

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

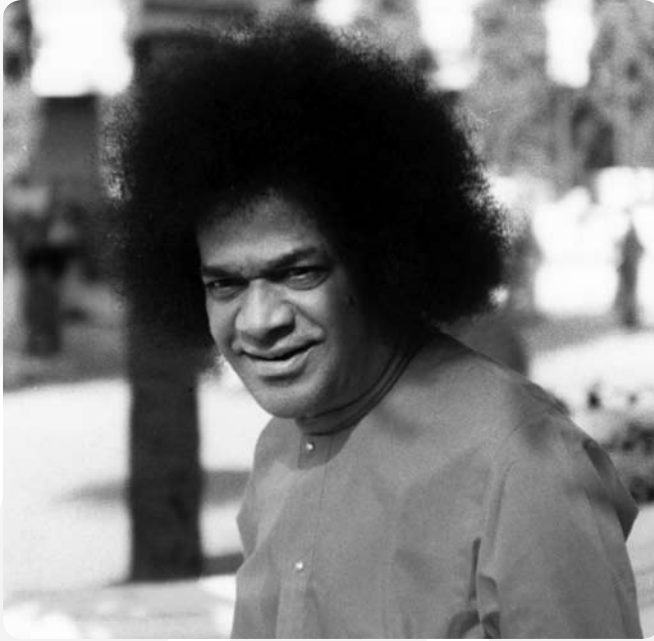
Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



"Effort and Grace"

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SAI'S MESSAGE



A Little More Effort ...

A little hesitation, and I stay away.

A little fear, and I stay away.

A little anger, and I stay away.

A little envy, and I stay away.

A little more effort from you, and I will come,

I will guide, I will protect.

I only look for your efforts.

I do not respond to your complaints.

I do not respond to your praise.

*I respond to your sincere determination
to reach me—always.*

—From *Sai Darshan* (Seema Dawan), 2:99, p. 226

Reflections on Effort and Grace

Let's Demonstrate Our Unity in Diversity

In his February 17, 2007, Shivaratri discourse, our beloved Sri Sathya Sai Baba declared, *I will very soon go around the world.*

Undoubtedly everyone must have been thrilled by this announcement. On several other occasions, he has clearly stated, *You have to engage in sadhana (spiritual effort) to win my sankalpa (resolve).* Thus, in order to make this a reality—that is, including the USA in a world tour itinerary, or for that matter a world tour itself—we all have to put in place a steady and thorough sadhana. In fact, as if it were a premonition and first step, the editorial staff of this *Newsletter* had previously started printing letters of invitation to our beloved Swami from individuals, groups/centers, and so on from within our homeland, the USA.

Swami compares the Lord's compassion to butter, which needs but a small amount of heat to melt. Perhaps the above-mentioned declaration of a world tour was in part a response to those already-published letters of invitation, as well as an acknowledgment of the many other “unpublished” invitations, written in the hearts of devotees throughout the world.

To persevere in any activity, one has to overcome obstacles. Our beloved Sai says, *One must have both sadhana and sankalpa, self-effort and grace (God's will).* Per Swami, God's grace is always outpouring, but a world tour would make the showering of his grace more apparent. Since he is unimaginably compassionate, observing our efforts, he may come and visit us physically, or we may become able to experience his cosmic visit.

To lead life within a spiritual routine, we should be disciplined. Sai says, *Regulated life and habits are two-thirds of the treatment, while medicine (“vitamin G” or God) is only one-third.* It may also be true that a sincere, heartfelt, full-of-love effort will melt his heart. He has already assured us on many occasions, *Take one step toward me; I will take a hundred steps toward you.*

When he talked of a world tour, he spoke of Russia and Africa, so one might infer that he could have been referring to the physical, earthly world, comprised of many cultures. Our homeland, the United States of America, is well known for its cultural confluence. Swami said that culture is actually what one does, when no one is observing! To illustrate this as applicable to our day-to-day living, one of the students of the Sri Sathya Sai

University came up with the following poem, which appeared in a “Sai Inspires” feature in the monthly *Heart2Heart Listener’s Journal* put together by the Radio Sai Team (www.radiosai.org). Since it is pertinent in the context of our beloved Sai’s proposed world tour, the poem is reproduced here (reprinted with permission, courtesy of *H2H Journal*):

If God came to our house to spend a day or two,
If he came unexpectedly, I wonder what we would do.
Sure, we’d give our nicest room to such an honored guest,
And all the food we’d serve him would be the very best.
We’d keep assuring him, we’re glad to have him there,
And serving him in our own house is a joy beyond compare.
But when we see him coming, would we meet him at the door,
With our arms outstretched in welcome to our heavenly visitor?
Or would we have to change our clothes before letting him in?
Or hide some magazines and put the holy book where it had been?
Would we turn off the tape and hope he hadn’t heard?
And wish we hadn’t uttered that last loud hasty word?
And I wonder if God spent a day or two with us,
Would we go right on doing the things we always do?
Would we go right on saying the things we always say?
Would life for us continue as it does from day to day?
Would we sing the songs we always sing and
read the books we always read?
And let him know the things on which our mind and spirit feed?
Would we be glad to let him meet our very closest friends?
Or would we hope that they would stay away until his visit ends?
Would we be glad to have him stay forever on and on?
Or would we sigh with great relief when he at last was gone?
It might be interesting to know the things that we would do,
If God in person came to spend some time with us too.
Discipline in life is to do the things we do,
Knowing that God is watching all day long and all night too.

Once a devotee asked Sai Baba, “Swami, we know what is right and what is wrong, but we still commit mistakes frequently. Why is this so?” Bhagavan replied, *You forget that the Lord is watching you always!* Convince yourselves every now and then that whomsoever you come across in your life, is none other than Swami himself. This is the greatest motivation for prompting you to do only good deeds at all times.

A popular story tells of an ashram where endless bickering took place. Once the head of the ashram went out and returned after a few days. Upon returning, he reported he’d had a vision in which God told him that he was visiting the ashram in the guise of one of its residents. The effect was immediate and dramatic. All quarrels and unrest were settled, and peace pervaded the ashram. Everyone looked upon each other with the feeling, “If I am not God in disguise, then

who knows? Perhaps this other fellow is the Lord that our master spoke of!”

These examples demonstrate that we have to live as if we are being inspected all the time, and also know that our grading does not come from an outside agent. We reap what we sow, so our grades are implicit and unavoidable. If we engage ourselves in a steadfast spiritual effort, our beloved Swami, who is latent in each of us, can make himself manifest in our interactions in the family, society, and everywhere, wherever we are.

Thus we can make our homeland not merely a land of worldly activity (*karma bhoomi*) but a land of divine unity (*yoga bhoomi*). Let us live up to the truth stated in the very first word in our country’s name—*United*—and demonstrate our divine unity in diversity.

—Murthy Cheruvu
Hopewell Junction, New York

It is not possible to make any noise with only one hand.

In the same manner, if man wants to achieve something higher, without making an effort, it is not possible. If man wants to get the fruits without making any effort, this signifies weakness on his part. In order to achieve any result, some attempt has to be made. It is man’s duty to put in his best efforts, and the success or failure will be decided by God. By making an effort, we will be able to achieve many things and achieve good results.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (*Summer Showers*, 1977)

Work, Worship, and Wisdom

Dive Deep to Attain the Pearls of Spiritual Practice

If there were no clouds in man's life, it would be difficult to discern the true value of light. So, too, there can be nothing extraordinary about happiness that does not arise out of genuine exertion. Without truth (sathya), righteousness (dharma), peace (shanti), and love (prema), one's acquisition of education will be meaningless. Charity will bring no merit, and the results of all good deeds will verily come to naught, if man lacks these few virtues. Even so, no heavenly good will accrue to those who wield power in the world, yet lack these cardinal virtues. Sathya, dharma, shanti, and prema are the four foundation walls on which the grand mansion of the eternal, universal religion (sanathana dharma) stands. What else can I make known unto you, O assembly of good and gentle persons! TELUGU POEM

Embodiments of Love! Knowledge of God (Brahman) is denied unto those who discard the intellect and are enamored only of ephemeral knowledge. To the man who stands on the shore and observes the limited external manifestations of the sea, it appears only as waves. It takes a daring expert diver to search the seabed and find the precious pearls that are there in the depths. The Bhagavad Gita declares that knowledge of God is attained only by the person who seeks the *Atma* (divinity) in the innermost recesses of his subtle being.

Recipe for Removing Impurities

The human body is affected by impurities connected with the three humors that

are present in the body—wind (*vata*), bile (*pitta*), or phlegm (*sleshma/kapha*). So also, the subtle body, represented by the mind, is tainted by impure, evil thoughts and tendencies (*mala*), projection of the unreal as the real (*vikshepa*), and concealment of the real (*avarana*). As a result of this tri-fold impurity of the mind, man remains unable to attain divine knowledge. As long as his mind has these taints, he cannot gain the knowledge of the *Atma*.

Impure thoughts and tendencies can be gotten rid of by means of sacred **work**, while projection of the unreal as the real can be removed by **worship**, and concealment of the real can be removed by **wisdom**. The Gita teaches us that by good and sacred work

we can purify our hearts, that by worship we can attain one-pointedness of the mind, and that by wisdom we can remove the veil of ignorance and attain union with God. Thus by work, worship, and wisdom, man can become divine. However, according to the Gita, all these three—that is to say, purification of the mind, one-pointedness of the mind, and unitive knowledge of the Godhead, can also be attained by the practice of yoga.

Five Types of Equanimity

Yoga also means *samatva* or equal-mindedness (*samatvam yogamuchyathe*).

With regard to the environs in which the ordinary man is immersed, and his secular and spiritual duties, equal-mindedness applies to five different domains: nature (*prakriti*), society (*samaja*), knowledge or wisdom (*jnana*), action (*karma*), and worship or devotion (*upasana/bhakti*).

First is equanimity toward nature and natural phenomenon (*prakritika samatva*). In the cold season, warmth gives us comfort, while in the hot season, coolness gives us joy. So both heat and cold, at one time or another, give us happiness, and neither subjects us to misery. Due to varying intensities of heat and cold, we might at times be put to some inconvenience, but these are only subjective and superficial experiences, rather than universally applicable realities. Essentially, both heat and cold give us happiness.

In the same manner, pleasure and pain also bring us happiness. Without pain, we cannot appreciate the true value of pleasure.

Only in the light of sorrow does joy assume greater prominence. Pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, should be looked on with an unruffled mind and with an equal sense of detachment.

It is essential to develop equanimity in relation to nature, especially for students, who tend to be impulsive and let success and failure influence them easily and profoundly. Impulsiveness is a sign of human weakness. Everyone should recognize the truth—that pleasure is but an interval between two pains—and face the trials and tribulations of the world in a calm and collected manner. The alternating experiences of pleasure and pain actually prod us along on the path of righteousness.

Equanimity as a member of society (*samajika samatva*) is next. Society, like nature, subjects man to the dual experiences of joy and sorrow. For instance, both praise and blame come to man from the society in which he lives. Praise and blame are like two faces of the same coin; they always haunt each other. But we should be perturbed by neither. We should regard both adulation and censure as stepping stones to progress. When a well is dug, the earth removed from the pit forms a mound by its side. The mud in the mound is the same mud that was in the pit. Praise and slander are like the mound and the pit, essentially of the same origin. Realizing this, the mind should be trained to develop equanimity in terms of one's relationship with and existence in society.

The third type of equanimity to promote in ourselves is *jnana samatva*. This basically

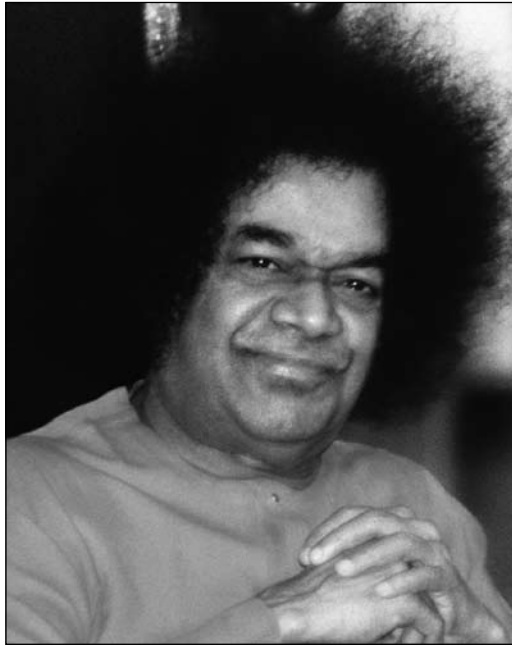
consists of recognizing the divinity that permeates all beings, irrespective of caste, color, or creed. Religions may be different, but they all lead man to the same goal—God.

Garments may be different, while the fabric is the same. Ornaments may be varied, but the gold is the same. Cows may be of different hues, but the milk is one. Electric bulbs may have varying wattage, sizes, and colors, but the electricity that lights them all is the same. Similarly, individuals and animals are myriad and multiple, but the life force in them all is essentially the same. The realization of this unitive aspect of creation is *jnana samatva*.

Next, to perform right and sacred actions in a detached manner, without being at all ruffled by their consequences, whether good or bad, is the spirit of equanimity in action (*karma samatva*).

And equanimity in devotion (*bhakti samatva*) consists in the realization of the truth that Easwara (God) pervades the entire

universe and that he is everything, the refuge for all. “You are my everything, my loving Lord (*Twameva sarvam mama deva deva*),” is



—•—
Pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, should be looked on with an unruffled mind and with an equal sense of detachment.

the cry of the person endowed with equanimity in devotion. It is only when his devotion (*bhakti*) is constant, enduring, and unwavering that the devotee can attain equanimity in devotion.

The flow of love for God should always remain the same and be steady. Krishna declared in the Bhagavad Gita: “I shall look after the material welfare and the spiritual well-being of those who worship me through one-pointed devotion and are ever attached to me.” This one-pointed devotion (*ananya bhakti*) comes as a result of

the five kinds of equanimity. Equanimity should be maintained and promoted steadfastly at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances.

The word *manava* (man) has three letters: *ma*, which means ignorance; *na*, which stands for negation of the ignorance, and *va*,

which refers to the power to attain divine knowledge. Thus, if man is to deserve his name, he should be free from ignorance.

Gita Context Clarified

The Bhagavad Gita expounds the sacred lore of the spirit. Krishna delivered to humankind, through Arjuna, the core of the Gita message, on the Kurukshetra battlefield, at 10:30 a.m., on the day called Karthika Bahula Amavasya, which was the day on which the great Mahabharatha War commenced.

Ten days later, when Bhishma fell in battle, Sanjaya informed Dhritharashtra of the proceedings on the battlefield. Dhritharashtra asked Sanjaya, "Gathered on the holy plain of Kurukshetra, O Sanjaya, what did my sons and the sons of Pandu do?" This was on the day called Margasira Suddha Ekadasi. Some consider this day as the Gitajayanti (birth of the Gita), but this was the day on which Sanjaya narrated the story of the battle to Dhritharashtra, while the Gita was actually given by Krishna to Arjuna on the day of Karthika Bahula Amavasya.

Why did Krishna choose the Amavasya day for the commencing of the battle and thus for teaching the Gita? Normally, nothing auspicious is done on an Amavasya day. However, such examples of Krishna's divinely enigmatic ways are evidenced in

other episodes of his life, too. His birth on an Ashtami day is itself a case in point. Krishna was born on July 20, in the year 3227 BC, at 3:00 a.m. The battle of Mahabharatha took place in the year 3141 BC, when Krishna was 86 years old. In the 5,119 years that have passed since the Mahabharatha war [as of 1979], the message of the Gita has spread to every corner of the world.

Today, students conveniently forget the injunction to engage in constant remembrance of the

Lord (*ananya chinta*), while craving the experience of union and equanimity (*yoga kshema*). The Lord assures you that he will look after your *yoga* and *kshema*. *Yoga* is the obtaining of the unattainable, which is for the Lord to confer on you, while *kshema* is the experiencing of that which brings infinitely good results. You have been listening to these teachings ... , but no purpose will be served by mere listening Listening (*sravana*) should be followed by inner review (*manana*) and assimilation (*nidi-dhyasana*).

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Summer Showers 1979:29



*Equanimity should be
maintained and promoted
steadfastly at all times, in
all places, and under all
circumstances.*

The Power, the Strength, and the Blessings

Baba Guides Our Efforts Step by Step

“Can we do more, Baba?”

The words flew from my mouth in a rush of emotion. We were attending Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s 55th birthday celebration, and I was overcome by his love. As a wife and mother of four children in a busy household, there was not a spare moment in the day. Yet, like many others, I wanted to emulate Baba, to serve as he serves, to give joy as he gives joy. I wanted to do more.

“Can we do more?”

Baba responded immediately to my question. ***Yes, I will give you the power, the strength, and the blessings.***

Is there a greater promise than this? When we express the desire to serve, he provides “**the power, the strength, and the blessings.**” When we reach out selflessly to others, he fills us with the spiritual energy to succeed!

I returned home from this trip and quickly became immersed in the daily routine of life. I had wanted to become engaged in grand service projects, but saw the projects unceremoniously shrink into small acts of kindness. I could not find the time, energy, or will to do more.

Many years later, when we had another privileged moment to sit with Baba, I again asked, “Can I do more, Baba?”

He replied, *Later, after the children are grown, I’ll give you very good work.*

What did he mean by “good” work? Did he mean “special” work? I felt sure that there would be a special assignment.

Several years later, I again asked Baba, “Is there good work for me?”

His response was not what I expected: *Yes, for you, now, home and family.*

My heart sank. I was always working with home and family, so that could not be my assignment! As if reading my thoughts, Baba added, ***All work is good work when it is offered to God.*** In other words, forget grandiose projects; the simplest act done with love is enough. The family is an excellent place to start.

I soon realized why Baba had directed me to home and family. My father became ill, and the entire household helped to care for him. He was a good man who struggled to have faith in God. He studied religious texts, yet as he grew weaker, he sadly lamented, “I’m talking to God, but he’s not answering!” The family gathered around his bedside and sang to him, massaged his feet and legs, and shed a few tears. We knew that God was speaking to him through our love. Near the end, he whispered weakly, “Family is the most important thing,” and finally, “I love you.”

I must tell you of the paramount importance of love. Love is God; live in love. God is the embodiment of perfect love. He can be known and realized, reached and known, only through love. You can see the moon only with the help of moonlight; you can see God only through the rays of love. —Sri Sathya Sai

Baba (SSS 12:11, Apr. 1, 1973)

Shortly after Sai Baba came into our lives, my husband and I wanted to share Baba's love with others, so we started a Sai center in our home. Hoping for guidance, we asked Baba, "How is the Sai center?"

He responded, *They're singing songs with good devotion, but they're not doing any seva* (selfless service).

We returned home, and got to work! We had some lessons to learn. For a while, we fed the homeless at a particular site, without realizing that our presence was not wanted at this site. We also discovered that our center members had diverse ideas about service, and we learned to patiently work through our differences to achieve unity.

Additionally, we noticed several needy members in the center, and realized that our own family should be strong and healthy before we reach out to others! "Helping Hands" was initiated to serve one another in times of stress and difficulty. Eventually, the center started humming along with various forms of seva.

Service to man will help your divinity to blossom, for it will gladden your heart and make you feel that life has been worthwhile. Service to man is service to God, for God is in every man and every living being and in every stone and stump. —Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 4:43,

Dec. 5, 1964)

Another time, again, we mentioned the Sai center to Baba. He said, *They're singing with enthusiasm and working hard, but they don't understand why they are doing it.*

Sai Baba was asking us to study his teachings in greater depth. Why does he stress the importance of seva, and

what is the proper attitude while serving? Are we without ego or attachment? Are we showing discipline? Are we trying to see God in the other person, although sometimes a difficult task? Are we correctly assessing the needs of the community we are serving? Are we becoming humble and happy? These questions became the subject of spirited study circles.

God will not ask you, "When and where did you do service?" He will ask, "With what motive did you do it? What was the intention that prompted you?" You may weigh the seva and boast of its quantity. But God seeks quality, the quality of the heart, the purity of the mind, the holiness of the motive. —Sri

Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 15:31, Nov. 19, 1981)

"Will you save the world, Baba?"

**He replied,
"Half seva, half save."**

Much later, we again mentioned the Sai center to Sai Baba. *It's a good center*, he said, **but *where are the leaders?***

Of course! Every organization needs skillful leaders with vision and vitality. The center members created a leadership workshop with Sai Baba as our role model. Baba says that he is a servant to all. What a great insight: the best leader is a servant to all! By becoming virtuous, humble, and dedicated servants, cannot we all become leaders?

Many of the young adults among us have grown up in the Sai Spiritual Education program and are maturing into innovative leaders. Some of Baba's remarkable college students have come to the USA and are expressing their love for Sai through inspired leadership. In addition, a recent article in the *New York Times* described a new wave of young social entrepreneurs who are creating nonprofit programs to address the social and economic problems in the world. How can we worry about the future, when such dedicated young leaders are developing in our Sai centers and beyond?

Be convinced that whatever achievement you make, is caused by the grace of the Lord. Pray to the Lord for strength, wisdom, humility, detachment, light, and love. With each step in the pilgrimage of life, approach divinity steadily and surely. —Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 11:09,

Feb. 21, 1971)

We are thankful that our small Sai center is unified and balanced. Sai centers are Baba's gift to us. They are unique among

organizations. There are no dues, the door is always open, and the emphasis is on seeing divinity in all. Most precious of all, Baba allows us to use his name! In helping us strengthen our Sai centers, Sai Baba is helping us purify our own hearts.

"Will you bless the center?" we asked.

Baba smiled lovingly and replied, *The members are sincere and good people. I will bless. I will bless.* He paused, adding softly, ***The whole world is a center.***

How sweetly and subtly he teaches us. Our Sai Krishna reminds us that all is his, and that he is leading us to victory.

At times we may feel disheartened. "There is suffering and disharmony in the world, Baba," we said.

He replied, *The world is good, but the mind of man is corrupt and polluted.*

"Will you save the world, Baba?"

He replied, ***Half seva, half save.***

When we rally the forces of love and compassion, he provides, as he promised, the power, the strength, and the blessings. When we protect Mother Earth and take care of one another, he takes care of us. When we open our heart to others, he lets us merge into his heart. He allows us to become his messengers on earth. His love saves.

—Sharon Sandweiss

San Diego, California

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Sometimes He Plays with Us

Anecdotes on Spiritual Lessons

There are many ways of viewing a relationship with Sai Baba, although all of them involve some sort of transformation, or at least that possibility. In that respect, Sai Baba is like the proverbial philosopher's stone—the ultimate alchemical cure-all. A devotee expressed it well when she said, “He is *dewitching* me!”

One must ask oneself: who is Sai Baba, and why is he significant or insignificant to me? What does it mean to say that he is the *Atman* (inner divinity)? Personally, I feel that Sai Baba's greatest teaching is that God is in all, equally; thus, God is in me as my core reality. Silent *Om* meditation is my principal personal approach to my God-Self, which I do not identify with the personality identity of Sai Baba, although I do identify my God-Self with the *Atman/Paramatman* identity of Sai Baba. In that sense, I am Sai Baba.

Of course, I think of Sai Baba as a great saint. His teachings of service to humanity have helped me grow in love and same-sightedness. In that light, I hope this loose collection of anecdotes will inspire devotees to laugh, think, and grow spiritually.

☺ I used to relish serving food in the Western Canteen, as it was a wonderful opportunity to practice seeing God in each

recipient. One night I imagined that God was also in the food: Krishna chocolate cake, Sai Baba orange pudding cake, and Vishnu vanilla ice cream. I felt it quite strongly. That very evening, the canteen staff became concerned when about 100 people more than expected came just for dessert that evening. The needed extra food graciously appeared!

☺ Ramakrishna Paramahansa once said, “Gurus are soft toys for children to chew on while cutting teeth.” But some visitors to Prasanthi Nilayam might disagree about the “soft” part—for if one is serious about cutting one's teeth in spirituality, one's experiences may be quite rigorous. The inner world is reflected in the outer world with amazing alacrity on those sacred grounds.

A visitor was angry with Sai Baba for not meeting her needs. To the amazement of the people she was complaining to, a swarm of wasps appeared out of nowhere and began chasing her! She escaped unharmed but with heightened respect for the axiom, “Watch your words,” as well as heightened curiosity about Sai Baba.

☺ Some people say that the taxis in Puttaparthi run on honks (as opposed to petrol), but I think that sometimes they run on the Lord's grace and presence alone. Once

a lady accompanied me in a taxi to Bangalore. The driver stopped for tea about halfway through the trip. We stood by the taxi, and some men came over with some *amrit* (holy nectar) and *vibhuti* (sacred ash), of uncertain origin, which they gave to the lady and me. A short while later, my companion mused that she felt something was wrong with the items they had given us. Instinctively, I opened my window and threw out what they had given me, but she couldn't locate where she had put the "gifts" she had received from the men. As she searched, she continued to affirm that they had "bad vibes."

At that very moment, our taxi came to a complete and unexplained stop. The driver tried in vain to start the car. He had no idea what was wrong. During this intermission, my companion was able to find the suspect *vibhuti* and *amrit* and throw it all out the window. I felt sure that now the taxi would start again, but for added confidence, I put some ashram *vibhuti* in the palm of my hand and blew it over the steering wheel. The driver's eyes grew round as saucers as the taxi started without further ado.

Were the items cursed? Had the negative thoughts of my companion affected our trip? Sai Baba is the Self, which is so vast that the whole of the conscious and unconscious universe fits inside this Self, with room to spare. His energy seems to amplify everything in our psyche, including fears.

Being with Sai Baba is like adding a catalyst to a chemical reaction, as the Great Spirit he rests in is the same spirit as in you and me; thus, his presence resonates with and

amplifies that vibration within us. If we can view our issues in a detached manner and seek the information the universe is trying to communicate, then we may find tremendous love, freedom, self-empowerment, and humor.

However, it takes faith and self-confidence to face our fears and negativities, particularly those that may be only partially conscious or so overpowering to our customary consciousness that they remain in the shadow. Then, because the message that the universe is trying to communicate to us is often so very personal—and different from the surface interpretation—we must make sure that we do not miss the message for lack of inner inquiry and observation.

© A lady who was to return to the USA later in the day, requested that the *seva dal* (service volunteer) in Sai Kulwant Hall give her special darshan seating. The *seva dal* had her wait for quite a while; then she returned and merely handed her a blank sheet of paper. Jumping to conclusions, the woman complained and was then told, "Don't be so particular!"

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spare.**

So she thought, “Okay, let’s see if this blank sheet of paper will get me close to Sai Baba.” She was surprised to be seated in the front row. Had that blank paper been her ticket? Later she realized a deep, inner message from the “blank piece of paper” and tried to empty herself of ego identification, to become a blank and receptive slate for spiritual

**Being with Sai
Baba is like
adding a catalyst
to a chemical
reaction, as the
Great Spirit he
rests in is the
same spirit as in
you and me...**

awareness.

☺ As we grow spiritually, our awareness of Sai Baba changes as well. A nurse from Seattle had a revelation about Swami as a garbage man. In fact, he came to her in a dream with a giant plastic bag, cleaned her whole apartment, and permeated the atmosphere with the scent of bliss. After a while, in the dream, she began meditating at the sacred tree, and it sang to her the old Shaker song, “Simple Gifts”: “‘Tis a gift to be simple, ‘tis a gift to be free. . . .”

☺ Spiritual lessons are often full of playful synchronicities. Synchronicity is nonlinear, in that it represents a pattern that elucidates parts of the whole identity, or *paramatman*. A new visitor to Prasanthi Nilayam arrived on Mahashivaratri night, but instead of going to Sai Kulwant Hall and joining in the all-night singing, she went

straight to bed. When she awoke the next morning, she hurried to darshan, hoping that her long trip to India would not be in vain. She was tall, and while standing outside the hall, she could see Sai Baba clearly. Her first thought upon seeing him was to ask him mentally, “Are you God?” In that instant, he produced a *lingam* (symbol of all creation)!

☺ Another synchronicity occurred to me one day at darshan. I had the habit of meditating before darshan and, since the hall is sometimes noisy, was pleased that the lady next to me was also meditating. After a while I had a vision of Sai Baba flying around in Santa’s sleigh, his bushy hair and orange robe waving in the wind. I burst out laughing, and when I opened my eyes, I saw the lady next to me also laughing. She had experienced the exact same vision, and it was nowhere near Christmas time! Well, apparently so had Santa Sai Baba, because when he entered the hall, he flashed us a wonderful, “Ho-ho-ho!” smile. When he is playful, everything seems to be made of joy!

☺ Sometimes our accustomed world view or status quo can be shaken quite dramatically at Prasanthi Nilayam. An artist with depression thought she had seen everything, until she arrived at the ashram. One of the first strange sights to greet her was a group of tribal people, covered in turmeric, with shaven heads and huge nose rings. Then, Sai Baba came close to her, and she witnessed materializations. At first her reaction to all this was very negative—she projected her “shadow side” onto Baba. But even such projections can be a prelude to

creative expression, if the experience can be reclaimed and integrated consciously.

Fortunately, this woman's attitude was open enough to lead her quickly to become conscious of her error in perception, and she opened to her larger Self. The result was rejuvenation, and new, original spiritual images appeared in her paintings. These were manifestations of her own divinity, which ignited in her awareness from proximity to the avatar. Her "ho-hum" state had been transformed into *so-hum* (the breath mantra, "I am God")!

☺ Americans traveling in India may experience frustration over an inability to communicate effectively. Part of the frustration is due to language, and part to custom. For example, if a merchant tells you something will be available "tomorrow," be prepared for a long wait! Remember, it is said that in India a world age transpires in the time required for Brahma (God) to open and close his eyes.

Even the simple act of dining out can offer an opportunity for spiritual insight: An American woman reading a menu asked a waiter, "What is a *lassi* (sweetened yogurt drink)?" The waiter replied, "A *lassi* is a *lassi*." So she asked, "Okay, what is a *lassi* made of?" He looked at her strangely and replied, "*Lassi*!" She had to laugh, recalling that the avatar himself recommends a self-reflexive definition: *I am I*.

☺ Years ago, during my first trip to Puttaparthi, the Sai avatar's playfulness challenged me to examine my concept of truth, including that of personal identity. A

roommate at the ashram recommended that I read a book called the *Sri Sai Satcharita*, a collection of stories from Shirdi Sai Baba's life. I searched everywhere for the book, without success, and the merchants advised me to give up the futile search, as only a few copies had been printed, years earlier, making the book difficult to obtain.

Sai Baba came out during that evening's darshan, and I spoke with him mentally about the book. I told him that it was important to me and that I wanted to get to know Sai Baba of Shirdi. I left darshan as if in a dream, headed right out the front gate of the ashram, and entered directly into a store just across the street and slightly left of the gate. The store had only one item on its shelves—thousands of copies of the *Sri Sai Satcharita*! I was vaguely aware that this was unusual, but I was not in an analytically conscious state. The only other items in the store were a few old scrolls, and I stood before them, wanting to pick them up—but I could not do so.

I bought several copies of the book; an old man sold them to me. After returning to my room in the ashram and showing my roommates the bounty of rare books, they howled with laughter. "Who was that old man? Well, you wanted to meet Him!" *Medius fidius*! (By faith's guardian!) I never found the bookstore again, but my heart found a storehouse of love for Sai Baba.

—S. Ishwara Aajul
Ft. Collins, Colorado

Forgiveness

These words came to me after going through a life-changing experience. I had reached my goals at a very early age and thought myself to be invincible. I searched for answers, and this came:

Forgive me God, for not asking for your forgiveness.

Forgive me God, for asking and not having given.

Forgive me God, for having and not thanking you.

Forgive me God, for not seeing ...

Forgive me God, for I love you, and had not thanked you for being.

Forgive me God, for sinning.

Forgive me God, most of all, for not letting go.

*For, all that I am, and will come to have,
Would not have happened if not by thy hands,*

Awareness of this shall enlighten us all.

Forgiveness is grand, not issued by man.

Forgiveness is there—for the ones, for all

Who in despair have fallen short—

The highest forgiveness comes from above.

—Angelica Baez
Boca Raton, Florida

SSEHV at “The Beacon”

Developing Re-Entry Skills for At-Risk Young Adults and Adults

In our July-August 2007 issue, Sathya Sai Newsletter USA featured a report from Region 2 on a prisoner-mentor service project conducted through the nonprofit organization, “Opportunities, Alternatives, & Resources” (OAR) of Fairfax County, Virginia, by Sai devotees in the greater Washington DC area. The following article reports on an extension of that program.

While the OAR mentoring process helps its clients develop decision-making skills, decision-making is just one of the tools that prison inmates need to successfully re-enter society. While we were involved in the prisoner-mentoring project, OAR was in the process of initiating a re-entry program, called “The Beacon.” The Beacon’s mission is “to enable the formerly incarcerated to become productive members of society by supporting them in building and sustaining a community and a business through which they develop the skills and values needed for success in life.”

The Beacon is a two-year program, with six new men joining it every six months. Participants live in a communal environment once released from prison, engaging in classes and job training that provide these skills and values. One of the Sai volunteers discussed the principles of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) with the Beacon Program Director, who then expressed an interest. After the volunteer contacted the Regional SSEHV Coordinator, a proposal to pilot an SSEHV

project was developed and approved by the SSEHV Foundation of the USA, after which the plan was presented to the board of OAR.

The Regional SSEHV Coordinator and the (now) project director have developed lesson plans for a weekly one-hour class. Lessons focus on those values and qualities that would be the most important for these men to reclaim their lives and achieve longed-for success—human values such as self-esteem, self-discipline, equanimity, responsibility, unity, cooperation, and so on.

As part of the SSEHV lesson plan format, we find relevant quotes, stories, activities, and songs that we hope will touch the students’ hearts, as well as reinforce the lesson’s value and human quality. Who knew the poignant stories circulating on the web would come in so handy?

The one SSEHV lesson component that we were most cautious about was silent sitting/tuning in. We could not be sure if these men would trust us and each other enough to close their eyes and give themselves the space to be taken through this process. But our beloved

Swami ensured that this was a nonissue. We waited until the fourth class to build up a level of trust, and then led them through Phyllis Krystal's wonderful "Figure 8" visualization. At the end of this visualization, you are supposed to picture yourself forgiving somebody, and that person forgiving you. After the students opened their eyes, one of the students shared the following: "I pictured the other person getting out of his chair, walking over to me, and giving me a hug." Thank you, Swami. We have since introduced the Light Meditation, and have the students practicing this every day.

Other moments have underscored the amazing impact that Swami and the SSEHV program are having on these individuals' lives. One student shared the following: he had received a letter that made him angry, and his initial reaction was either to write a nasty letter in reply, or call and give the person a piece of his mind. Instead, he realized that the only person who would be hurt by this would be himself. He decided to accept the letter, not let it affect his mood, and go about his business. Another student described the warm feeling he got when he helped a fellow inmate.

One of the lessons that we constantly teach is that all the human values and qualities are already inside us; SSEHV just helps make us aware of them. Our initial three students have been in and out of prison many times, and they realized that they needed to learn different ways to react and respond to life's events.

The experience of working with these clients has been incredibly spiritually uplifting. We have felt Swami's presence in each class, as the students begin to understand what it means to listen to their hearts, respect that little "voice" inside, and trust and work with others. Every time we see a "light bulb" go on in one of these men, we thank Swami for allowing us to be his instruments in touching their lives and hearts, and for allowing them to touch our lives and hearts. Thank you, Swami, for being with us, for calling us to you, and for giving us this opportunity.

—Devotees of Region 2 (Mid-Atlantic)



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

Assisting the Visually Impaired

Sai Volunteers Serve at the “American Council for the Blind” Convention

On July 6, 2008, members of the Louisville, Kentucky, Sri Sathya Sai Baba group volunteered to assist the American Council of the Blind (ACB) during its annual conference, which took place in Louisville.

On the designated day, fifteen devotees reported to the venue, a downtown hotel, at precisely 8:30 a.m. Upon their arrival, the local ACB chapter coordinator (who is also blind) gave them a quick lesson on how to provide assistance. The most important caution was never to grasp a blind individual by an arm. Instead, volunteers were instructed to introduce themselves politely, extend their left arm for the person to hold, and then walk normally.

Most volunteers assisted attendees in the registration process, and in escorting them to the lecture or exhibition halls. Some helped guests to find their rooms. The highlight of this conference was the large attendance—nearly 2,000 blind or visually impaired attendees, from every corner of the country including Hawaii. Approximately one thousand seeing-eye dogs also took part in this gathering. The absence of barking from the service dogs was remarkable, as despite

the hundreds of dogs, hardly one or two barks could be heard throughout the day.

On display in the exhibition halls were products representing the latest technology for making life a little easier for these individuals—from talking clocks and computers to the latest in GPS technology, specifically designed for providing directions to the visually impaired.

The resilience, fortitude, and widespread sense of humor displayed by all the attendees is worthy of special mention. Many of them were seeing each other again after several years' time, and it was fascinating to witness them recognizing each other from their voices. Some of the abilities and skills noticed in the visually-impaired that day were positively eye-opening for the volunteers.

—**Shakti L. Mukerjee**, Service Coordinator,
Sathya Sai Group of Louisville, Kentucky



Dental Camp for Needy Children

Volunteers Team with Head Start Organization in Eugene, Oregon

Dental screening and treatment is an acute need among children living on the edge of poverty. Responding to this need, Sai volunteers in Region 6 teamed with the local chapter of Head Start and Lane Community College dental clinic in a beautiful expression of service, for a second free dental camp in Eugene, Oregon, on May 2, 2008 (a prior camp had been offered in 2006). The 2008 camp served 73 children and adults, with many seeing a dentist for the first time. Swami's presence was felt through many signs: the suite number, 108; the number of dental chairs, 18; and the freeway exit number, 189! All patients were welcomed by Sai volunteers at registration, where paperwork was appropriately handled. Then they were escorted to have x-rays taken, and on to the treatment area for initial screening by a dental hygienist. Four dentists were on hand to provide the necessary care. Treatment included teeth cleaning, tooth extractions, and cavity fillings. Spanish-speaking interpreters helped any in need of assistance to communicate—all in a spirit of Sai love!

Patients were then escorted from the treatment room to receive dental kits and oral care education from Sai volunteers who have a nursing background. A "balloon man"

made beautiful toy balloons. The smiles on the children's faces as they received their balloons expressed pure joy and happiness! After all members of a family finished their sessions with the nursing staff, the family was invited to another area for refreshments.

All aspects of the camp were accomplished in a spirit of loving kindness and compassion on the part of all volunteers, including those from the college dental clinic. One could feel Sai's presence and loving energy all through the day. It was visible in the eyes of the patients, who expressed deep gratitude for receiving caring, no-cost treatment. Many who had arrived in immense pain, left with great relief.

The dental camp brought together Sai family members of all ages (from SSE Group 3 to seniors) in a spirit of selfless love. Several volunteers took up additional projects in the area, including yard cleaning and clothes knitting. All who participated felt strongly that, through Sai's grace, many more such camps will be held in years to come.

—Region 6 Newsletter, July 2008

Interview with Roopa Sharma

Corona/Norco Medical Camp Coordinator



The Corona/Norco Medical Camp is now an annual service activity sponsored by the Region 8 Sai Organization. This event usually takes place around March of each year. Regular volunteers at this Camp know Mrs. Roopa Sharma as the indefatigable organizer and coordinator who oversees all details involved in staging the camp, from inception to final wrap-up. It's a daunting task, and Roopa has proved her dedication and commitment to successfully coordinating these camps over the past four to five years. Interestingly, Roopa is not a medical doctor by profession, though her husband, Ashok, is a physician. Roopa, a busy mother with two children, Eswara and Vishnu, ages 5 and 1, is actually an interior designer by profession. I had the opportunity to chat with Roopa to get some insights into what got her started in this *seva* activity and some of the behind-the-scenes activities surrounding a medical camp. —Saras Kollengode

You are not a medical doctor by profession. So, how is it that you got motivated to become involved in coordinating and organizing various medical camps?

The biggest motivator is Swami! Also, my main inspiration in life is my husband, who is a physician. I was looking for an avenue for service and to get involved, and then this golden opportunity came!

The seeds to serve were sown at a Sathya Sai retreat in Idyllwild that I attended with my husband, Ashok, wherein Mr. J. Jagadeeshan from Malaysia was one of the main speakers.

He talked about the various service projects undertaken in Malaysia, including medical camps. We also watched some incredible DVDs that he shared with us, of what has been achieved through these camps, which were very inspiring. When he concluded his speech, he wanted all the doctors in attendance at the retreat to come forward and commit to Swami by writing a note stating that they will be available for service.

Hearing his words, I asked Ashok if he was interested, and since he was, he pledged

his availability. As for me, I was so moved by Jagadeeshan's faith in Swami that even though he asked only the doctors to make a commitment, I too wrote a note to Swami, saying that even though I was not a doctor, I was very good at cleaning. Through my involvement in a service activity undertaken by the Karuna Center as a "Love Crew" member, I had participated in cleaning service calls to needy folks in the Corona area. I wrote that I was willing to clean toilets at the medical camp facility.

The retreat being the starting point, an opportunity for a medical camp was then presented in Corona, California, after the 9/11 (2001) terrorist attack in New York. Feeling very motivated to be of service to the community, some of us felt that we should work on service projects with the community and its leaders in unity.

Talk to me about the first camp that you organized.

After 9/11, and inspired by Brother Jagadeeshan's talk at the retreat, under the umbrella of T.R.A.C. (Tradition, Religion, Aspiration,

and Culture), headed by Nosh Vadoli, we got together with other religious denominations and city officials in Corona. We collaborated in launching a medical camp in Corona, calling it the "America United" project. The first camp was held in July 2002. Leaders and members of various interfaith groups participated in the America United medical camp. Dr. Nitin Shah, much experienced in running medical camps for the last fifteen years, who was the current Jain Center president, along with Nosh Vadoli, provided us with much-needed backup support in running that first camp, as did Sai devotees.

When did it become an official Sri Sathya Sai organization sponsored activity?

In 2004. The impetus for this camp came from a number of sources. The city officials in Corona urged us to hold another camp similar to the one in 2002. We also met with Dr. Goldstein and had the support of many devotees, including Mr. Harshad Patel. With Swami's blessings, as well as those of officers of the Sai organization, the next camp came about.

Is there any way to measure the success of a medical camp?

Success in the Sai way is not measured by the number of patients seen. Sheer numbers don't tell the whole story. Success is all about working in unity; creating harmony, peace, and love; and providing quality service. It's not about quantity but quality.



How many months in advance do you start your planning activities?

At least six months in advance of the actual date. Much has to be done: you've got to start doing the legwork, planning the logistics, contacting doctors, start working with the doctors, service providers, task force leaders, etc. Fortunately now we have a document to fall back upon regarding specific planning activities, and I'd like to share with you how that came about.

After the first medical camp, I was totally exhausted, and while asleep, I had a dream wherein Swami came in the dream, and he kept on talking, nonstop, giving me advice and instructions as to how to go about the planning activities, in terms of creating and setting up task forces for registration, advertisement, logistics, transportation, legal, training, setup, clean up, and providing training to task force leaders and volunteers. Swami covered much in my dream, and, unfortunately for me, I didn't write all this down while it was still fresh in my mind. Over time, I forgot the specifics of the dream.

Later, Juan Moore (then the regional service coordinator) told me that it would be a good idea to document medical camp processes and planning activities. I was at a loss as to how I'd actually go about this. I went to Swami's room and prayed to him. I told him that he had told me so much a few months back, but I was now totally blanked out and couldn't remember anything. I prayed to him to inspire me again, and I put a pen and paper in front of his picture. I closed my eyes, prayed, and then started to write—seven pages in all, documenting the specifics of coordinating and organizing a medical camp.

This document is available in electronic format for interested devotees' use. Megan Bennett and Mike Congleton have also been of help in putting together this document.

Is the Corona medical camp an annual event?

Yes, it is now. In 2007, under the leadership of Mike Congleton, the camp has become an annual, Sai organization sponsored event. Region 8 has committed to doing these on an annual basis. We have had camps in '06, '07, and '08.

How many hours does the camp stay open, and what is the typical start time?

We have learned from experience that it's good to start early in the morning. The registration counter opens at 7:30 a.m., even though the official stated start time is 9 a.m. The camp stays open until 2 p.m. Many of the patients arrive in the morning. Many have fasted since the previous night so that they can



get the appropriate medical tests done. They leave at noon. Attendance, typically, really dwindles down after 2 p.m. The volunteer doctors, however, are always willing to stay if there are patients to be seen later than 2 p.m.

What is the number of participating medical doctors?

With Swami's grace, physician participation has increased each year. The very first medical camp had 32 participating physicians. Just to give you an idea as to how the volunteer base has grown, the following are stats for the March '08 camp. There were: 105 medical doctors, dentists, and medical professionals, covering 28 medical specialties; 120 professional volunteers; 160 student healthcare professionals; and over 100 high school student volunteers and volunteers from local referral clinics.

A total of 684 men, women, and children came to the medical camp for medical screening and services, such as blood tests, electrocardiographs, pulmonary function tests, bone mineral density tests, mammograms, Pap smear screening, diet counseling, immunizations for adults and children, TB tests, free prescriptions and eye glasses for children, and so on.

Picture the actual day of the camp. What is your day like, from the time you arrive at the camp?

On the actual day of the camp, my main activity is to make sure that everything is in place and good to go, to tie up any loose ends, and to make sure that the patients are happy and that they are getting the help that they need. Of greater

significance is the day prior to the actual camp. All of the important tasks are done on the day preceding the event.

Does it take long to set up the medical equipment and instruments?

Not really. Some of the specialty equipment, like those used for testing bone mineral density or electrocardiogram, are brought in by special agencies. They set them up and take them back when the camp concludes. The doctors bring with them whatever medical instruments they might need.

Our setup tasks consist mainly of arranging tables and chairs, preparing information material on clinics that we will be using as referral sources in local areas, and referral and requisition slips that travel between the departments at the camp. We set these up the day prior to the actual camp, working from 10 a.m. to 9-10 p.m.

What volunteer seva opportunities are available to devotees who are not of the medical profession? How can they be of service?

Several service opportunities are available. Volunteers can work in various departments at



the camp. It's very important for participants to realize the importance of what is involved when they get to volunteer and serve/work in an assigned department. For example, they will get to deal with important documents pertaining to patients. I feel it's very important that the task force leaders and volunteers undergo at least one mandatory training session, wherein they will be taught about the different activities that will take place in their respective departments—what papers come in, what papers go out.

Is a training session conducted for the participants?

Yes. We have started to provide prior training to all volunteer participants. Usually there are two training sessions. The first one is a session conducted for volunteers who will play the role of task force leaders. We meet with them and let them know specifics of their respective departments and the sort of services that their department will be providing to the patients. The task force leaders in turn will then pick a date, usually two weeks before the actual camp date, and schedule a session for the other Sai devotees who sign up to volunteer.

How many task force leaders are required?

We usually have twenty to thirty task force leaders, with some specialty departments having two leaders. In Corona, typically, we have had anywhere from six to twelve volunteers in each of the different departments. We are beginning to see volunteers from the school district, such as principals, teachers, and other staff. This year we had about twenty volunteers from the school district.

In the four camps you have organized thus far, did any one in particular far exceed your expectations, in terms of turnout and being relatively glitch-free?

When I look back at all the camps that I've been involved in, I can say that all of them have been a vehicle for spiritual growth. Service activities that we engage in are really for our own growth, and the more we understand and the more we work with others, the better we become. Viewed in this light, the camp that we did this year was the best, because we learned from the previous ones and made improvements. This was reflected in almost every aspect—right from its organization, to working with the local clinics, vendors, and the school districts, and

everybody else. This has been, thus far, the best one, and we are getting better year after year.

What is the best way to encourage wider participation in such activities?

As a Sai devotee, I would really love to see more such camps in more places. In southern California, there are so many places where much help is needed. Not long ago, I was contacted by a school district



in the Hemet region about the possibility of organizing a camp there. There are many areas in Los Angeles, Santa Ana, Pomona, and so on, where such a real need exists. Even if a few centers got together and organized a camp in their local areas, it would be terrific. The doctors can participate from all over. Small camps such as these, I think, can serve more people on a regular basis. More opportunities will be available for Sai devotees to volunteer and serve.

How has participating in these medical camps strengthened you spiritually?

Oh, it is the best thing that ever happened to me! I am involved in these camps for my own good, and maybe that is a selfish way of looking at it.

I see what sort of changes come about when you work with people as part of a large family. I have seen it right here in Corona. The unity in diversity is incredible. The change within me is helping me bring change in others. I feel more uplifted when I serve others. I feel it's a great opportunity for me to show my gratitude, not only to Swami but also to the community in which I live. These camps have been a great opportunity for me to give back to the community.

Also, having had the chance to work with some non-Sai devotees, I have witnessed and felt the same love that I have in my heart, flowing in theirs as well. They too have the desire to be of service to the community. This is what inspires me to do more and more in this region. There might be many like-

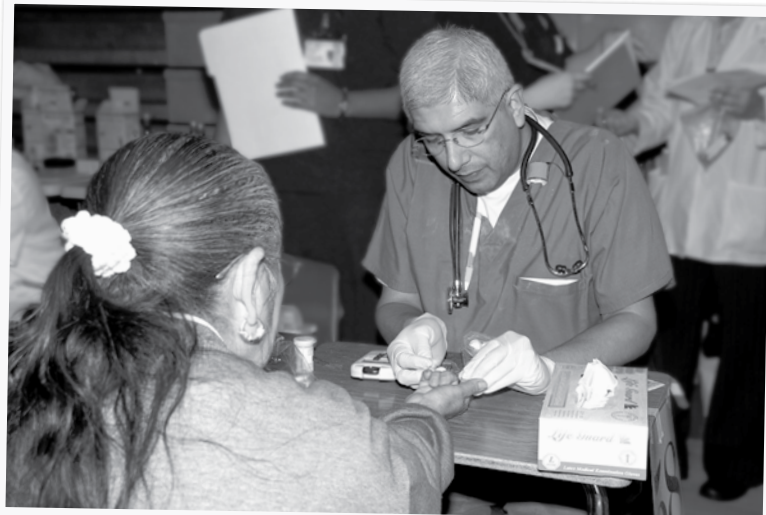
minded people who may not have a guru like we do, who nonetheless are traveling along the same path of selfless service. I feel very blessed to be involved in all this, through the Sai organization.

What is next on tap for you?

The next Corona medical camp takes place March 7, 2009. Our planning meetings will start in October. We have actually created a local medical camp committee, spearheaded by the Sathya Sai organization. Local college directors and clinics, and a few directors from the school district will also be involved, attending the monthly meetings. In October we will sit and plan various services and activities, such as transportation, advertising, the reach-out program, how to get bilingual translators, and so on. The wheels will be put into motion for a wonderful camp in 2009.

—Interview of Roopa Sharma
by Saras Kollengode

Region 8 Newsletter Staff reporter



Exciting News! First-Ever National Youth Conference Planned

May 29-31, 2009, near Chicago, Illinois

The USA Sai young adults (YAs) have taken the initiative again in planning a national youth conference, the first of its kind. The National Youth Conference 2009 will take place May 29-31 at Camp Duncan in Ingleside, Illinois (www.ymcacampduncan.org), about 55 miles northwest of downtown Chicago. The camp is described as being “situated on semi-private Fish Lake; rolling prairie, a large mowed sports field, dense woods for camp outs, and marshlands for nature study blend to form an ideal camp setting.” The cost per person for the weekend is \$95, including lodging at the campsite and meals from Friday evening to Sunday evening. The event hosts will arrange transportation from and to the airport.

This conference will bring youth together in thought and action. It will increase unity and will celebrate the Sai in each of us. The conference theme reflects this: ***We Are One for Sai.***

Dr. Joe Phaneuf, the National YA Advisor, received the opportunity to present to Swami the USA National Youth Conference proposal on November 24, 2008, and received Swami’s blessings for the plan. The proposal outlined the following aims, couched in earnest prayers for Swami’s guidance and support:

- To engage in pre-conference programs at the individual, local, regional, and national levels.
- To focus on practicing spirituality in daily life, internally and externally, through:
 1. Gayatri Mantra Chanting
 2. Daily Meditation and Prayer, including the Light and *Soham* meditation techniques, and strengthening heart-to-heart communication with Swami
 3. Ceiling on Desires, to engender savings in food, money, time, and energy, and practical methods for implementing this program as well as using the ideas and savings for the benefit of others
 4. “Living” Service, with an aim to bring about personal transformation through sharing Swami’s love with others.

Every month, a National Youth Conference monthly newsletter shares updates about the conference, discipline program, and young adult experiences. The first issue was released in January; these newsletters can be viewed at www.saiyausa.net.

Join now to walk the path together, united as one group of USA Sai Youth!

Additional National Youth Conference 2009 information and an online registration form can be found at <http://www.saiyausa.net>, or through national or regional YA representatives and advisors.

A Touch of Sai Love in Our Hearts

Flood Protection Efforts at Cherokee Lake Camp, O'Fallon, Missouri



The Young Adults of the U.S. Mid-Central region were blessed with an opportunity to share our beloved Bhagavan's love by helping a flood-affected area in Missouri. The Cherokee Lake Camp in O'Fallon, Missouri, was flooded in June 2008. Sandbags were used to levee the campsite to protect it from severe flooding. As the water levels receded, the YAs coordinated a service project to help clean the campsite by removing the wet sandbags.

Forty-two YAs and adults came together in this effort. Just as the *vanaras* (monkey army) formed a chain to build a bridge to Lanka for Sri Rama, our "Sai *vanaras*" formed a human chain to pass sandbags to the designated location, empty them into a mound of sand, and pick up the debris all around.

As the mound grew taller, the difficulty in placing the bags increased too. Sensing tiredness in the volunteers, a few YAs began singing bhajans, pouring their hearts out to Swami. The amount of love generated was so high that the work scheduled to take a day-and-a-half, finished in less than a day. Every volunteer felt touched with Swami's love in his or her own personal way. Each received an invaluable gem for the heart from the infinite Sai treasury.

—Prasanna Kankanala, Region 4 YA Coordinator

“My Little Friend”

Preface to Jermayne’s Story

Teaching alternative students, I often work with those for whom school is difficult, unfulfilling, and tedious. Often, for these students, basic skill levels in early grades were either nonexistent or interrupted. In other cases, the students have endured emotional trauma. I’ve come to terms with the reality that my instruction is compromised by a lack of time and is not as thorough as I would like. Ideally, an educational environment to serve this population would be dedicated to strong academics, high expectations, and essential support to achieve reachable goals. Thus, for the most part in situations such as this, my interaction with students is to provide opportunities for expanding their unlimited potential in the time available, in a spirit of love in action.

The following account is from one such student who took my Language Arts class for only one semester near the end of her high school coursework. From the start, her purity, innocence, and sincerity reminded me of the attributes of the *gopis* (cowherd maidens) who were immersed in the love of Krishna, so it was not surprising when she revealed to me her vague memory of having seen Baba from somewhere before! Keep in mind that prior to the events she relates in her story, she had not heard or read a thing about Baba. What she learned of him was through direct experience.

Of course, Baba wants youth to hone their academic discipline while firmly adhering to the love of God as the substratum of their studies. His modern-day *gopis* are to incorporate studiousness with devotion. However, with students such as Jermayne, academics hold little appeal. As an educator and Baba devotee, I’ve encountered students whose simplicity has engendered my great respect. I find their lack of materialistic focus and their unsophisticated, uncomplicated humility refreshing. Here, then, in its straight-forwardness, is Jermayne’s story.

—Barbara Rousseau
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Jermayne’s Story: “My Little Friend”

I am a Navajo New Mexico young adult. My story is somewhat unusual because I have been clairvoyant all my life. My mom was killed in a car accident when I was two going on three years old, just five days before my birthday, so my aunt and uncle have raised me all these years. They have been good to me. I know a lot about horses and about living on a farm.

School never really held much of an interest for me. I really thought it was boring and I didn’t study much. One day, though, things changed for me when I was seeing some of my usual “invisible” people. I was upset and more worried than usual, thinking that I was crazy—schizophrenic. Finally, I went to my high school counselor, who worked with me for a while. Eventually

she told me to talk with our English teacher, Ms. Rousseau, because she might know how to help me.

At first I felt a little shy, but when I went in during lunch hour, Ms. Rousseau was alone at her desk working. I told her the counselor had sent me to talk with her about the people I was hearing and seeing, and about my worries that I might be crazy. She was very understanding and told me I wasn't crazy, just clairvoyant. I told her I was scared and I cried a little. She just looked at me for a while and then asked me if I would like a picture of a very special "little friend" to keep by my bed whenever I felt afraid. She said, "Just look at his picture and ask him for help." Then she gave me some "holy ashes" for healing my fear and showed me how to put some on my forehead, throat, and in my mouth.

When I looked at his picture, I thought maybe I'd seen him somewhere before. He just seemed very familiar. I thought to myself, "Maybe I saw him in a movie while I was staying in a motel in Albuquerque." I told this to Ms. Rousseau. She asked which video I had seen, but I couldn't remember. It seemed as though it was so long ago, but at the same time it felt like it was just a few days ago.

My aunt and uncle were having some marital problems, which finally resulted in a divorce. My aunt moved out, and since I was just finishing my senior year in high school, I stayed with my uncle, who was taking care of me.

Then one night something unusual happened. About 3:00 in the morning, my "little friend" from the picture came to see me. I couldn't remember his name. He was lecturing me! He told me I needed to study more, and that I needed more discipline. He was acting just like a dad. I couldn't figure out why he was doing this; I just sat up in bed listening to him as he walked around my room. I don't remember how he left, because I fell asleep.

The next morning I went to school early to talk to Ms. Rousseau. I went to her classroom and said, "Ms. Rousseau! Ms. Rousseau! That little friend came to see me last night!" She looked confused at first and asked, "What little friend?" I said, "I don't remember his name. The little friend in the picture you gave me." Her eyes got big, and she said, "Baba?" I said, "I guess that's his name." I told her that he was lecturing me about being a better student and studying harder.

She started laughing and laughing and said she was amazed at how fast Baba came to me. I told her that he still seemed so familiar to me, but I couldn't figure out why.

The next night, before I went to sleep, I looked at his picture and said, "You're not real!" But then, my little friend, Baba, came back at 3:00 a.m. and said, "I AM real! I AM real!" Then he began lecturing me again about improving my study habits and about how important it is to be more disciplined. I just listened to him as he walked around and around my room. I fell asleep again listening to him.

So the next day, I went back to Ms. Rousseau to tell her that he had come back again and told me, “I AM real! I AM real!” She was just laughing and laughing and shaking her head in amazement. She gave me some CDs of people talking about my little friend and a website where I could go on the Internet to find out more about him. She didn’t give me a book, maybe because she thought I’d be more likely to go on the Internet.

Later that day at school, I fell asleep in history class because I was so tired from my little friend, Baba, waking me up every night. But a wonderful thing happened. I had a dream, but it was more real than a dream. I was with Baba in another time in a forest. We were running through the forest having a lot of fun; he was like my best friend then, too. He was really cute. I knew right away it was him!

I remembered being with him a long, long time ago. When school ended, I went to Ms. Rousseau’s classroom and told her my “vision.” Her eyes got watery and she said, “Oh, you were with Krishna, five thousand years ago! You are together again in this life! How wonderful! You are very, very blessed, Jermayne!”

When I went home, I was on the Internet reading about Baba and listening to the CDs. That night, Baba came back again, walking around and around my room, telling me how important it is to study while I’m young, so I can have a good life and help people.

That morning when I went downstairs for breakfast, my uncle was having coffee

and looked really mad. I asked him what was wrong. He asked me what I was doing up every night walking around. I guess it was waking him up, too.

I told him it wasn’t me; it was my “little friend,” Baba, who comes to teach me to study more. I showed my uncle the picture, and he got really, really mad. He wanted to know how this man had gotten into my room. I tried to explain that it wasn’t like that; he’s a holy person who heals and helps people, and he’s magic. He can go to anybody he wants to, even though he’s in India.

My uncle lost his temper and started screaming at me. He forbade me ever to talk, see, or have anything to do with “that guy.” He pulled the Internet cord out of the wall and my computer and then threw my CDs and pictures of Baba in the trash.

I went to school early to see Ms. Rousseau and tell her what happened. I had been crying really hard, and my face and eyes were swollen up. I sat by the window in her class and just looked out the window. I could tell Ms. Rousseau was upset, too. She said she would talk to Baba [by praying inside], to see if he could do something. I was upset all day and cried a lot. I didn’t know what would happen. I didn’t want to lose Baba as my friend. My uncle just didn’t understand.

That night Baba didn’t come. I woke up the next morning and was very depressed. I thought my uncle had ruined everything and that I’d never see my little friend again. Would he ever come back? I didn’t know. I realized he had become very important to me.

I went down to breakfast, and my uncle was sitting with his coffee, looking down. He told me he wanted to talk to me. I didn't want to get screamed at any more, but I asked, "About what?"

He looked a little strange and said he owed me an apology. I was surprised! Then he said, "Your friend, that guy with the big hair, came to see me last night. He said to me, 'Don't you ever scream at her like that. She's a good girl. You made her cry with your screaming. Don't ever make her cry!' I agreed I wouldn't do that again. So, I'm telling you I'm sorry, Jermayne. He is real." Then, he gave me back my CDs and plugged my computer back into the Internet.

A few weeks later, there was a bad snowstorm. My aunt came to pick me up for the weekend to go to Farmington, New Mexico. We were driving from the west into town and had to go down a very steep part of the highway. The highway crews couldn't keep up with the icy roads, and it was extremely dangerous. As we came over the hill, we could see a semi-truck jack-knifed at the bottom of the hill. My aunt braked gently, but the brakes locked, and we began to slide sideways down the hill. We were going faster and faster. I looked behind us, and another vehicle also lost control and was coming fast behind us. I knew we were going to be sandwiched between the two vehicles!

The next thing I knew, I was in the emergency room of the hospital with bright lights all around and a nice doctor looking down at me. He said it was a very, very bad accident, and the crew had to pry my aunt

and me out of the wreckage, because the car was totaled. He said we were both okay and that he couldn't believe that neither one of us had any broken bones, internal injuries, cuts, or anything! He also said that the EMTs were looking through my address book in my purse, trying to find the "Bobby" who I was calling for, over and over. They couldn't find any "Bobby." I must have been calling "Baba" without knowing it. I know Baba saved my aunt and me from death.

Life has gotten better and better for me since my "little friend," Baba, came into my life. I'm now engaged to be married in the spring and am working toward a degree in criminal justice. Studying is still hard for me, but I know that if I need help, I can just call for Baba.

My "little friend" is still in my life. I am very fortunate that I had a chance to get to know him. At first, I was a bit hesitant, but after a few visits from Baba, I felt like we go "way back." He still warns me when I'm driving and has saved me from bad accidents.

From my past experiences, to this time now, the only advice I can give to the reader is this: take time to get to know him. He'll really help you, and he's always there. I also text message Ms. Rousseau almost every single morning. She and I are usually awake at the same time ... early!

—**Jermayne Lemone**
Farmington, New Mexico

Group 3: The Joy of Serving

Volunteering at Mother Theresa's Soup Kitchen

At our SSE class of the Sathya Sai Centers of the greater St. Louis area, one topic was "service." Our teacher decided that Group 3 students needed some hands-on experience with service, so we volunteered at Mother Theresa's Soup Kitchen, for five Sundays, from January to March 2008. This is in the poor section of our town, where some of the homeless and the less fortunate folks live, and the Sisters serve them a hot brunch with a lot of TLC (tender love and care).

At the Soup Kitchen, all of us were assigned a job. Some of us helped peel, wash, and cut vegetables, and cook the food, and all of us helped serve the food and then clean up. There were approximately fifteen volunteers, including two adult Sai devotees and eight SSE Group 3 students, who served about a hundred recipients. There wasn't time for us to think about anything other than the present moment.

As people walked in, a lady was narrating a beautiful story about Jesus and his life, followed by prayers, and then brunch was served. We served hot chocolate to all our guests. It felt really good to be there among these folks. It dawned on us that we could have been in their position by a simple twist of fate. Each Sunday, as we went home after the project, chanting the Gayatri, it made us realize how lucky we were to have such a blessed life. We truly appreciated this experience and would love to go back again.

This trip has had a huge impact on our lives. It has made us more appreciative and aware of God's gifts, especially the gift of a loving family, and of all the other comforts that we often take for granted. When we see how a simple act of service can brighten up someone's day, we feel humble and grateful.

Baba says: Engage yourselves in service activity. Consider social service as service to God. This is the best way to earn God's Love. Love all and serve all. Your entire life will be sanctified thereby.

—Group 3 Sathya Sai Education Students
St. Louis, Missouri

My Experience at a Medical Camp

An Opportunity to Lend a Helping Hand

"No money! No insurance! No doctor! Absolutely nothing! These are the people we are going to help." That's exactly what I heard from my mom one Friday night. Saturday was going to be my big day. I was going to spend the whole day helping at a medical camp.

Swami says that service to the community is the highest service. It gives a feeling of contentment and happiness. I had been to the medical camp before, but this year I had the opportunity to get assigned to a specific task to help others. I was stationed in the vital signs department. Vital signs are measurements of the body's most basic functions. The four main vital signs monitored are body temperature, pulse rate, breathing rate, and blood pressure. My job was to check the height and weight of each patient. Families from all over the city came for a medical checkup. Numerous doctors and volunteers came to serve with humility and purity. Initially, it was a bit difficult for me to juggle through many patients at the same time. I could see the desperate faces of some when they were waiting in long lines for their turn. I was trying my best not to hold them up. After a while my work started to speed up. I was able to see the frowns transform into smiles instantly.

After a break, I also got an opportunity to engage the kids playfully. Many families had their children with them. Now what are children suppose to do when their parents are occupied in their medical checkup? I brought balls, balloons, and snacks to entertain them. Every time I hugged them or held their hand I could feel the warmth of Swami and feel his presence all around me. I was happy to provide joy and pleasure to all. I also came to realize that I was fortunate to have all the necessities in life.

The patients stepped out with a feeling of security and wellness. Some were happy to know that they were healthy, while others still had an opportunity to follow up with their medical conditions. Families departed with love from Swami through me. In the end I realized that I am not doing service to others but I am doing service to myself. This medical camp helped me to become aware of God within all.

Swami says: *Move among your brothers and sisters looking for opportunities to be of help, with the name of God on your tongue and the form of God before the mind's eye.*

—Sakshi Walia

SSE Group 2, SSBC of Lakewood, California

“Bangaroo” Buffalo

Many years ago, Baba invited a few lucky followers to go with him on a trip. They went to a place called Horsely Hills. Every day, Baba led everyone out to a beautiful spot. It was a peaceful place where they could talk about God. They set up this “camp” high up above a small village. The road was very steep. They could get there only by foot or by jeep.

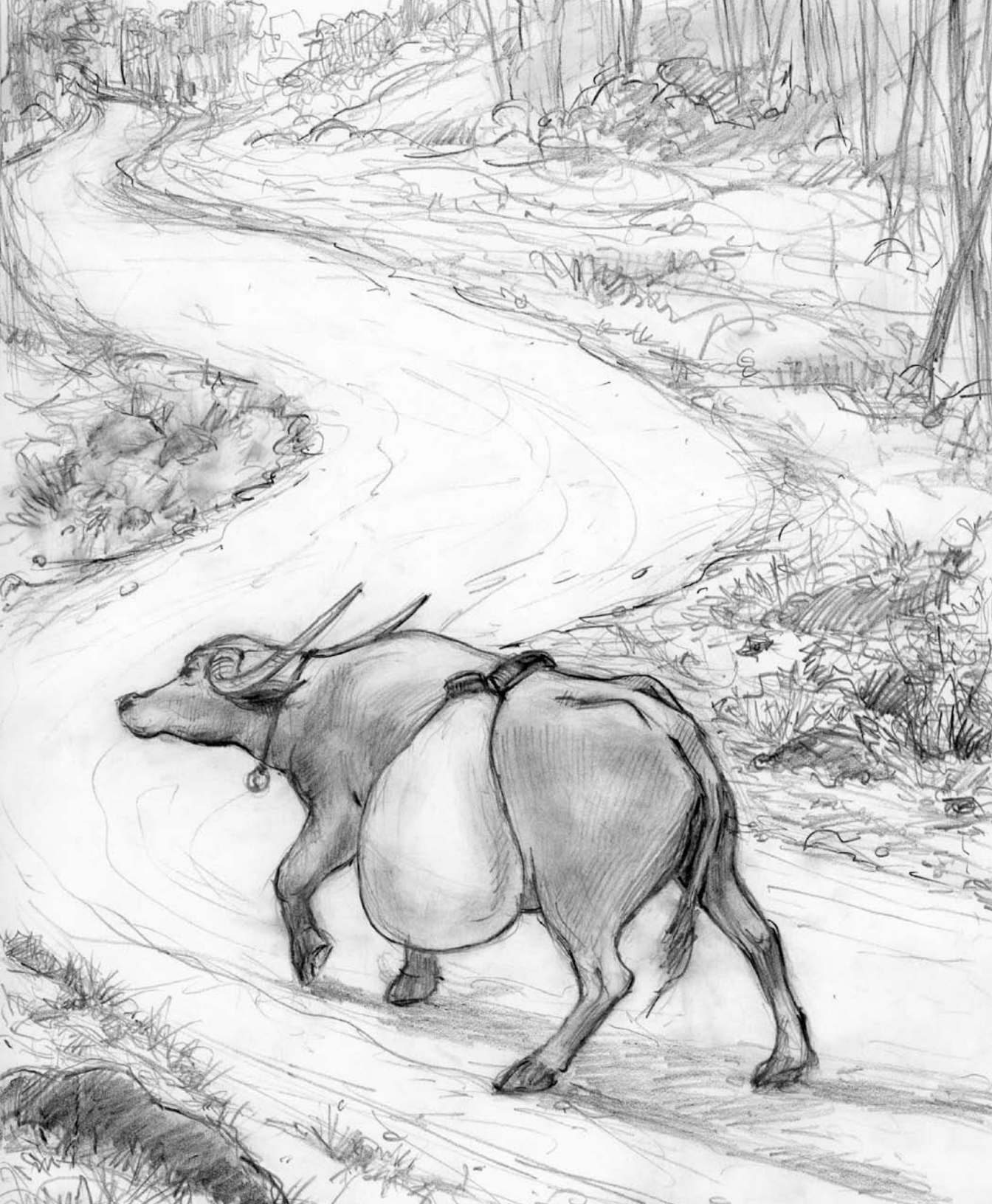
The lovely days were enjoyed by all. Everyone felt so blessed to share them with Baba.

But how did they get food and water? The villagers below kindly carried up food for the happy group. One of the villagers had a water buffalo. The villagers poured water into skin bags. Then they placed the heavy bags across the buffalo’s back. Many times a day, the sturdy buffalo climbed up and down the hill to deliver water to Baba and his group.

On the last day, the group got ready to leave. They could have taken a jeep down the hill. But Baba had a different idea. “Why don’t we all walk down together?” he asked. Then he suggested, “Let’s see who can get down the fastest!”

Everyone was excited about a chance to have a race with Baba! They got ready to start down the steep hill. Suddenly Baba said, “Wait! I’ll be back in a minute.”

He disappeared into the garden. Everyone wondered why Baba was holding up the race. What was he doing? Some devotees followed him quietly.





They found Baba talking to the buffalo. He patted it gently, saying, “You have done me a good service, Bangaroo!” *Bangaroo* is a very sweet nickname. It means “golden one.”

All eyes filled with tears at seeing Baba shower such love and affection on the hard-working buffalo. Those watching thought, “What grace the buffalo is getting from Baba! What gratitude Baba shows, for the simple service done by the water buffalo.”

Like Baba, let us show our loving thanks to all who serve us, even in the smallest way.

—Adapted from N. Kasturi, *Sathya Sai Baba [Sathyam Shivam Sundaram]*, Part 3, 1972, pp. 279-280.

—Illustrations by Ashwini Jambotkar

Sai Spiritual Education Lesson Plan

“Bangaroo” Buffalo (Group 1)

VALUE: Right Action • **SUBVALUE:** Hard Work

QUOTE: *The Lord will reward, by his grace, the work that is done sincerely and gladly.* —Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 3:38, Dec.6, 1963)

PRAYER/AFFIRMATION/SILENT SITTING: (Sit silently for 1-2 minutes)

O Lord, take my hands and let them work always for Thee;

O Lord, let me be an instrument to work for Thee.

PRE-STORY DISCUSSION: What does it mean when Baba calls someone *Bangaroo*? (*It means he feels very happy. He wants the person to feel loved.*) If Baba pats someone or taps them on the head, what does it mean? (*The divine touch is a blessing.*)

STORY: “Bangaroo Buffalo” (See pages 36-38.)

DISCUSSION: (1) What work did the water buffalo do that made Baba so happy? (*carried a lot of water up a steep hill*) (2) How did Baba show his gratitude? (*blessed the buffalo by patting him and calling him “bangaroo”*) (3) What work can you do that will make everyone around you (and Baba) happy? (*Examples: pick up toys, make bed, set table, take out trash, rake leaves, wash dishes, sweep floor*)

ACTIVITY/SONG: Teach the German folk tune, “When We’re Helping, We’re Happy” (see p. 40). In the “Tra-la-la” sections, children can pantomime their answers to question 3 above, pantomiming an action of helping mother, father, or others—pick up toys, make bed, etc.).

EXTENDING ACTIVITIES: Teach the song “Oh, I Know the Lord” (see p. 40) and practice it with children. Then, stand in a circle and select a child to be “Bangaroo Buffalo.” Bangaroo Buffalo stands in the middle of the circle. Have the children move to the left while singing the song; each child takes a turn to bless the buffalo by *gently* tapping the top of his or her head. Repeat, letting others stand in the center as “Bangaroo Buffalo.”

LIFE APPLICATION: Have children give examples of work that they did (or will do) to please Baba this week. During the week, have children keep track of work they do that would make their parents and Baba happy.

Note: See page 40 for the words to the songs and online music references.

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

When We're Helping, We're Happy

(German Folk Tune; words by Wallace F. Bennett, 1898–1993)

(Happily)

When we're helping, we're happy, and we sing as we go.

And we like to help Mother,* for we all love her* so.

Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la, Tra-la-la-la-la-la,

Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la, Tra-la-la-la-la-la.

(*Alternate words: Father/him; Baba/him; others/them; [name]/him/her; etc.)

(Pantomime a “helping action” during *Tra-la-la* parts.)

To listen to the tune online, go to: www.lds.org/cm/display/0,17631,4766-1,00.html

Oh, I Know the Lord

(African American Spiritual)

(Lively) REFRAIN:

Leader: Oh, I know the Lord, I know the Lord, I know the Lord laid his hands on me.

Group: Oh, I know the Lord, I know the Lord, I know the Lord laid his hands on me.

1. *Leader:* Oh, wasn't that a happy day . . .

Group: I know the Lord laid his hands on me.

Leader: When Baba came to teach and stay.

Group: I know the Lord laid his hands on me. (REFRAIN)

2. *Leader:* He teaches how to work and play . . .

Group: I know the Lord laid his hands on me.

Leader: Baba shows his love and gives his grace.

Group: I know the Lord laid his hands on me. (REFRAIN)

To listen to the tune online, go to: www.hymnsite.com/fws/hymn.cgi?2139

It requires all the strength one can collect to carry a load uphill. The gear, the accelerator—both must cooperate to haul a car up a steep grade. The guru who taught you cannot do anything to haul it; he can only guide. Controlling the senses, changing the mode of life, the habits of thought, has to be done by you. The senses say, “Why struggle? Eat, drink, and be merry while you can.” But the guru says, “Death lands on you without notice; overcome its fear now, before it calls.” Now is the true friend; yesterday has deceived you and gone; tomorrow is a doubtful visitor. Today is the fastest friend; hold fast to it.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (*Sathya Sai Speaks* 3:5, Feb. 6, 1963)

A black and white photograph of a narrow European street. On the left, a tall building with classical architectural details like columns and arched windows rises. On the right, another building with a balcony and plants is visible. In the foreground, a canal reflects the buildings and the sky. The overall scene is peaceful and historic.

BENEVOLENCE OF OUR BELOVED SWAMI!

Watching Over Us, Every Step of the Way

My husband and I recently took a trip to Europe as part of our anniversary celebrations. The most remarkable aspect of this vacation arose from the unexpected blessings that followed us all along our journey. We were at first only pleasantly surprised by the positive turns of events we encountered, but eventually we began to see that an invisible hand was helping and watching over us, every step of the way.

Our journey began at the Los Angeles International Airport terminal. Our airline had given us two aisle seats during our initial reservation. At the check-in counter, the airline representative, upon her own initiative, changed our seats to the center bank of the 747 aircraft, which has five seats in a row. She gave us two aisle seats at the opposite ends of a row and told us that we would have three empty seats between us. We were pleasantly surprised and grateful to accept this change, which gave us extra space. The nonstop flight was eleven hours from L.A. to Frankfurt, and we did not notice anyone else on board with an extra three seats to stretch out across for more comfortable sleeping.

We traveled to Milan, Italy, and on our anniversary day decided to go to Lake Como. We took a boat to one of the picturesque islands on this lake. There we happened to walk into a hotel, totally by chance, just to use the facilities. While we were talking to the registration clerk, he mentioned that he could give us a room for an overnight stay at a discounted price, with a gorgeous lake view. We decided on the spur of the moment to take the room, despite having no previous plans to stay on the island for the night. The same young man made sure we had all the comforts possible, including extra pillows and a warm glass of milk with cookies, at night. The next morning at breakfast—which was included—we learned that his mother has been a devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba for seventeen years. Needless to say, we wondered about this coincidence.

From Milan, we proceeded to Venice on the next leg of our journey. We boarded a train in Milan and were grateful that our hotel had provided us with a porter to take care of our bags and assist us in getting on the train. At Venice, we had to take a boat-taxi to our hotel. While waiting at the dock for the designated boat, we were quite concerned about our ability to move our luggage into the boat, as the boats were crowded with passengers. We happened to converse with a couple who were waiting with us in line. They decided to get aboard our boat and help us carry our bags. They did not mind this extra detour from their own plans. We did not know what to say at this generous offer but gratefully accepted it.

After the four of us boarded the boat, with the luggage, we sat chatting happily and getting acquainted. Then the couple shared with us that they have been Sai devotees for thirty years. We were speechless, for we could not believe this added coincidence. All four of us became aware of a very strong fragrance of vibhuti in the air, as the boat moved along. It was as if our Baba were standing right next to us!

This dear couple also insisted on getting off the boat with us and helping us take our bags to the hotel. We invited them to join us for a cup of tea at the hotel after all this exertion. They accepted and stayed for refreshments with us. We talked about the fact that our chance meeting in this foreign land seemed like no coincidence at all, but rather like it was meant to be!

To add to our amazement, we were in for another pleasant surprise. Our hotel informed us that our room reservation had been upgraded—we had not requested this—to a suite with executive dining privileges, which meant we had access to all meals free of charge, throughout our stay. Once again, we were speechless. We gratefully accepted the gift and invited our guests to join us to partake of the delicious buffet. All of us were grateful for the rest and refreshments.

During our journey back to Los Angeles from Frankfurt, we ran into some confusion at the gate. Many passengers had complaints, and there was a long line. We once again were assigned two aisle seats at opposite ends of the center section. At the counter we were told that the plane was full and that they could not make any changes for us, so we fully expected to have to sit separately. We boarded the 747 with the crowd of passengers. To our great amazement, we found three empty seats between us this time, too. We smiled and once again were overcome with gratitude for His hand watching over us.

Words can not describe our feelings as these and many similar events unfolded before us, one after another. This travelogue, in our mind, is a testimony to our Swami's love and benevolence. We can only bow to him in utmost humility!

—A Sai devotee from Southern California

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SELECTED BOOKS and RECENT ARRIVALS

Dasara Discourses 2004 This book compiles the discourses Swami gave during the Dasara festival of 2004. Topics include: Having Faith in God, The Only True Friend, Obeying the Divine Wholeheartedly, Cultivating Good Habits, Upholding the Dignity and Honor of India, and Who Are You? BA-130 \$3.00

Dasara Discourses 2005 This compilation of discourses from the Dasara festival of 2005 includes the topics: God is the Indweller, With Courage and Purity One Can Realize Divinity, Purity of the Heart is True Sadhana, Education without Educare is Inadequate, and Vision of the Divine. BA-123 \$3.00

For the Seekers of Moksha Written by P.P. Arya, this book is a guide to fundamental truths one must follow to obtain the ultimate goal of liberation or *moksha*. BI-200 \$6.00

Nine Forms of Devotion This book explains the nine forms of devotion or *bhakti*, the simplest and shortest way to experience the Divine. Swami has explained that these nine steps lead one higher and higher on the path to God. BI-153 \$5.00

Sri Sathya Sai Gita: All About Spirituality in Q's and A's Compiled by P.P. Arya, this book, in question and answer format, covers many aspects of spirituality, taking all answers directly from Swami's discourses. BI-162 \$5.00

Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 38 (2005) As the 38th volume of the ongoing *Sathya Sai Speaks* series, this book is a compilation of discourses Swami delivered in 2005. It does not include the Dasara discourses, which have been published separately. BA-038 \$6.00

CDs

A Bridge Across Time, Volumes 1-12 Popular bhajans performed by Sri Sathya Sai students. Twelve separate CDs. Each CD \$6.00

AUM This CD contains *Omkar* repeated nonstop, so that the listener may attune himself/herself with its auspicious, divine vibrations. SCE-169 \$6.00

The Bhagavad Gita, Part 1 This CD consists of the first part of a series of divine discourses on the Bhagavad Gita given by Swami to his students in August and September 1984. The emphasis is on the Path of Devotion. SCE-265...\$12.00

The Bhagavad Gita, Part 2 This CD contains the remainder of the discourses on the Bhagavad Gita given by Swami to his students in August and September 1984, those emphasizing the Paths of Wisdom and Action. SCE-266...\$12.00

VCDs

(VCDs can be played on many DVD players, including those in personal computers.)

Love in Action Commemorating Baba's 80th Birthday, this VCD highlights a wide range of humanitarian projects that have been initiated and inspired by Baba, as well as service activities happening in various parts of Africa. SCE-131 \$9.00

Sathya Sai Baba: The Avatar This VCD is a film by Cosby Powell portraying Sai service projects. SCE-214 \$9.00

Spiritual Blossoms, Volume 1 A collection of rare videos on Bhagavan, filmed during the 1960s and 1970s. A soundtrack of bhajan music is added in the background. SCE-250 .. \$9.00

Spiritual Blossoms, Volume 2 A collection of rare videos on Bhagavan, filmed during the 1990s and 2000s. Bhajans in the background add further fervor to the video. The VCD has three parts, 20 minutes each. SCE-251 \$9.00

The Ten Commandments This video captures a musical drama presented by the Bal Vikas students of Goa and Maharashtra on Aashadi Ekadashi, July 7, 2006. SCE-216 \$9.00

2009 Festival Dates - India

March 27, Friday: Ugadi New Year's Day for the people of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra does double duty as the day celebrating Brahma's creation of the universe, and the day upon which Krishna left the body, signaling the change of yugas or ages.

April 3, Friday: Sri Rama Navami and Vishu This occasion celebrates the birth of Rama, the avatar of the Treta Age, and Vishu, the Keralese New Year's Day.

April 14, Tuesday: Tamil New Year New Year's Day for the people of Tamil Nadu and Kerala states, usually falls on the 14th or 15th of April. Devotees from these states flock to the feet of the Lord by the thousands to begin the New Year in the divine presence.

May 6, Wednesday: Easwaramma Day May 6 each year commemorates the anniversary of the passing of Easwaramma, mother of the physical body of the avatar of the Kali Age.

May 9, Saturday: Buddha Purnima or Vaisakh Purnima, observed by Buddhists worldwide, commemorates Gautama Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and attainment of Nirvana.