

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

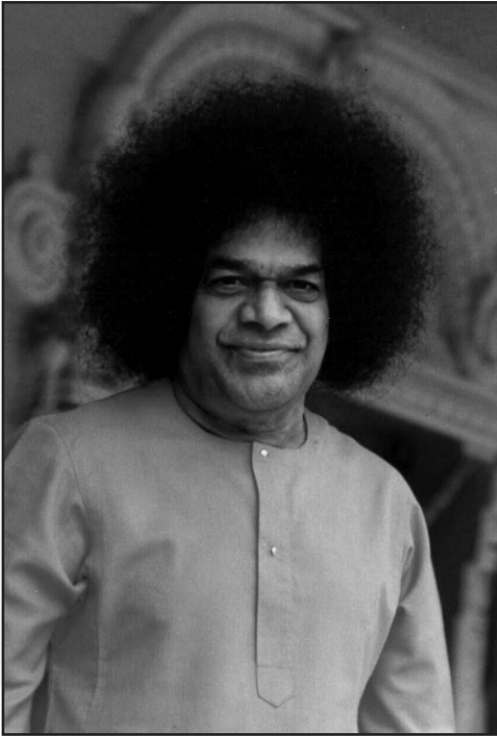
Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Happiness: Be Happy

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SAI'S MESSAGE



Lead a Contented Life

Even if we don't have any property, we can lead a happy life if only the property of love is with us. This love should be supported with self-confidence. God is the only source and sustenance for the entire universe. Everything else is an illusion. Sorrows and difficulties, loss and gain, disease and sickness—treat them all as divine will. Then everything will turn out to be good for you. You are God, verily; just get rid of “I,” the

ego, and “the ‘my’ attachment.” Rise above these.

Let us all move together. Let us all grow together. Let us all stay together and grow in intelligence together. Let us live together in friendship and harmony. (PRAYER)

Lead a contented life; you will derive great happiness.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Nov. 23, 2008

BE HAPPY. MAKE OTHERS HAPPY. GOD WILL BE HAPPY. —BABA

God Is Bliss, Bliss Is God, Live in Bliss!

Prof. Anil Kumar is best known for translating Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's discourses into English. He also gives very popular talks on Sunday mornings in Prasanthi Nilayam and visits many Sai centers for the same purpose. He has been Principal of the Sri Sathya Sai University (SSSU) Brindavan campus and has authored many books on Swami. He is currently a faculty member of the Biosciences Dept. at SSSU, Prasanthi Nilayam, India. (From the author's website, www.saiwisdom.com)

Sri Sathya Sai Baba wants us to be happy. One time, at the end of a public discourse, he said, "Happy, happy, happy." He repeated it thrice. He wants everybody to be happy.

Then one day a few years ago, Bhagavan blasted the author, in particular, for some mistake in running the college at Bangalore. Something had gone wrong, and he showed the author his other face, which is so hot and serious—worse than the hottest summer. Scorching, burning!

The very same evening, Bhagavan asked the author to get up and translate. The author felt reluctant to do so, because his mood was totally upset. Even during darshan time, he had on a very long face because he felt so bad. But Bhagavan asked the author to get up and began his divine discourse.

What did he say? "God is bliss. Bliss is God. Live in bliss." Oh-ho! (laughter) "God will not look at the faces of people who are serious, crying, with long faces. God wants everybody to be cheerful!" God is bliss. Bliss is God.

What is bliss? How far are we from bliss? Why are we not blissful? Let us consider if we are really enjoying a state

of bliss. Unless we know what bliss is, we cannot say whether we are blissful or awful! What is bliss? We have to understand and investigate.

We are happy, no doubt. Occasionally we are unhappy. But we remember the unhappy moments and forget the happy ones. "How are you?" We immediately say, "Oh, so-so." "Pulling on." "Carrying on." These are really nasty statements that we should not say at any time, or any age.

"How are you?" Being Sai devotees, we should say, "Very fine! Fine, wonderful!" Yes, why not? In life, as Bhagavan says, moments of joy, of happiness, are many. But troubling moments are only a few seconds, or a few days of sickness. For the majority of days, for the most part, we are happy.

Bhagavan gave an example. One day a wife was serving food to her husband—rice and other things. The husband suddenly started shouting at his wife, "What! Don't you know how to cook? I found a small stone in the rice." She said, "You have been eating rice all these years, Every time, it has been fine. Only now, because of a small stone or pebble, you are making a big fuss."

Be Grateful, Be Happy

We feel so upset because one thing happens, while forgetting 99 other blessings that are blissful. This is testing providence. Think of how many days are happy. In this long life, most of us have only a few days of sickness and many years of good health.

So, the way to be happy is to count God's blessings and think of them always: "Swami, you have helped me in such and such a way! You have blessed my family in this or that way. We are thankful to you." The spirit of thankfulness, of gratitude, will keep us always happy. We are unhappy because we are ungrateful. Let us, therefore, learn to be thankful to God all the time.

A boy started crying a few days back. Swami came to him and asked, "Why do you cry?"

The boy replied, "Swami! You are not talking to me, so I am crying."

Swami responded, "How about those thousands of people? They are not crying. So go ahead; continue to cry—it makes you happy."

But if we are upset because Swami does not talk to us, doesn't look at us, and we start crying, Swami says it means we don't have proper understanding of God.

Happiness Is Choicelessness

When certain things happen against our preference, wish, or choice, we feel unhappy. Our happiness seems cut off.

So, to be happy is to be choice-less. If you really want to be happy, be choice-less. Do not be preferential.

A marriage took place in Bangalore, involving a prominent family, and the author received an invitation to attend. Baba was to go there too and bless the couple. The author felt sure that he would be taken there with Swami. The marriage was to take place at 9:30 a.m. So the author got dressed up in a new suit. Many dignitaries would be attending—ministers and all, and he felt he shouldn't be dressed in an ordinary way.

The author got all ready, but Swami's car sped right past the crowd, including the author, without stopping. Then the author understood: he was not supposed to go. He changed into his normal clothes, attended to his duties at the college, and came for evening darshan. Swami asked, "Why did you not attend the marriage this morning?"

What to say? Immediately the author said, "I had college classes, Swami, so I couldn't."

He said, "Ah! What a bluff-master you are! You got ready with a new suit, eh? And you expected that I would take you. And now you say you had college, therefore you have not attended!"

This exchange with Swami made the author so happy that he forgot the moments of unhappiness for not having attended the marriage. He had been unhappy because he could not attend along with Swami. But when Swami spoke to him

"...When we have a choice, a preference, and it does not happen, we become unhappy. Therefore, to be happy, to be blissful, let us be choiceless, non-preferential, so that anything can happen, and we will still be happy."

in this way, he forgot all that.

This is only an instance to show you how, when we have a choice, a preference, and it does not happen, we become unhappy. Therefore, to be happy, to be blissful, let us be choiceless, non-preferential, so that anything can happen, and we will still be happy.

Be Ready to Accept Anything

One day in Puttaparthi, Swami was calling somebody. A student told the author, "Sir! Swami is calling you. Go!" Well, students are sharp enough, quite intelligent. The author doesn't question them. He went straight away.

Swami asked, "Why are you here?"

"Swami, You called me?"

"No, no! I did not call you. Why are you here?"

"Swami! Whomever you call, I feel you are calling me; I always wish and pray that you should call me."

He said, "*Oh-ho!*"

Then the author said, "Somehow I have come all this way, so let me have



padnamaskar
(blessing
of touching
Swami's feet)
and go."

"Oh! *Pakka*
(perfect) busi-
nessman!"

We should
be able to take
things not as
shocks. Any-

thing we accept as a shock in life will have a negative effect and take away our happiness. A shock is negative, whereas a surprise is positive. Therefore, instead, let us receive things as surprises, not shocks.

One time Swami started talking to people on either side of the author, while conveniently ignoring the author—as if there were only an empty space where he was. The author enjoyed this divine romance for the moment. Then in the evening, Swami said, "What happened to you? I was searching for you. Where were you?"

The author did not affirm that he had been very much present. He said only, "Swami! I am happy you were looking for me. I'm happy that you wanted me! Now I am available."

So this is the attitude we should have—ready to accept anything that happens to us—anything—not necessarily as per our wish. Particularly, Sai seems to delight more by bringing surprises, if not by giving shocks! He will ask for you just at the time when you go for your breakfast, when you are unavailable. Then, when you are available right in front of him, he doesn't notice you!

Blessed Either Way

One day when the boys were feeling very bad, the author told them, “Don't worry. I'll give you a formula by which you can still be happy. When Swami does not pass by that side, we might feel that he is avoiding us, right? We think, ‘Swami usually comes this way, but today he has not come this way. So, he's avoiding me.’ We feel bad. But we don't need to feel bad. Why? Because to avoid you, he must first see you. Without seeing you, how can he avoid you?

“So, think, ‘Oh Lord! You have seen me first, and so you have avoided me. I am blessed. Otherwise, you would have come this way.’” The author used to speak to the boys this way.

Second, suppose Bhagavan looks at you and calls you for an interview. Then you are blessed because he looked at you and chose you. In both cases, he had to see you. In both cases, it works to your advantage.

This sort of positive attitude will make us happy and blissful. Swami wants us to

be happy always. This is spirituality. The right attitude toward life is spirituality. Otherwise, it is an expectation, expecting something in return, like a business transaction. But life is not so. Life is religion. Life is spiritual.

Bliss Is Permanent

All the moments of happiness that come and go, of joy that appear and vanish, are trivial, worldly, physical, dual, and transitory. In the morning, I am happy; by nightfall, I am unhappy. So, happiness is an interval between two states of unhappiness, and unhappiness is but an interval between two states of happiness. As Swami says, “Pleasure is an interval between two pains.” This is not bliss. That which comes and goes is not bliss.

Worldly happiness comes and goes. Happiness is worldly; bliss is spiritual. Happiness is human, but bliss is divine. Happiness is gained by a certain effort: you work hard, study well, get through the examination, and pass with high grades—you are happy. By effort you can be happy. But bliss is not obtained by any effort. Bliss is your natural state. Bliss is our right, our nature—unlike happiness, which comes and goes.

Happiness relates to one's stature, dignity, qualification, property, wealth, and so on. But bliss has nothing to do with these things. Bliss is original. We were born in bliss, we grow in bliss, and we merge in bliss. That is the doctrine of the

eternal path, *Sanathana Dharma*, whereas happiness may be only worldly.

When I get a cup of hot, steaming coffee first thing in the morning, I feel happy. When I don't have a cup of coffee, I am unhappy. But bliss is not like that; whether you have coffee or not, bliss is always in you, with you, and around you, because you *are* bliss. Bliss is your Self. Bliss is spontaneous. Bliss is natural.

The Five Senses Cannot Confer Bliss

Bliss cannot be obtained through your senses, nor will mind take you to the state of bliss. Bliss is beyond our comprehension, beyond the level of thought, taste, touch, sight, and hearing.

The five senses do not confer bliss. If I can get bliss by listening, we have 40 broadcast channels—and in some places, 95. Any channel will give me music, but continuous listening will not make me blissful. On hearing it again and again, I get bored. So, the happiness that you get initially through the senses vanishes after some time, by continuing the same thing.

If I watch cinemas or films regularly, I might feel happy. But by watching every day and night, I get disgusted! This kind of happiness exists at one time and later is the source of unhappiness. I like sweets—pie, donuts, and cakes—particularly in the Western canteen, yes! The Italian-made cakes are very nice. Two cakes—gulp! I am so happy. They are so tasty. Then the third cake—“Ah! Enough! I don't want any

more.” Why? All things that are received or accepted through the senses give happiness, but they are also the very sources of unhappiness! Bhagavan says the senses will never take you to the state of bliss. To substantiate Swami's statement, we only have to think of these examples.

Something cannot be the source of bliss at one time and not at another time. No! Bliss is constant. We all know Bhagavan's favorite term, C-I-A, meaning “constant integrated awareness.” Bliss is constant integrated awareness—a constant factor, not something that appears and disappears. Bliss is with us throughout.

Get Out of the Past and Future

Happiness is a hope for most of us. We hope things will turn positive some day. But bliss is a guarantee. We want and expect to be happy. But whether that moment will come or not, we do not know.

Swami said in a poem: “A child wants to be happy as an adult. An adult wants to be happy after getting a degree. After getting a degree, he wants to be happy getting a job and settling in life. So, this kind of happiness is something like a football that we keep kicking far ahead of us.” This happiness remains only a hope, never a reality. But bliss is not like that. It is constant.

Boredom is a common complaint today, an evil of modern society. Why? Because we always want to live in the future. We keep viewing things from the perspective of the past. We do not live

in the present. As we do not live in the present, life looks boring. Boredom is but a psychological feeling, a reaction to a state of mind that peeps into the future or goes back into the past.

On the other hand, if you live in the present, you have no boredom at all. The secret of happiness is to live in the present. Let us live in the present, in the moment.

Suppose I meet a friend. In the past, perhaps we lived together and had many differences of opinion. We fought a lot. Then we meet after a long time. Instead of saying, “Hi! Very nice to meet you after such a long time,” when I remember all the past differences and clashes, I am not happy. I don’t enjoy the present because the past comes into my mind.

Or I may be concerned with the future. I might want him to do me a favor, or I have a fear that he may rob or exploit me. In other words, my mind is suspicious. I don’t say, in a happy voice, “How are you?” No. I speak artificially, in a half-hearted way, “How are you?” So, by keeping the future or past in view, we lose the present. Bliss is life in this moment. If we really want to be blissful, let us live in the moment, in the present.

Bhagavan gave an example. The sky is open space, ether. In it, clouds may appear, then move away, but the sky remains all through. Bliss is like the sky, like space—eternal, full, and permanent—whereas clouds are mere moments of happiness

or unhappiness, seconds of pleasure or pain.

Bliss Is Beyond Name and Form

Bhagavan gave another example the other day. With clay, you can make a pot with a lid. A pot has a form and a name. But when the pot breaks, it returns to being clay. Clay has no specific form. Swami said, “All that has name and form gives you happiness, but bliss is beyond name and form.”

Further he said, “Bliss is nondual.” He gave the example of a cinema screen. “On the screen, you can project many, many films, but the screen remains undisturbed, unruffled, unagitated. It does not respond, whether the film shows a romance or a war, a union or a separation, a dance, a tragedy, or a comedy. The screen is a screen. That’s all. It is unaffected. This screen represents bliss.”

Bliss, like the screen, is permanent—a constant state, unaffected by the fleeting happiness and unhappiness of the world, pleasure or pain, profit or loss, success or failure. This means bliss is nondual. So, God is bliss. Bliss is God.

The Shiva Lingam

Once the author humbly submitted, “Swami! This Shivarathri was fantastic!”

Baba said, “It was nothing special. Why do you say *fantastic*? Did you not attend last year’s Shivarathri?”

“Yes Swami, I attended. But this year, ah!”

"...Detachment—doing everything as a matter of duty and responsibility, without attachment—will help us to experience the state of pure consciousness, which is our right, our true nature, and actual bliss."

Swami said, "Why? Perhaps you did not fall asleep this time? This time you stayed awake, so you enjoyed it. Last year you must have slept!"

"No, no, everything was as usual."

But God was still curious. He asked, "Why was it special this year?"

"Swami! Some people asked me to ask you to put your chair up a little higher. It was so low that not all could see."

"Then?" he asked.

"Some people also wanted me to pray to you to install a few TV sets on all sides, so that everybody could watch, because at the time the lingam is produced, some people may get up, and then others cannot see. But when TV sets are put up, all can see and enjoy."

"Hmm," he said. "What did you say? What did you tell them?"

"I know, Swami, that I should not ask you such things. They wanted me to, but I did not say anything, because I know my boundaries. I also told them that I am in this position because I don't



say such things. The moment I do, my seat will be elsewhere, not here."

Then he said, "Also tell them that you will be respectful as long as you don't open your mouth! Go and tell them! If

you refrain from saying these things, you'll be more respectful."

"Oh, Swami!"

Then he asked, "Why were you happy this year?" Divine curiosity—persistence, insistence to know.

The author replied, "Swami! This year was thrilling because you got up! There was no need to raise the chair. There was no need to install TV sets. Without my telling you, without anybody telling you, you stood up, and the Shiva lingam came out.

"Oh! Good, good! I know, I know. You don't need to tell me." Further, he said, "You know what happened? The Shiva lingam came out by force—not slowly! You must have seen it. All of you must have watched. It came out forcefully, like a jet, just like that!"

Swami explained that everyone's body contains all the metals, including gold, which is why in Ayurveda (Indian traditional medicine), gold is regarded as a curative medicine. So, all metals are present in our body in liquid form.

Bhagavan said, "When the liquid gets transformed into a solid, heat is generated. Liquid becomes solid at that time. Heat is generated, and therefore the lingam came out forcefully. Not only that, I was sweating. You must have seen it. ... I asked two or three lecturers to fan me. You must have noticed. I was sweating because heat is generated when the liquid gets transformed into a solid. So it came out forcefully. Because of the heat, I was sweating—so, many boys had to fan at that moment."

Then he said, "In your case, solid is transformed into liquid. But in my case, liquid is transformed into solid. That is the difference. Gold is in you. The solid is transformed into liquid. It remains like that. But in Swami's case, liquid is transformed into solid. Therefore it came out in the form of the Shiva lingam."

Then Swami said, "This demonstration shows that the Shiva lingam is in every one of us." He brought it out as a symbol, a matter of symbolic effect, with a spiritual meaning behind it, so that we might enjoy the state of bliss. Bliss is not an ideal, or a notion, or a hypothesis. Bliss is not theoretical. Bliss is the actual state of existence. God is bliss. Bliss is God.

Three States of Consciousness

Bliss is a witness, not a participant, whereas happiness is obtained by being a participant. As a participant, you can be happy or unhappy, but bliss has nothing to do with your participation. It *is*, irrespective of participation, because bliss is the witness, the state of witnessing. Bliss is consciousness.

Consciousness exists in all three states, in all levels. There cannot be anything without consciousness. One state is physical or waking consciousness. This alert or wakeful state involves the body, the mind, and consciousness—or Atma. All three work together.

The second is dreaming consciousness, where two of these three are functional. In this state, the mind creates everything. The body is not involved. There is only *M* (mind) and *A* (*Atma* or consciousness). That's all, as mind creates the dreams.

The third state, sleeping consciousness, is without any dreams. Only Atma remains. Consciousness is present as a witness. But even sleeping consciousness is not permanent. No one can describe it. Deep sleeping consciousness is neither sweet nor hot, tall nor short, fair nor unfair, or dark. Deep sleep is only experience.

But the deep sleep experience is not permanent; it also vanishes. The moment you wake up, you will say, "I had a nice sleep last night. Now I'll have my real life."

Pure Consciousness

Baba said there is a fourth state still—pure consciousness. Pure gold is 24-carat, unalloyed, unpolluted, crystal-clear. So, what is pure consciousness? It is beyond the three levels.

“Swami! If it is beyond these three, how am I to recognize it? Waking I know. Dreams I have had. Good, deep sleep I enjoy. But what is that fourth state? I do not know!”

Swami said, “The fourth state—pure consciousness—is in all the other three states but above them.” Oh-ho! In all the three, but above them. Then what am I? How to know that?

Swami gave a simple example. “This microphone helps to amplify my sound. You’re able to listen to me because of it. But the mike is just an instrument, a medium. That’s it. You get a breeze from a fan, and electricity is in the fan, but the fan is not in the electricity. Electricity, current, is in the mike, but the mike is not in the electricity. So, electricity is in the light, the mike, the fan, a TV, a heater, and so on. But all these electronic gadgets are not in the electricity.

“Electricity is like pure consciousness, which is in all three states—just as electricity is in a fan, a water fountain, a refrigerator, a TV. Similarly, pure consciousness is in the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states, but it is beyond all these, just as electricity is beyond specific gadgets. That pure consciousness is bliss.”

Detachment

If this is bliss, then why are we not blissful? Swami says, “You are not blissful because of attachment. Bliss is there, but attachment robs or denies the state of bliss. The more you cultivate detachment toward everything, the more you’ll enjoy the state of bliss or pure consciousness.”

Should we be detached from our family? If a professor is detached from his teaching profession, how can he teach? If a doctor is detached, what will happen to his patients? Is it possible to practice detachment? Is it desirable? Is it necessary? Will detachment not lead to laziness, dullness, inertia?

Bhagavan says, “You can be detached but do every activity as a responsibility, not with attachment. It is your duty. It is your responsibility. Take me as the best example. I do all these things. I talk to you. I give everything, but I am totally detached. It is my duty to help you, to save you, to love you, and to come to your rescue. But I am not attached.”

So, detachment—doing everything as a matter of duty and responsibility, without attachment—will help us to experience the state of pure consciousness, which is our right, our true nature, and actual bliss. Bliss is God. God is bliss. Live in bliss.

—Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju
From *Sai Vedam*, Ch. 3

Bliss Is Your Goal

Suppress Your Sorrow and Manifest Your Inner Joy

Everyone aspires to attain bliss. In fact, attaining bliss is the very purpose of human life. Life has no meaning if one cannot experience bliss. Bliss is your goal.

God is the embodiment of eternal bliss, wisdom absolute, one without a second, beyond the pair of opposites, expansive and pervasive like the sky, the goal indicated by the saying, “Thou Art That”; the eternal, the pure, the unchanging, the witness of all functions of the intellect, beyond all mental conditions and the three *gunas* (characteristics) of *satwa* (purity), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance, dullness).

There is a saying in Telugu: “One who is free from *chinthā* (worry) will be able to sleep peacefully even in a *santhā* (market place).” All should make efforts to overcome worries and enjoy everlasting happiness. . . .

Man makes various efforts to experience happiness. You find very few in this world who do not want to be happy. But one must understand that happiness cannot be acquired from outside. It originates from the heart. The heart is the source of bliss. The happiness we enjoy in the external world is only a reaction, reflection, and resound of the happiness within. Very few understand this truth. The apparent joy that one experiences

today is artificial and temporary. Only the happiness that springs from the heart is permanent.

Happiness Must Manifest from Within

Embodiments of love! You must behave so as not to cause hindrance to anyone. Happiness cannot be purchased in a market, nor can it be acquired by worldly means. It must manifest from within. It is not human nature to hurt others’ feelings for one’s own pleasure. One should respect others’ feelings and act appropriately. One should share his happiness with his fellowmen. . . . One should be prepared to sacrifice his body to have the experience of eternal bliss.

The body is a combination of five elements, and the mind is merely a bundle of thoughts. One should neither be attached to the body nor follow the vagaries of the mind. Drive away the evil qualities of desire, anger, greed, infatuation, pride, and jealousy—and manifest your inner peace and bliss. Instead of developing peace and bliss, man is destroying them. He is allowing unrest even in trivial matters.

Neither *asanthi* (unrest) nor *prasanthi* (supreme peace) are acquired from outside. People say, “I want peace.” Where is peace? Is

it present outside? If peace were to be found outside, people would have bought it by spending any amount of money. But outside, we find only “pieces”!

The real peace is within. Whether you boil it vigorously or dilute it with water, milk remains white. White symbolizes purity. In the constant manner of milk, your heart should always remain pure, bright, and peaceful, in spite of trials and tribulations.

Subdue sorrow; keep the evil qualities of anger, hatred, and jealousy under check; and manifest your innate bliss.

When your desires are not fulfilled, you become angry. Hence, desires are the root cause of anger and must be controlled in the first instance.

Contemplate Only Bliss

Embodiments of love! Everlasting bliss is everyone’s goal. You should derive happiness even from what seem to be troubles. One need not search for happiness elsewhere; happiness is always with you and in you. You are unable to experience happiness, as you have not understood its true meaning. You are under the illusion that happiness results from money, wealth, and material comforts. But once you have tasted true happiness, you will not crave for worldly possessions.

True happiness springs from the depths of one’s heart.

When milk is boiled in a vessel, its level gradually rises, but when you sprinkle a few drops of water over it, the milk level subsides. Because of its association with water, milk loses value. Likewise, man loses value when he associates himself with bad company.

One will always be blissful if one maintains good company. Before striking up a friendship with an individual, one should inquire into his character.

You may or may not be aware that I am always in a state

of bliss. I have no worries or difficulties whatsoever. Some people ask, “Swami, do you have any worries?” I do not know what worry is. I have never experienced worry. I am always blissful.

Always think of bliss; then you will see bliss everywhere. The experience of bliss is sweeter than sugar, tastier than curd, sweeter indeed than honey. People feel sad when they are faced with difficulties and at the bereavement of their near and dear ones. But at no point of time do I feel sorry about such happenings. They come and go like passing clouds. Happiness and sorrow follow one another. When you contemplate only bliss, there will be no room for sorrow.

Embodiments of love! Love is in each one of you, but you are directing it toward



*Always think of bliss; then you
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worldly relationships. You have not tasted true love. Love God wholeheartedly. That is true love. People may come and people may go, but God neither comes nor goes. He is always present. **When you are engulfed in sorrow, think of happiness. You will certainly experience happiness.**

Permanent Bliss Is Our Essential Nature

Bliss is very much immanent in the human being. Wherever we are, whatever position we occupy, our essential nature is bliss. People ask me sometimes, “Swami! Have you ever experienced sorrow?” I am amused at this question. In fact, why should I experience sorrow? Should I feel sorry about the body? It is not necessary. This body is always healthy and active.

The nature of the human mind is fickle. The body is like a water bubble; the mind is like a mad monkey. Don’t follow the mind; don’t rely on the body, since it is like a water bubble. After all, why feel sorry about the body and mind, which are transient? In fact, bliss is our essential nature, which is permanent.

Embodiments of love! Cultivate love, which will help you to experience bliss: **Start the day with love; fill the day with love; end the day with love—that is the way to God.** If you can achieve this, you will not be disturbed by sorrows and difficulties. The heart is the seat of bliss. True bliss flows from a pure and loving heart. Try to experience this bliss. All other forms of happiness are momentary.

Embodiments of love! Children are always happy and cheerful. They do not have any inhibitions. When somebody smiles at them, they smile back innocently. They experience bliss. That bliss is the inherent nature of all human beings.

There is a difference between happiness and bliss. In common parlance, “happiness” is momentary—it comes and goes. But bliss is something that wells up from within—it emerges from the heart as a result of one’s union with God. If one feels separate from God, one cannot experience bliss.

Embodiments of love! Experience bliss in abundance in the days to come. Let me remind you once again that neither age nor position, nor for that matter anything in the physical environment, can bring about such bliss. Only a pure and loving heart is the source of bliss. . . .

God is ever blissful. In fact, God is the embodiment of bliss. This is a white cloth. Only by dipping or painting the cloth with color does it acquire some color. Similarly, your essential nature is bliss. If you are experiencing sorrow, it is because you have immersed yourself in sorrow. Wherever you are, you must always be happy and blissful.

Sometimes people wish me, “Swami! Happy birthday!” Let me ask a question in this regard: is there any real happiness in celebrating a birthday? I am always happy. If that is the case, then what is the point of celebrating one particular day a year as a “happy birthday.” This is only an expression in borrowed words. In fact, bliss is our true nature. We camouflage our true nature with

artificial expressions and feel satisfied as if this were real bliss. This is not the correct approach.

Be Blissful by Keeping Desires at Bay

Embodiments of love! You are full of love. In fact, your hearts are overflowing with love, but you are preventing your love from flowing and expressing itself outwardly. Otherwise, love has no barriers or hurdles at all!

Constantly contemplate on God. Then you will always be happy—physically, mentally, and spiritually. Unfortunately, nowadays you are losing this divine quality of bliss, on account of various desires. If you can keep these desires away from you, you will always be blissful.

This is a white cloth. Whiteness is its nature, but it acquires dirt from constant usage. Similarly, your heart is always pure, bright, and blissful, but it gets polluted because of desires. Therefore, cultivate love and keep your heart always pure. Then you will be blissful every moment of your life.

You have forgotten your innate nature—bliss—and are always immersed in sorrow and unhappiness. When someone inquires, “How are you?” you reply, “So-so.”

This is not correct. We must reply, “I am happy!” It is possible that we may encounter

some ups and downs in life, but they do not affect our essential nature, which is bliss.

Have you observed me carefully—how blissful I am? Not only now, I am always blissful and overflowing with bliss. In fact, you can also experience such bliss in my presence. But if you approach me with an evil mind—evil thoughts and desires—you

cannot experience this bliss. Those are weaknesses that you must try to correct.

Never feel dejected. Suppose you fail in an examination; you should not feel dejected. Reconcile yourself that perhaps you did not

write the examination well and therefore you have failed, but never get depressed and dejected because of it.

Inquire into yourself the reason for your sorrow; you will realize that your own thoughts are responsible for your present feelings. Correct them, and you will be happy again. Sorrows and difficulties are like passing clouds. Never attach importance to them. Always be happy and cheerful. **Peace and happiness are your true qualities. Your true nature is bliss. . .**

Sorrows and Difficulties Are Manmade

God always provides happiness to man. He has no anger or hatred. His nature is love. The question arises then, why are sorrows and difficulties in the world? Strictly



Let your faith in God be firm and unshakable. Only God's love is eternal. If you can secure God's love, all other forms of happiness will come to you automatically.

speaking, happiness will not have any value without sorrow. Man cannot experience happiness without undergoing some difficulty or the other. Both happiness and sorrow are intertwined. One cannot exist without the other.

Pleasure and pain, good and bad co-exist; none can separate them. You cannot find pleasure or pain, good or bad, to the exclusion of the other. Pleasure results when difficulties bear fruit. (TELUGU POEM)

God does not cause pain to any living being in creation. All sorrows and difficulties are manmade only. God is the protector of all living beings. He provides peace and happiness to one and all. *Samasta loka sukhino bhavantu* (may all the worlds be happy). This is the will of God. How then can God cause sorrow to a human being?

Unable to understand God's divine will, you accuse him of causing sorrow. If you could fathom divine will, you would realize that everything is purely for your good. We are all embodiments of bliss. Day in, day out, experience that bliss and share it with others. Then only will it increase.

Embodiments of love! ... Welcome God, who is the embodiment of bliss. ... God is always blissful. You should not pray to God to fulfill your umpteen desires but instead pray, "Oh, God! Share your bliss with me. Make me blissful!"

Never deride God as compassionless. What God does is for our own good. Even

the sorrows and difficulties we experience are for our own good; they are preludes to happiness and bliss. If you cultivate such a positive outlook, you will always be blissful. Share your happiness with all. Instead of this, man today keeps happiness to himself and spreads sorrow to others. This is not what we should do.

Suppress your sorrow and manifest your inner joy. This is the spiritual *sadhana* (discipline) one must undertake. When you encounter any difficulty, sorrow, or restlessness, do not regard them at all. Ignore them. You are forever embodiments of bliss. If you constantly contemplate this reality, nothing will bother you.

Embodiments of love! ... In fact, the very name of a human being is *anandamaya* (full of bliss). *Manavatva* (humanness) is meant for rising to the level of *daivatva* (divinity). ... If you analyze properly, where does any bad lie? It lies only in your mind. Do not entertain thoughts of "bad" or share your bad thoughts with others. Bliss is the real food for a human being; one should always be hungry for bliss. Let your faith in God be firm and unshakable. Only God's love is eternal. If you can secure God's love, all other forms of happiness will come to you automatically.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks (SSS) 38:1, Jan. 14, 2005

"ALL I WANT YOU TO DO FOR YOUR SADHANA IS TO BE HAPPY." —BABA, TO A DEVOTEE

Find Happiness In Your Self

*When, totally free from outer contacts,
A man finds happiness in himself,
He is fully trained in God's discipline
And reaches unending bliss.*

*The experiences we owe to our sense of touch
Are only sources of unpleasantness.
They have a beginning and an end.
A wise man takes no pleasure in them.*

*That man is disciplined and happy
Who can prevail over the turmoil
That springs from desire and anger—
Here on earth—before he leaves his body.*

—Bhagavad Gita, 5.21-23

Share Happiness with Others

Happiness, truth, and sacrifice are the wealth in the treasury of God. You can be happy only when you understand the relationship that should exist between man and man.

If we ask ourselves what is the meaning of happiness, we get the answer that absence of sorrow is happiness. Therefore, we have to think about the process of getting rid of sorrow. Between one star and another, and between one planet and another, light shines in the space. In the same manner, between one period of sorrow and another, happiness should shine, as far as man is concerned.

In all that man does with a view to loving himself, it is not possible for him to ignore loving others. Without cultivating love for others, you can never cultivate love for yourself. Sorrow for yourself is gained by hurting others. In the same manner, victory in every war will result in another war. So also, any happiness that you can give to others will



"Life is not a one-way street. You should conduct yourself in such a way that you give happiness to others and that others give happiness to you."

result in happiness for yourself in the end.

Man must realize that he cannot get anything without sharing it with those around him. So, you must believe that, in due course, the happiness of the people around you will lead to your

own happiness. Death is implied in life, and sorrow is implied in pleasure. So also, night is implied in the day. We regard sorrow and happiness, night and day, as different entities. No, this is not right. Upon proper inquiry, we find that in fact they are the same. Iron, in its native state, is black and hard, but when you heat it, it becomes red and soft. This change comes as a result of a change that we have introduced to the natural state of iron.

In order to realize this truth at all times, we have to participate in good practices, keep good company, and accept good advice from elders. . . .

Life consists of man's attempt to move from a place called "I" to a place called "we."

If each one becomes so selfish that he always desires others to respect him and think that his interests alone matter—while he himself does not respect others or wish for their well-being—we will all be traveling down a one-way street. Life is not a one-way street. You should conduct yourself in such a way that you give happiness to others and that others give happiness to you. ...

Man cannot live in isolation like a drop of oil on the surface of a sheet of water. Man should realize that the individual and the society together make up the world. The happiness of the individual is intimately connected with the happiness of the society. The

prosperity of the society itself is intimately connected with the happiness of the world. If you want to enjoy individual happiness, then you have to accept that the individual, the society, and the world must all be happy. ...

Every person must make an effort to generate self-confidence; then he can enjoy happiness and bliss. He should then be prepared to sacrifice for the good of others. This will lead him to self-realization. All religions, in essence, preach that you should purify your mind and know your own self.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Summer Showers in Brindavan 1973:1, pp. 1-8

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Sai's Happy Vibration

Recently I returned from a short visit to Europe on a Delta flight from Milan to JFK. I was very tired and mildly depressed. I prayed to Baba in my heart, and his answers came in the following form.

At one point, I had to use the bathroom, and when I entered and saw my own face in the mirror, I smiled and started singing a few *bhajans* (devotional songs), feeling happier and happier (no one could hear me because of the droning noise of the plane). I felt directly connected to Baba. Then the idea entered my mind of doing service by cleaning some of the bathrooms (usually the flight attendants do this). So, at different intervals I went around to different bathrooms in the plane and cleaned them while feeling the loving vibration of our beloved Sai flow through me.

Also, while I was in my seat, I noticed a young father watching an in-flight movie; his four-year-old son was looking for some attention. I started to communicate with the son; soon the father and the boy felt like brothers to me. Time passed quickly, and we landed earlier than expected. My heart is full of gratitude to Baba for his divine love and continuing guidance.

—Anonymous

Strive for the Happiness of All

These days, even the educated and highly trained are anxious about the future and full of fear, lest the standard of life to which they are accustomed fall. “By what means can I increase comforts in my life?” is everyone’s concern. No one worries about the happiness that he can contribute, the joy he can give, the duty he can discharge. Everyone calculates the happiness that others might give him, the joy he can extract from society, and the duty that society owes him. Those who concentrate on their responsibilities rather than their wants are very few. “How can I as an individual get the maximum benefit out of society?” is the prevailing urge. People forget that their primary duty is to safeguard the security and prosperity of the society of which they are the limbs.

Only when the individual is prepared to sacrifice selfish desires and toil for society’s welfare will the nation prosper. Then only will the world have peace. That is why the Vedas proclaim that man can have peace only when he renounces selfish desires. The Vedas condemn those who accumulate wealth, ever immersed in activities to add to their physical comfort. The man who gives, receives—even as he gives—more than what he gives. Do not strive for your own happiness but for the happiness of all. Then you can derive greater happiness, with the added joy of having increased others’ happiness.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

SSS 14:21-1, Mar. 29, 1979

Taming the Vagaries of the Mind

Prescriptions for Happiness

*Sadhana can achieve what
appears impossible.*

—TELUGU PROVERB

Through *sadhana* (spiritual discipline), continuous and consistent, man can control the vagaries of the mind, which by their variety and vanity cause disappointment and distress. “Sadhana can achieve what appears impossible,” says a Telugu proverb.

Control Desires by Dedication

What is required is the awareness of the vicious game that the mind plays. It presents before the attention one source after another of temporary pleasure, without allowing any interval for weighing their pros and cons. When hunger for food is appeased, the mind holds before the eye the attraction of the film, reminds the ear of the charm of music, and makes the tongue water for the pleasant taste of something it craves for. Very soon the wish becomes an urge for action; the urge soon gathers strength, and the yearning becomes uncontrollable. The burden of desires gradually becomes too heavy, and man becomes dispirited and sad.

Train the mind to turn toward the intellect—the higher mind—for inspiration and guidance, not toward the senses for adventures and achievements. Doing so will

make the mind an instrument for reducing your vagaries and saving time and energy for more vital matters.

Desires, when fulfilled, breed further desires; when unfulfilled, they lead to further installments of life on earth in order to calm the urge. The only method by which the delusion of desire can be destroyed is to dedicate all activities to God and to engage in all activities in a spirit of worship, leaving the consequences to God and ceasing to attach yourselves to activities and their fruits.

Promote Others' Joy

Look upon everyone as the embodiment of the Divine and worship each as such by offering love, understanding, and service. Only the blind will be indifferent to the dismal condition of others; only the deaf will be unaffected by the sobs of others. In fact, there are no “others.” You are all living cells in the body of God, each performing its individual function to promote his will.

The joy one gets while promoting another's joy is incomparable. Your heart must melt in compassion when the eye sees another person suffering. That is the sign of the *sathwic* (pure or noble) individual; the *thamasic*

(ignorant) individual will be indifferent—too dull, too bovine, to be affected. The *rajasic* (passionate) man will rush to punish the person who caused the suffering and might even forget to relieve the misery of the person affected! Callousness is the root cause of all the cruelty that defaces the divine nature of man, in all the lands on earth.

Gain Elation from Devotional Singing

Thousands of devotional singing groups meet all over the world under the auspices of the Sri

Sathya Sai organization. They sing together for about an hour, once or twice a week, and disperse thereafter. Singing the glory of God, as embodied by various names and forms, they become elated.

The purpose of loud, congregational praying is different from silent individual prayers. Devotional singing is a joint, concerted, and mutually helpful effort of sadhana to overcome man's six internal foes—lust, anger, greed, attachment, conceit, and hatred. These nocturnal birds infest the tree of life and foul the heart where they build their nests. By singing aloud the glory of God, the heart is illumined, and such dark birds cannot bear the light. Besides, the voices rising from the many throats frighten them, and they fly away.

Avoid Excess

It is advisable for all to follow the middle path. "Avoid excess in all places," advises the ancient axiom. You must respect the limits set forth by the experience of the ages, as set down in the sacred texts, which act like embankments curbing the waters of a flood; they direct the raging passions toward harm-

less channels and save you from ruin. Of course, man has elementary needs—physical, mental, and intellectual; these have to be fulfilled in some measure, but there is no need to encumber oneself

with unwanted food, superfluous furniture, and multi-roomed mansions. Luxury enervates and enslaves.

Be Ideal Examples

Leaders have to set an example in this respect, for people usually try to imitate and emulate. Example is more effective than precept. An ounce of practice is worth more than a ton of preaching. That is why I declare, "My life is my message." You must transform your lives into examples of the ideals you preach. Parents must set good examples for children; teachers must set good examples for students; leaders must set good examples for those whom they expect to follow them. Preaching austerity and practicing luxury will only reveal one's hollowness.



The best way to gain happiness is to choose God as one's leader and guide. Then, he will guide and guard, from the heart itself.

Parents talk of honesty but utter lies in the presence of children and even encourage them to speak falsehood. The father, while at home, asks the child to tell the unwelcome visitor that he is not at home! The child is thus taught his first lesson in prevarication, by the father himself. There is no use blaming the child if he grows into a social menace.

Take God As Your Guide

Really speaking, the best way to gain happiness is to choose God as one's leader and guide. Then, he will guide and guard, from the heart itself.

These days a wave of anxiety is spreading over the world as a result of rising prices, and attempts are being made frantically to bring down the level. The fundamental cause for the rise in prices is the decline in the price of man. Man must realize his pricelessness; he should not regard himself as a cheap nut or bolt that has no higher purpose in life. He should know that he is the imperishable unconquerable *Atma* (inner divinity), and that the body is only a vehicle for the *Atma*.

See All through the Atmic Eye

Everyone should respect all others as one's own kith and kin, as having the same divine spark and divine nature. Then, there will be effective production, economy of consumption, and equitable distribution—resulting in peace and the promotion of love. Nowadays, love based on the innate divinity is absent, so there is exploitation, deceit, greed, and cruelty. If man becomes aware of all men as “cells” of the divine

body, then there will be no more devaluation of man. Man is a diamond, but now he is treated by other men and by himself as a piece of glass!

Man can realize his mission on earth only when he knows himself as divine and when he reveres all others as divine. And, man must worship God, in the form of man. God appears before man as a blind beggar, an idiot, a leper, a child, a decrepit old man, a criminal, or a madman. You must see—even behind those veils—the divine embodiment of love, power, and wisdom—the Sai—and worship Him through selfless service.

God cannot be identified with one name and one form. He is *all names* and *all forms*. All names are his; all forms are his. Your names, too, are his; you are his forms. You appear as separate, individual bodies because the eye that sees them seeks only bodies—the outer encasement.

When you clarify and sanctify your vision and look through the inner, Atmic eye—the eye that penetrates behind the physical—you will see all others as waves on the ocean of the Absolute, as the “thousand heads, the thousand eyes, the thousand feet” of the Supreme Person (*Virat Purusha*), as sung of in the Rig Veda. Strive to win that vision and to saturate yourself with that bliss.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 13:8, April 1, 1975)

Fly to Happiness

On the Wings of Love and Service



In January of 1990 I was in India for a second visit to Prasanthi Nilayam. My first visit to Sri Sathya Sai Baba, about 16 months earlier, had been very short. This time, I planned to stay longer, and I anticipated and hoped for a personal interview, during which I could ask a question. Essentially, I wanted to ask how I could best increase my joy and happiness.

I had read many self-help books and had attended numerous seminars focusing on how to be more in touch with one's feelings. Although I had been helped by such books and seminars, it appeared that I needed to take more courses and read more books. I thought I could never catch up with all the available texts and programs, let alone find the time and money to invest in them. I thought surely there must be a more efficient route in my quest for happiness.

So, I hoped, here was my chance to ask Sai Baba this question. I felt that I needed to meet him in person; I never imagined that other means of communication might also be possible. But it was through one of these "other" means that Sai Baba addressed

my inquiry, on my very first night at his compound.

I was trying to rest from a long, tiring journey and to sleep on a very thin mattress placed in the middle of a large dormitory hall or shed. This was difficult, because almost all the other 79 men in the shed, from countries around the globe, were snoring, each in his own language! Furthermore, my excitement at the possibility of having a face-to-face opportunity to see Sai Baba and ask my question kept me awake.

In the middle of all this, while I was lying there listening to all the background noise and feeling quite disturbed by it, I began to "see" in my mind—as if viewing a slide projection on a large screen—the image of a dove, flying upward from right to left.

On the left wing of the dove appeared the word, LOVE. On its right wing, appeared the word, SERVICE. Here was my answer! In our quest for happiness, we are like birds who need two wings with which to fly. In order to fly directly to joy, happiness, and bliss, we need the two wings of LOVE and SERVICE.



“In our quest for happiness, we are like birds who need two wings with which to fly. In order to fly directly to joy, happiness, and bliss, we need the two wings of LOVE and SERVICE.”

Then I noticed that the dove's feet had a number of weights attached. These weights were holding back the bird as it struggled to fly. The weights represented the things that cause us misery: anger, arrogance, desire, fear, gossip, greed, hate, hypocrisy, jealousy, pride, vengeance, violence, worry, and so on. Here was a more complete answer to my question.

In order to fly—to reach ultimate joy and happiness—I needed to strengthen my wings of LOVE and SERVICE and, at the same time, make every effort to drop all those weights—or at least to reduce their number or size.

While watching this picture, I was still completely aware of all the background noise in the hall. Then I realized that the three elements of love, service, and the dropping of the weights were even more interrelated: the more I could strengthen my love and service, the easier it would be to drop or reduce the weights.

A person who has unconditional love, translated into action as selfless service, is not jealous, does not gossip, and does not

harbor hatred. With deep love, one can drop all the weights and be liberated. Reciprocally, the more one reduces anger, hypocrisy, arrogance, and so on, the more easily one's love soars.

Then another question came to me: which of these aspects should I work on first—increasing love, or decreasing the weights? Or, was there a way to accomplish both at the same time? I felt there must be an answer, but nothing further came during this vision. Several hours later, I finally fell asleep.

The next morning, I still wondered about this latest question. A couple of days later, I was among a group called for an interview with Sai Baba, but I didn't have a chance to ask that question. A couple of weeks later, however, I did receive an indirect answer, which was: The best way to foster love and at the same time drop one's weights of misery is to give unconditional, selfless, and LOVING SERVICE. The more we practice LOVE and SERVICE *together*, the more happily we can fly through life.

—From the book, *Love to Be Happy*,
by Mehdi N. Bahadori, PhD
(Blue Dolphin Publishing, 1994)

Blind and Low-Vision Olympics

Positive Attitudes Abound

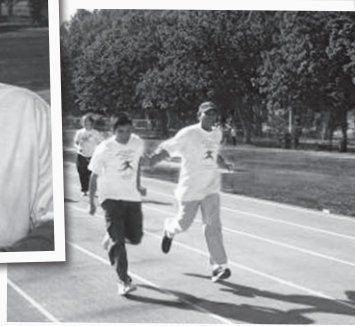
The Northern California Blind and Low Vision Olympics is an annual event organized by the Society for the Blind, in Sacramento, California. The event, now in its 26th year, usually takes place in the early fall, on the track practice field at California State University, Sacramento. The day provides an opportunity for youth ages newborn to 18 to highlight their athletic abilities. Modifications are made to the sporting events to accommodate the needs of athletes who have low vision or blindness. Every year about 50 blind or low vision youth take part in these Olympics.

The Blind and Low Vision Olympics is designed to build positive attitudes and understanding about vision loss or impairment and to encourage independence in blind or visually-impaired youth. It improves individuals' belief in themselves and their abilities, taking them

out of their "safe comfort zone," and showing them that they are capable of excelling in tasks normally not associated with blind people.

The events in the Blind and Low Vision Olympics are the 50-yard dash, 100-yard dash, discus throw, shot put, javelin throw, and broad jump. Participants are placed in groups by age range, and each group rotates to every event, so that participants compete in all events. After a group completes an event, the top three finishers receive medals—gold for first place, silver for second, and bronze for third. At the end of the event, all athletes receive participant medals.

In 2008, the event took place on October 11, with the Sathya Sai Baba Center of Elk Grove participating for its third year straight. The majority of the Elk Grove center members have taken part in this event, including the SSE



students. This time, nine adults and seven students attended. Center members assisted with all the athletic events and in leading groups of athletes to each event. They served as guides, filled out result scores, took measurements of results when required, and helped award medals. Afterward, Sai center members helped take down booths and tables, load them into vehicles, and clean the area.

The volunteers have learned valuable lessons from participating in this event, including sportsmanship, the benefits of maintaining a positive attitude, and the importance of communication skills. The athletes did not show negative rivalries when participating in the event. Rather, they showed enthusiasm and spirit, and interacted with each other without having the sole purpose of winning. Athletes displayed positive attitudes toward each other, and courtesy and respect to teammates and

group leaders. They cheered, rooted, encouraged, and motivated each other.

Athletes were given verbal cues by their guides (“go left,” “go straight,” etc.), allowing them to employ a sense of direction independently. Center members were encouraged to treat athletes as if they did not have any visual impairments. Overall, this activity is grand fun for both the athletes and the Sai center members, who have developed lasting friendships with the athletes. It is a great joy to see the athletes improve their skills year after year. This event provides the members of the Sai center with an excellent opportunity to build understanding, help individuals gain self-reliance and self-confidence, and generate happiness in a group endeavor.

— **Michelle Prasad and Sharnil Chandra**
Sai Center of Elk Grove, California



HAPPINESS ARISES OUT OF UNION WITH GOD. —BABA

The “Inner-Active” Power of One-on-One Service

Work done with no desire is the supreme ideal for man. When the mansion of life is built on this foundation, through the subtle influences of selfless service, virtues will gather unto him. Service must be the outer expression of inner goodness. As one undertakes selfless service more and more, one's consciousness expands and deepens, and one's Atmic reality is known more clearly.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Vidya Vahini, ch. 8, p. 43)

These thoughts grew out of a discussion in our region on “interactive” (one-on-one) service vs. group service projects. In the past few years I have spent much time and effort serving the elderly, and, as a result, learning to live in the fluidity of the moment and experiencing conscious stillness while watching God's loving guidance unfold. Some have called one-on-one service “interactive,” but to me it is “inner active,” for it has provided me with direct access to the depth of my being, far beyond sentimentality and worldly attachments, and guided me to an open inner space of unbounded compassion.

Two mornings a week I spend about an hour each with a few elderly people in an assisted living community. I live several minutes away (the distance of 21 Gayatris!). Before these visits, I prepare by chanting and dedicating all efforts and outcomes to God.

I have had the privilege of developing an intimate rapport with several people over the years. Some have passed away and new people have come. Each individual has a unique and extraordinary story, dealing with loss, failing

health, transitions, fear, and/or helplessness. When I walk into an elderly person's room, nothing but the desire to serve the need of the moment matters to me. Sitting in front of another, looking deeply into her eyes, I find myself fully attentive to a dynamic potential between us. My own life story slips quietly out the door.

What I find remains is an openness to the now. I stand in my intuitive nature, in the moment, open to sharing whatever comes up.

Seva (selfless service) saves you from the agony you experience when another suffers; it broadens your vision, widens your awareness, and deepens your compassion. All waves are on the same sea and from the same sea. Seva teaches you to be firm in this knowledge.

(Seva: A Flower at His Feet, p. 33)

I feel deeply humbled whenever I can acknowledge that only here and now exist—no frills, just the honesty of two lives crossing for a brief time. Our lives are brought to a standstill to receive sacredness and guidance in the moment. In that moment, we acknowledge and share the inevitability of aging—hers and mine

alike. We find that our experience of transience is exactly the same. We stand in front of one another, not with our differences, but only with what we have in common. We see ourselves in the other—like looking into a mirror.

Seva without the idea of self is the very first step in the spiritual progress of man.

(Sanathana Sarathi, Vol. 26, p. 173)

Swami often tells us that we must perform “selfless” service to reach God, but our understanding of this statement depends on our perception of what “self” means. To me, selfless service means to act from a place of “no-self,” and this does not mean self-denial, self-effacement, or being less visible. How often we try to “make” ourselves humble, when humility can be rather an effortless by-product of having less of a feeling of separateness.

Service invites us to offer our “self” for others’ upliftment. As a result, within the experience of interconnectedness, we can realize that joy is not acquired by any separate entity—i.e., the ego; joy is what is left when all else dissolves.

Swami also states that selfless service is a direct pathway to God. I understand this to mean finding God’s presence in the moment that the mind wholeheartedly serves, hands reach out, and the heart radiates its innate compassion with a powerful feeling of unity and reverence. As I taste this “selfless” experience, I wish and strive for every single act in life to embody that sweetness and intensity.

Bliss is not found in our “story”—who we think we are, our personality. Bliss prevails only when we are “nobody,” open to the unfolding present moment.

The real value of seva, and its most visible result, is that it transforms and reshapes you.

(Seva: A Flower at His Feet, p. 10)

To me, the value of service lies in its transformative power, and our intention is the dynamic force that leads to transformation. In other words, the impact of our efforts in seva directly correlates with the quality of presence that we invest in the process. And, our degree of personal investment defines the depth of transformation that will unfold within us. When we are involved in service, we may ask ourselves, “How is this effort transforming me? Am I fully invested in the process—physically, mentally, and spiritually? Do I put all my integrity and sincerity into the person I am reaching out to? Are my efforts attached to a pre-conceived outcome?”

For me, it takes uncompromising personal dedication, putting myself on the line for the sake of another, for inner transformation to happen. I have found no act more meaningful than the complete dedication of myself for the benefit of someone else in need whose heart stands wide open to receiving loving compassion. To me, this is the definition of self-sacrifice.

Serve others, for they are all reflections of the same entity, of which you are also another reflection. None of you have any authenticity, except with reference to the original. Feel always kinship with all creation. For realizing the One, the Absolute, which personalizes into God and creation, there is no discipline more valuable or more effective than seva.

(Seva: A Flower at His Feet, p. 28)

I have found that what lives beyond the confines of the mind is pure compassion, without form but manifesting through me as attentiveness, unconditional understanding, readiness to console, and unshakable inner strength. And, only in a state of nonattachment can the highest quality of compassionate presence arise in me.

A narrow and concentrated path leads to this inner state. With an unwavering mind, I seek in my own being the “samenesses” that unite all human experience. We all share the same deep need for unconditional love, acceptance, and acknowledgment of our inner goodness. We all feel vulnerable in the face of aging, loss, and death. Standing in this awareness, separation dissolves, and an inner shift unfolds, in which we can witness life’s processes, but without judgment or resistance. In reaching surrender and deep acceptance, we can let go and offer all to the unknowable presence, God himself. And we can know then that all is perfectly as it should be. The only word I have for describing this sacred moment is *compassion*—beyond all mental concepts, and wherein wells up exquisite joy and gratitude.

“Swami says that in seva, you are developing your own good qualities within, and you are fostering your own good nature.”

(Directives and Commands of Sathya Sai Avatar for Spiritual Transformation, pp. 2-3)

One-on-one seva has taught me to embody and manifest the compassion I have searched for in others. We cannot receive or experience that which we do not already have within us. By standing in compassion and holding that

space in the presence of others, they may find it in themselves. Touching a current that runs through everything and everyone, the healing that takes place in those moments is nothing short of a miracle.

This kind of intimate seva requires a comprehensive investment. It is a conscious experience that I believe is worth striving for in every aspect of life, so that we may live with continuous inspiration. We are called to read the fine print within ourselves, to access the subtle realm of who we are.

I am discovering that compassion is a medicine that can cure all grief and protect us from our inner enemies.

While one-on-one seva can be an intensive course in the field of spiritual development, group service projects are also essential, as they teach us to work in unity and reach out to broader sections of our community. If truly connected to the effort of serving others in need, all seva can be “inner-actively” transformative.

Serve others, not with the feeling that they are others, but with the attitude of worship that you reserve for God. One single act of service offered to the God whom you visualize in another is worth all the years of yearning for God.

(Sathya Sai Speaks 7:5, p. 29, Mar. 8, 1967)

—Karen Stancs

Shelton, Connecticut

NOTE: All quotes appear in
Sevadai: To the Hands That Serve
(Bhagavan Uvacha Series, SSSB&PT, 2005).

What Service Will Give Happiness? For the Elderly, Often, It's the "Small Things"

Sri Sathya Sai Baba emphasizes to us that we must care for our aging parents and make them happy, and that we must treat them and serve them as God. I have also noticed, in various accounts of Swami's followers, that Sai frequently and sweetly arranges our lives—gives us the boon, the golden spiritual opportunity to fulfill this primary dharmic principle—so that we end up spending intimate and extensive time with our parents in their final few years, when they need the most care.

When it came my turn, I learned over time that the "small things" can make a big difference to the elderly. High on the list is our simple presence—just "being" with them, or doing "with them" what they really like to do, even if it is just sitting together quietly. Also, we have to look beneath the surface to see what is needed or can give them happiness and satisfaction.

Here's a story told by Sai Baba that illustrates how our giving of service should match a person's needs, according to *what they need or would like*, not just our ideas of what would make them happy. This story's message influenced me when it came to caring for my parents.

[Once a king joined a group of people, incognito, to listen to the discourse of a saint.] ... At the end of the discourse, people returned home, but the king remained there. As the saint got up to leave, his shawl became entangled with a nail of his chair. As a result, the shawl got torn. Immediately, the saint brought out a needle and thread and tried to put the thread through the eye of the needle.

The king, in disguise, was watching all this. He said, "Swamiji, you are trying to stitch an old shawl; please leave it aside and accept this new shawl that I have brought with me."

The saint replied, "I don't want a new shawl. If you really want to help me, help me put this thread through the eye of this needle." (SSS 31:29, p. 266, Sept. 11, 1988)

It wasn't until the last six years of my parents' lives, starting at the time when they could no longer drive themselves, that my siblings and I became highly involved in their care. Somehow, though, Swami "arranged" this sadhana for *me*—to be the lead person in shepherding and monitoring their care, and in communicating with and coordinating the family, even though I was not the closest family member geographically.

From finding part-time helpers and housecleaning assistance, to arranging for “meals on wheels” deliveries, to my staying with them for several days at a time on a regular basis, we were able to keep them in their home as long as possible. Finally, however, despite my parents’ desire to remain in their home of 50 years, my father’s Alzheimer’s disease forced a move to an assisted living facility. Later came an even more heart-wrenching separation for my mother, as my father eventually required full-time Alzheimer’s care in a separate facility.

During those six years, as I would call and visit, I started to notice something. If I telephoned and asked my mother, “How are you? Do you need anything?” she would always answer that she was fine. No needs would come into her mind. Same thing if I stopped by for a quick visit. Call it short-term memory loss, a reluctance to appear needy, or a gradual detachment from this earthly plane—but as long as nothing was pressing immediately on her awareness, she was “fine” and felt no worries.

But over time, I realized that only by spending quite a bit of time with my parents, could I find out what their real needs were. If I would sit with my mother and simply keep her company, without any sense of rush, then the things she needed would slowly come out, one by one. But I had to “be there” when the need came up, or came to mind, in order to know about it.

It could be as simple as needing paper towels, her favorite hand lotion, or the dried cherries or yogurt she liked as snacks—or

other sundry items that she enjoyed or found useful. But it could be more involved, too, such as food going bad in the refrigerator; safety, medical, and prescription drug issues; home and equipment repairs; or correspondence that they were unable to respond to on their own.

I got into the habit of looking inside cupboards, closets, and drawers more, and checking the entire house and property—the automatic garden sprinkler system, heater and air conditioner, water softener, and so on—on my visits. And on phone calls, I took my time and just chatted—chances were that some little need would occur to my mother eventually during the call.

I found myself gradually adjusting my rushed pace; slowing down and “learning” how to listen, wait, and look below the surface for places where their needs might not be being noticed, or where simple ways to give them a little happiness might be hiding.

One of these “little things” involved getting some larger wheels for my mother’s walker. She was using an older walker that had tiny wheels, and it took us quite a while to realize it was difficult for her to push the small wheels across the carpet, let alone small cracks in the pavement if she were outdoors, or door sills in medical offices. Beyond that, it took time even to discover that larger wheels were available! But without spending in-depth time with her, I would have remained oblivious for much longer.

Another major discovery involved staying in touch with friends and family. My mother enjoyed chatting with family members and dear friends, and she would *think* about calling

them but never actually remember to pick up the phone and make a call. As a result, she gradually became more isolated. I began making a point of dialing a friend or relative for her to talk to, each time I visited. Most of her peer-relatives and friends were aging, too—many subject to the same syndrome—and they greatly appreciated getting a call.

This mode of making a deeper observation carried over into the years of assisted living also—all the way to the end of my parents' earthly lives. Pretty soon I realized that we never know who all is watching our behavior—frequently, the staff members of the assisted living or nursing facilities—and later, even hospice staff—would comment with appreciation about the high degree of involvement of our family and how lucky our parents were; they would lament that many residents received very little attention from their families.

During visits to my mother or father, I would sometimes be there during meals and would sit with them in their dining room, along with the other residents, or I would accompany them to an activity such as a musical presentation. Along the way, I got to know some of their co-residents.

One day I heard Violet, one of my mother's table-mates, complaining about a broken fingernail. She said, "Oh, I need to get a nail file. I keep forgetting to ask my daughter to bring me one."

Another table-mate, Barbara, piped up, "Don't worry about that, dear; I'll get you one. I have plenty in my room."

But I knew that Barbara herself had memory issues. I also had observed that, other than seeing each other at mealtimes and activities, many of the residents do not visit each other's rooms between meals. I suddenly had the feeling that this same conversation had been repeated at the table on several occasions already, and that the next moment the nail file would be completely forgotten—again.

The next time I came, I brought Violet a few nail files. Sure enough, she hadn't remembered to tell her daughter, and she still needed a nail file.

A dear and lifelong friend of our family, Betty, also happened to live in the same facility as my mother. She and her husband had been youth counselors at our church when I was a teenager, and they had initiated a service project in Mexico that I participated in for several years. Also, Bob, her husband, who had passed away several years earlier, had offered me my first "real" job when I was a young adult. In short, they were like parents to me at times. Betty had always been such an expert at knitting, crocheting, and other forms of needlework. She had made me a beautiful, framed, embroidered panel as a wedding gift, and also had gifted me with handmade cross-stitch needlework pieces when my children were born.

I loved having the chance to visit with Betty along with seeing my mother. One day I noticed that Betty's table-mate, 93-year-old Margaret, was knitting, and Betty was not. They were discussing Margaret's knitting project—her church group was making knitted

caps and scarves for orphans in third-world countries.

I found this sight strange, as the memories flooded back of *always* seeing Betty with a bag of yarn and the knitting needles flashing away at great speed, no matter the social occasion. I wondered if the fact that she had had a stroke was preventing her from participating in this activity that had always given her such joy.

I said, “Betty, I am surprised that you are not knitting, too!”

She answered, “Oh, I would be, but I lost one of my needles!”

It was as simple as that. Also, she hadn’t remembered to tell her sister—her main family caregiver—about it.

I inquired what size needle she was using. After I left, I stopped by a discount store and picked up a pair of the correct size needles. That evening, before leaving the area, I dropped back by the assisted living facility, leaving the knitting needles with the night receptionist to be given to Betty the next day.

The next time I visited, she was knitting away happily.

Thank you, Swami, for helping me notice a few small things that could give comfort or happiness to these dear “parents”—biological or otherwise—during their elder years.

—Corinn Codye
Wrightwood, California

Simple Gifts

*‘Tis a gift to be simple,
‘Tis a gift to be free,
‘Tis a gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
It will be in the valley of love and delight.*

*When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we will not be ashamed;
To turn, turn, will be our delight,
Till by turning and turning we come round right.*

—Old Shaker Hymn (Christian)



An Announcement from the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

SRI SATHYA SAI WORLD CONFERENCE IX: SAI IDEAL HUMAN LIFE

The Sri Sathya Sai Organization is set up to develop and foster love. It arose from the heart and it expands the heart. The inner desire to achieve love and expand love has taken outer shape as the organization.

—Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Sai Ram to all of you.

Our beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is providing yet another opportunity for all of us to grow spiritually and to experience selfless love.

Our dearest Swami has given divine approval and blessings for the **Ninth Sri Sathya Sai World Conference** to be held in Prasanthi Nilayam during November 2010. This Sri Sathya Sai World Conference IX, commemorating the 85th birthday of our Lord, will be preceded by zonal pre-world conferences, to be convened in all nine international zones, commencing December 2009 and concluding by October 2010. Dr. Narendra Reddy and I will attend and participate in all nine of these conferences. Subsequent to these zonal pre-world conferences, there will be a pilgrimage from each zone to Prasanthi Nilayam for divine darshan and blessings. These pilgrimages will provide an opportunity for you to present, in the divine presence, your cultural heritage and the good works done by the Sathya Sai Organization in the context of your respective societies. Swami's divine darshan inspires us and empowers us. We derive deeper meaning from his message and his works through the inspiration of his divine presence.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba lives among us and within us. We must avail ourselves of this opportunity to assemble at his divine lotus feet in order to worship him, experience spiritual insight and selfless love, and learn how to apply this in our daily lives and in our respective societies.





Our Pledge

Spiritual Principles We aspire to adhere to the spiritual principles given to humankind by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Authenticity We aspire to engage in spiritual programs that authentically reflect these spiritual principles.

Accountability We aspire to examine ourselves and our programs constantly, to ensure the perpetuation of spiritual unity and purity in all that we do.

The Program

Since the last Sri Sathya Sai World Conference, we have convened international conferences dealing with ideal spiritual publications, ideal healthcare, ideal youth, and ideal education. Great progress has been achieved in all areas. Let us learn from this progress, conceive plans, and achieve even greater spiritual progress in the future.

Sai Ideal Publications Currently Sai literature is translated into 24 languages, concentrating primarily on the divine writings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. There is a need to disseminate this literature in all countries so that everyone has access to his divine message.

Sai Ideal Healthcare Currently there are Medical Directors in all zones and an increasing number of medical camps and free clinics offering competent, loving healthcare to those in need. There is a need to disseminate the spiritual principles of healthcare, rendered competently with love, throughout the medical institutions worldwide.

Sai Ideal Youth Currently the Sai Young Adults are engaged in zonal pre-world conferences; three of the nine conferences have already taken place. All of these conferences are preceded by a sadhana program in which the youth have intently incorporated and practiced Sai spiritual principles in their everyday lives. There is a need for deeper understanding of the divine message and greater understanding of the nature of “spiritual leadership,” since the youth of today will inevitably be the Sai Organization leaders of tomorrow.

Sai Ideal Education Currently we have published a *Global Overview* of Sri Sathya Sai education programs, published guidelines for all Sai educational institutes, schools, and activities, and brought all educators worldwide into a common forum to learn from one another and determine how the Sri Sathya Sai Educare (Sai Spiritual Education/ Education in Human Values) programs should be practiced. There is a need for deeper understanding of our resources and capabilities. There is a need for a greater harmony





between Sathya Sai educators and other wings of the Sri Sathya Sai organizations. There is a need to disseminate the spiritual principles of Sathya Sai Educare everywhere.

Sai Ideal Organization Currently there are Sathya Sai Centers in many countries all over the world, comprised of sincere, loving devotees of our beloved Swami. They are striving to realize his teachings within their own societies. There is a need to understand that the road to self-realization might be a solitary journey within, but, nevertheless, we can act in concert, through love and selflessness, to be messengers of love.

Sai Ideal Human Life Currently we enjoy a great privilege. We have recognized the divinity of Bhagavan Baba. We have embarked on the spiritual path. There is a need to go within, find ourselves, and lead lives that exemplify selfless love. The rest will follow according to the will of our Lord.

Lovingly, in the service of Sai,

Michael Goldstein, MD

Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation
Chairman, Prasanthi Council

Narendra Reddy, MD

Director, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation
Member, Prasanthi Council

Institute of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE), USA

On July 11, 2009, Dr. Michael Goldstein announced the appointment of Dr. Hymon Johnson as Director of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE), USA. All members of the advisory board of the former entity, Sathya Sai EHV Foundation, USA, were invited to become members of the Institute. Besides the director, the Institute will also have an administrative board of directors that will include Mr. Michael Dave, Dr. Narendra Reddy, Dr. Bill Harvey, and Dr. Goldstein. Until a suitable location is found, the Institute will be headquartered in Dr. Johnson's private office. Among the first projects of the Institute will be to establish academic structure, procedures, and priorities. —Ed.

Notice Regarding Spurious E-Mail Appeals

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Sai Ram!

It has come to our attention that e-mails are being sent to Sai Centers everywhere with false and malicious information accompanied by illegal appeals for donations. The e-mails state that there is terrorism taking place in Puttaparthi and that people should send money to them to protect the ashram from this terrorism. There is no terrorism taking place. There is no basis for their appeals for money. Please disregard these spurious e-mails.

Lovingly in Sai,

—Michael Goldstein, MD



Dearest Beloved Bhagawan,

Without Your Will, no leaf can turn, no blade of grass can quiver. We, the youth of the United States, pray for the opportunity to be in Your physical presence and seek Your guidance as to when the USA youth should visit You in Prashanti Nilayam.

With Hearts Filled with Love and Eagerness to See You,
USA Sai Youth



Reflections from the 1st National Youth Conference

o. of Youth Delegates Attended: 400

o. of Adult Advisors Attended: 20

o. of Youth who helped plan and
the activities before and during the
e, and participated in the Cultural
200

egates from Outside US: 4 (3 from
rom Malaysia)



The National Youth Conference was one of the best conferences I have ever attended. It recharged me spiritually and made me feel Swami's presence right from the start, from landing in the airport till getting back. There were a lot of wonderful experiences. It was just like traveling to Puttaparthi to see Swami in his physical presence, and all the doubts were answered by the speakers and various workshops. We met a lot of people from various professions, which demonstrated that we can achieve anything when united.

The theme, "We Are One for SAI," was expressed very well in all aspects of the conference by all the YAs and made us feel "united as a single nation in action" ("U-S-A"). The host team did a wonderful job coordinating and organizing, and the love aspect was seen in each one. High energy abounds among all the YAs; their energy and motivation inspired me a lot and makes me feel proud. A few aspects of Swami's teachings were experienced by me

in practice—for example, that 11 seconds is enough to realize the innate divinity.

The main lesson I learned from the conference was "Reform, Realize, and Reflect"—which will help us achieve Swami (our innate divinity) and cultivate love. The pre-conference newsletters were a stepping stone that really molded and transformed the YAs. The pre-conference initiatives have become a regular habit and will be practiced throughout my lifetime.

I observed unity, purity, and divinity in each and every person; I will try to continue to realize these by feeling Swami's presence every day, wherever I am. The positive energy makes us live Swami's message, and YAs have already started working on some post-conference items, such as following up on the "Go Green" project at home, and moving the practices to a higher level. I pray to Swami to guide us all, to make our lives his message, and to spread our love to all those in need. As Swami says, *Love all, serve all*.

—Rohit Raghuveer, Region 9

"High energy abounds among all the YAs; their energy and motivation inspired me a lot and makes me feel proud."



One of the small things that I will carry with me from the National Youth Conference wasn't a workshop or initiative; it was an experience that I had with my fellow cabin-mates on Saturday night. The day's worth of amazing activities had ended, and I was heading back to my cabin when I was greeted by the sound of *bhajans* (devotional singing) coming from it.

At first I was a bit worried, since I had not gotten too much sleep the night before, and I was hoping to catch up on sleep that night. As I walked in, the cabin was filled with YA gents who were all singing bhajans. They had borrowed a whole slew of instruments, and everyone was taking turns leading bhajans. The session ended around 11:00 p.m., and all were ready to go back to their own beds and cabins, when a whole new set of YA gents came into the cabin, saying that they had heard bhajans were going on.

Sure enough the bhajans started back up again and lasted until midnight, with the new set of YAs leading and playing the

instruments. What touched me about the whole sequence was seeing all these YAs, many of whom, like myself, were sleep-deprived and tired, but all they wanted to do was sing His name and glory.

Seeing all of those YAs struck a chord in my own mind and heart and made me realize how amazing

our Sai is. Here were YAs from all over the country, coming together at a moment's notice and singing bhajans. Who else but Swami could inspire such a thing. The energy generated that night was unlike anything I had felt before; it was charged by the devotion of these YAs.

While I think of myself as a person who likes to connect with Swami through service more than through bhajans, that night I found myself hoping for the bhajans to continue on into the morning—not my normal response when it comes to bhajans. I was so caught up with the permeating bliss by these bhajans that I did not think about anything else except the next bhajan to be sung.

—Shriram, Region 8

“Seeing all of those YAs struck a chord in my own mind and heart and made me realize how amazing our Sai is.”



My experience at the National Youth Conference was beautiful. When the planning started and the regional reps started sending out registration information, I did not really plan to go. I thought I was too busy and did not want even to take a one-day vacation. But things changed for me at the work front, and I lost my work visa and job in a matter of days.

Suddenly, I realized that my priorities in life were different. Even though I had not signed up for any activity and had missed the registration deadline, a friend encouraged me to get in touch with the conference committees and book a flight. Five days before the event, I booked my flight and came down. Though I had not had time to sign up for transportation or accommodations, Swami took care of everything.

Once I was at the conference, it was a complete change of scene. So many YAs of similar frequencies were in one place, so the vibration was awesome. Initially I felt that I should have been put in the same cabin/lodge as other YAs from my region, but in no time the girls in our cabin got friendly.

“So many YAs of similar frequencies were in one place, so the vibration was awesome.”

They shared blankets, water bottles, snacks. Most of all we shared our experiences and stories, and I realized that I was not missing my friends, as I had a new group of friends.

All aspects were planned meticulously by the volunteers, right from the morning workout routines (yoga, volleyball, nature hike, etc.) to the late-night events. I especially enjoyed the talk given by YA sister Malini just for the women, and also the Q&A by Prof. Anil Kumar. I was touched by what Prof. Anil Kumar said when the YAs were asking questions. He said, “The answers I give are not from me; I am just telling you what I’ve heard Swami say.” The lack of ego on Dr. Anil Kumar’s part was humbling. The little tidbits that Malini shared were so precious, as I would never dream of knowing those things, were it not for her.

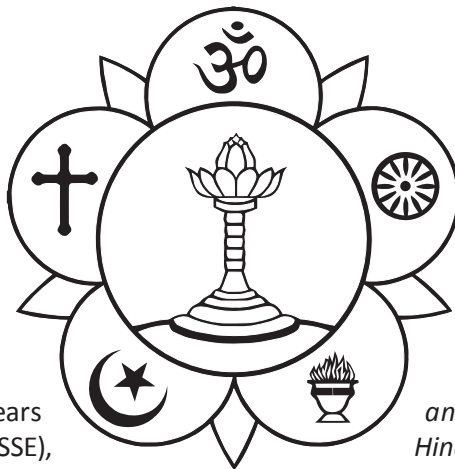
One thing I came away with was that all along I had felt that my career was my full-time job and the Sai Center part-time, but after my experiences, I have realized that, in fact, Swami is my full-time job, and my other work, part-time.

—Soundarya, Region 7



All Leading in the Same Direction

How I Learned to Appreciate the Unity of Religions



Throughout all my years in Sai Spiritual Education (SSE), I have always been taught about the different religions. At first I was actually upset, thinking that the SSE lesson on “Unity of Religions” would be just another cliché history class, but there was something different about this lesson. We learned what each religion believed in, but also how they were all united.

I had always felt that each religion was so different, each with its own books, languages, and people. Yet these SSE classes were able to make me see otherwise. Even though all the religions had different books, they all preached the same thing: Swami’s five values—truth, right conduct, love, peace, and nonviolence. One of Swami’s quotes helped me realize this:

I have come not to disturb or destroy any faith, but to confirm each in his own faith—so the Christian becomes a better Christian, the Muslim, a better Muslim,

and the Hindu, a better Hindu.

This led to another question in my head: why do people of different religions feel they are so different?

When it comes to religion, people seem to look at the differences rather than the similarities. Sathya Sai Baba is changing that, showing how all these religions are related and making us realize that no one religion is better than another.

Swami says that all religions are equal and all are pathways to God. In this day and age it is especially important to realize this. If we develop love in our heart toward all and respect everyone regardless of their religion, we can achieve peace.

The *sarva dharma* (all paths) symbol for all the religions shows that they are all leading in the same direction—toward divinity.

—Sandhya Rao, Group 3

SSSBC of East Brunswick, New Jersey

Happiness: Views from Many Faiths and Traditions

CHRISTIANITY/JUDAISM

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the Lord is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him, bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. —Holy Bible, Psalm 100

JUDAISM

The Holy Spirit rests on him only who has a joyous heart. —Jerusalem Talmud, Sukkot 5.1

ISLAM

The greatest bliss is the good pleasure of God: that is the supreme felicity. —Qur'an 9.72

Without doubt, in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction. —Qur'an 13.28-2

ZOROASTRIANISM

And may the sovereign Good be ours! According as one desires bliss, may one receive bliss, through Thy most far-seeing Spirit, O Lord, the wonders of the Good Mind that Thou wilt give as righteousness, with the joy of long life all the days! —Avesta, Yasna 43.2

JAINISM

The soul that is free from the defect of karma gets to the highest point of the universe, knows all and perceives all, and obtains transcendental bliss everlasting. —Kundakunda, Pancastikaya 170

CHINESE PROVERB

Make happy those who are near, and those who are far will come.

CONFUCIANISM

To seek gladness through righteous persistence is the way to accord with heaven and to respond to men. —*I Ching* 58: Joy

A man of happiness is consistent in his steps, not disorderly. —Confucius, 510 B.C.

TAOISM

Lao Tan (Laozi) said, “I was letting my mind wander in the beginning of things.”

“What does this mean?” asked Confucius.

Lao Tan said, “It means to attain perfect beauty and wander in perfect happiness. He who attains perfect beauty and wanders in perfect happiness may be called the perfect man.” —Chuangzi 21

HINDUISM

The Infinite is the source of joy. There is no joy in the finite. Only in the Infinite is there joy. Ask to know the Infinite. —Chandogya Upanishad 7.23

The felicity that results from the gratification of desire, or that other purer felicity that one enjoys in heaven, does not come to even a sixteenth part of that which arises upon the abandonment of all kinds of thirst! —Mahabharata, Shantiparva 177

BUDDHISM

Nibb-ana (Nirvana) is the ultimate happiness. Of all gains, good health is the greatest. Of all wealth, contentment is the greatest. Among kinsmen, the trustworthy is the greatest. Freedom (*Nibb-ana*) is the ultimate happiness. Having imbibed the essence of solitude and the essence of tranquility, and imbibing the joyous essence of righteousness, one becomes free from anguish and free from evil. —Dhammapada 203-05

SIKHISM

After wandering to my home [true self] have I returned, and all of my desires have obtained. Devotees of God! Completely fulfilled is my self, as the Master has granted a vision of the Supreme Being, realized by mystic illumination. —Adi Granth, Majh, M.5

A COURSE IN MIRACLES

God established his relationship with you to make you happy, and nothing you do that does not share his purpose can be real. The purpose God ascribed to anything is its only function. Because of his reason for creating his relationship with you, the function of relationships became forever “to make happy.” *And nothing else.* —Text 17:IV, 1-4

Sai Spiritual Education Lesson Plan

Happiness: Views from Many Faiths and Traditions (Group 4)

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE: Unity of Faiths • **VALUE/SUBVALUE:** Peace/Happiness

QUOTE: *People are unhappy because of worldly pursuits, attachments, enjoyments—too much interest in the world. To get free of this fault, a person has to be told of its seriousness. He must realize that desire is never-ending, like the waves of the sea.* (CWSSSB, p. 68) Have students copy the quote in their spiritual journals. Break the quote into phrases or sentences and discuss as a group the meaning of each phrase or sentence.

DEVOTIONAL SINGING: Students organize and lead a succession of bhajans on a happiness theme. Examples: “Sai Baba’s Coming to Fill Up Our Hearts,” “Love Is My Form.”

SILENT MEDITATION: Focus silently on a building a feeling of Sai’s wonderful presence and happiness in the heart, up to 10 minutes, or continue with regular group practice of the *So-Ham* or Light Meditation.

READING/STUDY: Copy for group reading the quotes on “Happiness: Views from Many Faiths” (pp. 43-44), and the poems on pp. 17, 34, and 48 (Bhagavad Gita excerpt, “Simple Gifts,” and “An Irish Blessing”). Guide students in listing and discussing the main ideas in each quote; invite students to respond to each poem/quote.

ACTIVITY: Work in small groups or as partners. Each group takes one or more of the quotes/poems and goes in depth with it to understand the meaning, using a dictionary, if needed, to construct meanings of unfamiliar terms. Have students identify the human values related to each quote; they can rewrite and explain ideas in the quotes, using their own words, to develop the meaning. Teacher rotates to each small group to monitor students’ work; then have students come back to the main group and share results.

LIFE APPLICATION: Review the concepts of desire, anger, simplicity, what it means to “bow and bend,” and friendship, in the poems and quotes studied. Ask students to reflect and journal each night on: (1) Did any desires lead you to anger during the day? (2) Were you able to “bow or bend”? If so, how? (3) What effect did this have on your happiness? (4) Were your friendships a help or hindrance in this? If not able to “bow and bend,” experiment with doing so in the following days/weeks and keep recording the effects.

EXTENDING ACTIVITY: (1) Challenge students to create a project based on the collection of quotes. (2) Read and apply the concepts in “Fly to Happiness,” on pp. 24-25, with each student creating an action plan for the “weights” they would like to reduce.

USA Retreat and Conference Dates, 2009

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

Region 9 (Southwest), New Mexico: Sept. 4–6, 2009, Land of Enchantment Retreat at the Bodhi Mandala Zen Center, Jemez Springs, NM. Theme: *Love in Action: Head, Heart, Hands*. Special workshop in preparation for the Spring 2010 Region 9 Walk for Values, which will take place in Arizona. Speakers: Berniece Mead, Ladd Bogdanoff. Contact: Elaine Hausman, 505-660-0283 or ehausman@rockridge.biz.

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

Region 6 (Pacific Northwest): Sept 5–7, 2009, at Silver Falls Conference Center, www.silverfallsconference.com. Theme: *All Our Relations: Expressions of the One*. Speakers: Daniel Scovill, Margo Bear. Contact: Ram Pochincherla, 503-531-0490 (h); 503-261-3452 (c); or rampochincherla@yahoo.com.

Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Conference: Oct. 10–11, 2009, at Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, CA. Organized by the Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Committee. Theme: *Sri Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare and Sri Sathya Sai Global Health Mission*. Due to rising interest in attendance and requests from interested delegates, the registration deadline is extended to Sunday, September 12, 2009. Physicians, dentists, fellows, and medical students may register online at www.saiconference.org. Contact: inquiry@saiconference.org or www.saiconference.org.

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

Region 8 (Pacific South), San Diego Retreat: Oct. 31–Nov. 1, 2009, at Camp Buckhorn, near Idyllwild, CA. www.campbuckhorn.org. Theme: *Love Is Our Form*. Speakers: Jeremy Hoffer, Gene Massey. Contact: Scott Sandler, 619-920-1620, icxcsai@gmail.com.

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RECENT ARRIVALS: BOOKS

Ceiling on Desires (Expanded Edition), by Phyllis Krystal, eloquently describes a method to achieve a happier life and an enlightened state by giving up attachment to our ego-and-bodily-inspired desires. It teaches self-discipline and the placing of a limit on wasteful uses of money, food, time, and energy. The reader is also given exercises and meditations to practice at the end of each topic. BW-031 \$14.00

Love Is My Form: Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, by B.V. Ramana Rao, recounts the author's initially skeptical journey to Baba—and how he was spiritually transformed through numerous experiences and the witnessing of many miracles through Baba's divine play. BI-188..... \$3.00

Sai Blossoms, by Professor Anil Kumar Kamaraju, Swami's translator, is the fourth book in a series containing the popular "Sunday talks" given by Prof. Kumar in Prasanthi Nilayam, which deliberate, in depth, Swami's sayings and teachings. (The previous volumes are *Sai Sandesh*, *Sai-Chology*, and *Sai Vedam*.) The author represents this volume as a continuation of *Sai Vedam*; it contains 14 lectures and rich question-and-answer sessions at the ends of some chapters. Various spiritual topics are covered; Professor Kumar imparts what he has learned as a result of observing, at close range, whenever possible, Bhagavan Baba's actions, interactions, and utterances. BI-181 \$5.00

The Divine Master: My Lord and My Light, by Jenny Socrate, offers readers the necessary stages in finding their way to spiritual fulfillment. She discusses and demonstrates Swami's teachings through sharing her own learning experiences. BI-193..... \$5.00

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

CDs

Kaliyuga Ke Avathar Sai Bhajans Beautiful bhajans on Lord Sai performed by Srinivas Raghavan. SCE-194... \$10.00

Remind Me My Lord Sai devotional songs in English, performed by Srinivas Raghavan SCE-195... \$10.00

An Irish Blessing

*May the sun always shine on your windowpane;
May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain;
May the hand of a friend always be near you;
May God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.*

Upcoming Newsletter Themes: Invitation for Submissions

Many thanks to our contributors who have enriched these pages by sharing their inspirations, poems, artwork, personal experiences, reports, and photography. Thanks also to our SSE and YA contributors! We have in mind some themes for future issues and would like to invite your submissions:

- November-December 2010 (85th Birthday issue): **"I Am I"**

Other themes we'd like to explore:

- **"Polishing the Mirror"** (*sadhana*/aiming for triple purity in thought, word, and deed)
- **"Trust"** (or as Phyllis Krystal has said, "Surrender, Trust, and Accept")
- **"Opening the Heart"**

In addition, SSE/SSEHV teachers are invited to submit original lesson plans for any age group (Groups 1-4). As always, materials received are subject to selection and editing per the discrimination of the editorial team. Please include the **author's name, city, contact info, and complete citations for all quoted passages, especially the dates of discourses**. Kindly keep a copy for yourself of all submissions, as materials are nonreturnable.

—SSN-USA Editors