

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Divine Darshan

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SAI'S MESSAGE



VISIONS OF THE DIVINE

*V*isions are only reflections of divine vibrations in the mind, aroused by sadhana (spiritual practice). They are milestones, signposts; they happen on the road to the goal. They do not—they cannot—accompany you right to the end. You will have to travel alone and overcome obstacles. Grace from your own Self is the most important and essential help for spiritual progress. I might grant you grace without limit, but of what use can that be if your heart is not clean and if your head is full of ego? Clean your heart with love and remove ego through service.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Sanathana Sarathi, 1979

Oceans of Darshan

A Personal Flotilla of Sai Bliss

Just when I finished the enclosed *darshan* story for the *Newsletter*, a fresh new copy of the *Tapovanam** arrived from the Tustin Book Center. I picked up the book, and it opened to a section on Dr. Frank Baranowski, which tells the story of his seeing Baba's huge aura at Whitefield, a decade before my story took place. I started to cry.

Can you imagine? Here I was, ready to send the *darshan* story, and the book comes from Tustin, and it opens to the Baranowski aura story.

Baba's energy filled the room. I was so amazed, I stayed up all night, falling asleep at 6:00 a.m. Who of us can understand the amazing things Swami does? When he wants to show you his omnipresence, the feeling is simply wondrous. Frankly, I cried all night. Thank you, Baba. What a feeling. —L.

* *Tapovanam: Sri Sathya Sai Sathcharithra, Sacred Life Story of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba* by Santisri (Jandhyala Venkateswara Sastry), Prasanthi Nilayam, 2000.

As every word ever uttered since the dawn of time reverberates circling the universe ... As every thought ever pondered reverberates forever across the universe ... So, too, every Sai *darshan* reverberates forever around the universe ...

In one way or another we've all experienced dozens of Baba *darshans* (blessing of seeing divinity)—perhaps under the bright sun of Prasanthi, perhaps in dreams, perhaps by focusing on a Baba photo or a Sai *bhajan* (devotional song). In those moments, Baba's love invades us totally. Those *darshans* are not a one-time affair. They are never-ending. Accessing our internal memory buttons, we

can fly back into those omnipresent *darshans* and live them again in full technicolor. And by some Swami miracle, those *darshans* replay in our hearts with the force of the same Sai love as happened long ago. There is no rigid time structure in the Sai cosmic sea, because Swami controls time. So, each and every *darshan* is an unending *akhanda* (everlasting) *darshan*, filled with Sai.

A galaxy of *akhanda darshans* is swirling inside me—stored, and frequently replayed. Unannounced, they race to the surface of my mind by themselves—while walking the streets of New York, when leaning on a tree, or while sitting near a stream.

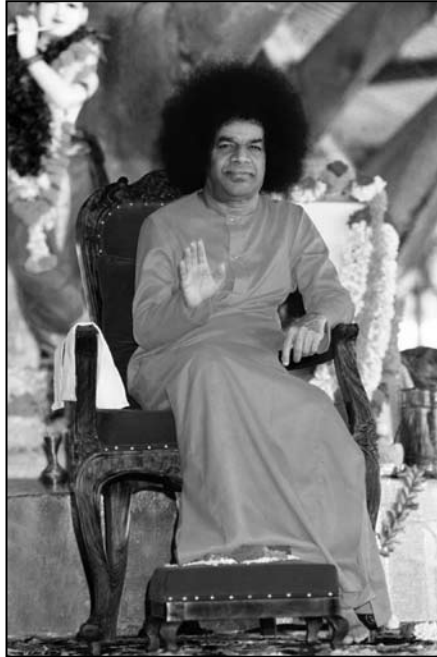
What was yesteryear in Prasanthi transforms instantly into today in New York. That parade of *darshans* has become the fabric of who I am, what I think, how I feel—they are my personal flotilla of Sai bliss.

One bewildering *darshan* always leaps to the surface more frequently than any of the others. The time was in the early 1980s—years before the modern steel and glass superstructure rose over the Whitefield *darshan* space. All we had in those days was a giant tree, a statue of Krishna, a tin roof to ward off the glaring sunshine, and a hyperactive troop of monkeys. Unfortunately, we also had only one *darshan* daily. But in the afternoons a few devotees would slip in to sit under the giant tree.

That particular day, there were no garlands on the Krishna statue and no chair for Swami. The gatekeeper insisted that Swami would not come. The *seva dals* (service volunteers) assured everyone that he would not be coming. The potential for a Swami walkabout was zero. Yet, the joyous drama that unfolded has been etched in my heart for over 25 years.

Stubbornly, I was unhappy about the “only one *darshan*” rule. My heart needed to

see him again that afternoon. I was unyielding, but Baba tells us to be relentless and unyielding when it comes to the love of God. So, I found a spot on the periphery of the 20 devotees and planted myself. I sat and sat. It



seemed to go on forever. I silently sang to Baba the imploring *bhajan*, *Bhaktone he aja pukara* (Devotees pray to you to come). This dynamo of a *bhajan* ends with pulsating, insistent choruses of *Anahi padega* (Baba, you must come). I turned into a child, begging over and over, “*Anahi padega*,” mixed with “Baba, you must come.” Eyes closed, I was singing quietly, while the energy racing out of me was insistent.

“Baba, you must come” was all that I desired. Flashing through

my mind was a memory of that famous Baba letter wherein he states, *Having desired what ought to be desired, hold onto it till your desire is fulfilled*. That is what I did. Suddenly, the energy in the air shifted. I opened my eyes, and to my shock, Swami, who “would not come,” had quietly come. Nobody saw him come. How did he get there? He was standing delicately and all alone on the road, his halo and crown of hair prominent against the late afternoon sky.

Did he hear my imploring? Of course he heard me. I was shouting “*Anahi padega*” so loudly in my silence. He was immobile like a statue. His right palm was raised in a gentle Sai pose, and he was softly transmitting. I kept singing in the silence, hoping to entice him closer. But he stood his ground, simply radiating waves of love. Before long, you could clearly see in the warm afternoon air, a growing circle of love flowing from Sai far away on the road to our tiny group by the tin shed—and that circle of effulgent light was racing round and round, back and forth.

That luminescent love circle exploded from *love* to *LOVE* to *LOVE* to *L – O – V – E*. You could feel it. It was like heat baking the *darshan* area. Immersed in bliss, Swami was gazing directly at us. That flame of fire in his eyes. That stare. Was he 30, 40, 50 feet away? I was merged in Baba’s eyes as he roasted us.

He never moved, but the Sai bliss poured. His aura expanded and engulfed everyone under the tin shed and way beyond the compound wall. There was no stopping the love circle flowing from Swami to the devotees. He never stirred from his fixed point on the road adjacent to where we were sitting. I kept thinking, “This moment, this circle, this bliss, this merging with Sai, is what it’s all about.”

Bliss was racing. “*Anahi padega*.” I had experienced his love and aura before, so many times, but never so filled with technicolor waves of bliss rolling out toward devotees. It must have been 20 minutes of silent, golden Baba transmission. Time expanded and time vanished (typical Sai). This thrilling

Baba tidal wave cascading across the sands was so unexpected and indescribable.

It is during Sai fireworks like this that one can clearly understand what the creators of the “108 Names of Sai” meant by number 62—*Om Sri Sai Adbhuta Charyaya Namaha* (“I offer salutations to Sai, who engages in indescribable, wonderful activities”)—because that *darshan* was absolutely indescribable. Fine particulates of Sai light were building up inside everyone, and at some point the crowd had multiplied to hundreds, magnetically attracted by Swami’s mesmerizing outpouring of bliss.

It is hard to explain a Sai *darshan* like this to those who are new to Swami. To be sure, it is not simply seeing the avatar with one’s eyes. Rather it is seeing him with one’s total being. Every arena of sensation, emotion, and consciousness inside, floods with a cloudburst of Swami’s cosmic love. And this *darshan* was racing full throttle. At this moment, I was saturated with Sai, super-saturated with Sai light. And I was numb.

Had singing and begging for his love dragged Swami out to bless us with this unusual bath of love? Only Baba knows. Thankfully, he came and gave us a lifetime of memories. Eventually, Swami turned around and super-silently floated back to the gates of his compound, Sai style, while streams of light trailed behind him.

That astonishing day of the *Anahi padega darshan* wasn’t merely a Sai fireworks display. At times, with Baba, one gets the feeling that he is plugging you into the source—taking you beyond the ordinary world and the

meditation plateau, to Sai's playing field. That afternoon and that *darshan* were clearly another plateau.

While Baba created that very visible whirling circle of Sai love out to the devotees, he was surely teaching us about the engineering of love. That is, you don't merely bask in love—you send it and receive it. You float it out and share it. You empty yourself, so more abundant love can build up inside your heart. You activate the circle and you keep it radiating and flowing.

Since that day I have consciously incorporated that Baba circle into *seva* visits, soup kitchens, and all my interactions with friends and clients. So, when I'm handing out cookies and food to the homeless, I automatically remember Swami's circle of love and immediately fly back to the old Whitefield *darshan* grounds and live once again that omnipresent moment of Sai bliss.

—Lorenzo
New York, New York

Baba's Words on Darshan:

... to see the form of the Lord and receive his blessing. (Summer Showers 1973)

... bliss of the vision of the Lord. (Rama Katha Rasa Vahini 1)

Be in the state of receiving, like the negative of a photographic film in a camera, sensitive and ready to receive whatever divine beam comes from the Lord.

(Murphet, Howard, *Where the Road Ends*)



*By dint of devotion, one finds fulfillment in life.
Whether a prince or a pauper, a fool or a scholar,
By dint of devotion, one finds fulfillment.
Whether performing penance holding one's nose,
Holding one's breath, or donning ochre robes,
Whether adorned by necklace or ornament,
It is by dint of devotion that one finds fulfillment.*

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1996, ch. 8

Grasping What Ought to Be Grasped

From the Ramayana: Vibhishana and Hanuman

Vibhishana was a staunch supporter of *dharma* (righteousness). Upon finding his brother Ravana indulging in unrighteousness, he denounced his ways and tried to correct him, not wanting to be a party to sin and unrighteousness. When he failed to correct Ravana, he gave him up, joined the forces of *dharma*, and surrendered himself to divinity.

Vibhishana was a spiritual aspirant par excellence. Even as a young boy, he performed penance. Lord Brahma appeared to him and said, “O Vibhishana! Ask whatever you want.” Vibhishana replied, “Lord! Bless me that I may live a life of righteousness, charity, and sacrifice—that my heart overflow with compassion and never be hard.” Brahma blessed him.

By constant effort, Vibhishana filled his heart with the quality of compassion. He lived a life of devotion, observing truth and righteousness. This enabled him to understand the Rama Principle—that the name and form of the Lord correspond to truth and righteousness.

When Hanuman was searching for Sita in Lanka, he encountered Vibhishana chanting Rama’s name in the corner of a palace. They exchanged pleasantries, as both were devotees of Rama. Vibhishana said to Hanuman, “O Hanuman, though you met Rama only a few months ago, you have advanced very high in the realm of the spirit, and you are enjoying the sweet proximity of Rama. But although I have been chanting Rama’s name for so many years, I have not had Rama’s *darshan* even once.”

To this, Hanuman replied, “O Vibhishana, you must not only perform penance, repetition of the Name, and meditation, but you must also participate in *seva* (selfless service). Service is the very boat of life. It is not enough if you see a fruit; your stomach will not be filled merely by looking at it; you must eat the fruit and digest it.”

Hanuman exchanged spiritual ideas often with Vibhishana. He said:

*Having grasped what ought to be grasped,
Hold on till you succeed;
Having desired what ought to be desired,
Hold on till you succeed;
Having asked what ought to be asked,
Hold on till you succeed;
Having thought what ought to be thought,
Hold on till you succeed.*

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1996, ch. 8

Yearn for God Alone

Desiring “what ought to be desired ...”

The man who is filled with love has great peace of mind, is pure at heart, and is unruffled by any adverse circumstances, failures, or losses. This fortitude is derived from love of the Lord, which endows him with self-confidence. Self-confidence generates an immense internal power. Everyone has to develop this power. Everyone has to develop this self-confidence so that the bliss of the Self (*Atma-ananda*) may be experienced.

Love should be free from feelings of expectation of any return or reward. Love arising out of a desire for something in return is not true love. Utterly selfless and motiveless love should be developed; this is the bounden duty of man.

You should not pray to God seeking this favor or that, because no one can know what immensely precious, divine, and magnificent treasures lie in the treasure-house of divine grace. No one can know what God intends or desires to give to a devotee. In such a situation, by asking for trivial and petty things, man demeans his divine estate.

No one can understand what valuable, sacred, and divine favor God will choose to confer on a deserving devotee. Hence man should not seek from God, nor desire, nor pray for petty trifles. More precious and desirable than anything else is God's love.

If you wish to ask for anything from God, pray, “O Lord! Let me have you alone.”

Once you have secured the Lord, you can get anything you want. That was why Mira sang, “O heart, drink the nectar of divine love.” When you can have divine love, to crave for anything else is like asking for coffee grounds from the Wish-Fulfilling Tree.

Avoid Fawning Praise of God

What you must seek from God is God himself, and not any small or worthless benefits. Even while praying to God for his grace, you should not indulge in extravagant praise and flattery to win his approbation and seek his favors: “Oh Lord! You are the ocean of compassion! Your mercy is boundless! You are the refuge of the distressed and the protector of the abandoned!” Addressing the Lord in this manner palls on him.

Such praise for securing favors has a commercial tinge, and the favors obtained through such praise are not proper at all. When the rishis and the yogis in the past resorted to such praise, they had to perform penance for hundreds of years to get a vision of the Lord.

Consider God as Friend

God has a partiality for the human form. It is said, “God must be experienced in the human form (*Daivam manusha rupena*). Only when God is regarded as a friend and companion is when he is pleased most. By

addressing him as “Oh, my dearest friend! My beloved one! The darling of my heart,” you can give him the greatest joy.

But if instead he is described as one who is beyond praise by Brahma and other gods, who is not accessible to mind and speech, whose glories are beyond description, who prevailed over the god of death, who was born as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva, who came to the rescue of Draupadi, who protected the Pandavas, and so on—and then he is entreated to confer his grace on you—there is an element of the ludicrous in the comparisons made. Such praises even savor of envy. By saying, “O Lord! You have talked to them and given them so much! Why don’t you come to my help?” the comparison seems to stem from jealousy.

Only when God is approached as a loving friend who has the power to come to our aid will our desires be fulfilled. We use words of praise toward an unfamiliar person to show him respect and regard as a stranger. But we welcome an old friend with easy familiarity and intimacy.

The composer, Thyagaraja, performed *sadhana* (spiritual practice) for many years to obtain a vision of the Lord. By that *sadhana*, he established an intimate relationship with Sri Rama. Because of this, he greeted Rama with friendly familiarity and welcomed him to his house as a companion, in the song: “*Rara ma intidaka*” (Rama, come to our house). Because of his intimacy, Thyagaraja could address Rama in this way, in the second person singular.

We must learn to recognize the Divine in this intimate manner. Reduce your desires. Don’t pray for trifles. Don’t go to a shrine intending to seek fulfillment of petty desires. It is an unfortunate sign of the Kali Age that people go to a temple or pilgrim center only to get various trivial benefits.

If you can win over the Lord himself, can anything be beyond your reach? Thyagaraja declared: “Rama! If only I have your *anugraha* (grace) all the *grahas* (planets and their influences) will be within the palm of my hand.”

Attach Yourself Only to Love for God

It is essential to please God and win his grace by regarding him as a friend and not indulging in excessive praise. For this, supreme love is the primary means. This love should be firm and unchanging, unaffected by trials and tribulations and the vicissitudes of life. The Pandavas are supreme examples of such unwavering love (in their love for Krishna). When their wife Draupadi was being humiliated in Duryodhana’s assembly hall, when Arjuna’s son Abhimanyu was attacked and slain by the Kauravas, when Drona’s son Ashwathama massacred the infant children of the Pandavas (the Upapandavas), when they performed the glorious Rajasuya sacrifice at the height of their power, or when they were in exile in the forest without succumbing to the difficulties and troubles they were subjected to, they adhered firmly to the name of Krishna, with unwavering faith in him. They relied only on Krishna’s love.

Difficulties and troubles are passing clouds that come and go. Do we remember all the kith and kin with whom we were related in our previous lives? While all these relationships have changed, only the relationship with God remains unchanged. We should attach ourselves to this unchanging love and not cling to other, ever-changing relationships.

***Yajna* Is the Quest for Discovering the One**

Yajnas (purification rituals) are designed to lead you to the One who is unchanging and eternal. *Ya + jna* is *Yajna*. The *Ya* refers to the One who is the basis of all creation. *Jna* refers to the quest for knowing that One. *Yajna*, therefore, is the quest for discovering the One who sustains all. How is this search to be made? The Veda declares, “Permeating everything, inside and outside, is the Lord Narayana.” Where can you search for the Lord, who is omnipresent? Why search at all?

The sages performed severe penance to attain the ultimate Reality. Finally they declared, “We have known the Supreme Person, who is effulgent like the sun and beyond all outer darkness.” (*Vedaham Etham Purusham Mahantham Adityavarnam Tamasa Parastat.*) In other words, the Lord is beyond the darkness of ignorance (*tamoguna*), and to experience the Lord we must get rid of our ignorance. The Lord is beyond the veil of darkness, so when the veil is removed, the Lord can be seen. When filled with the darkness of ignorance from head to foot, how can one experience God?

People are not prepared to make any sacrifice. Harboring a mountain of desires in his heart, a devotee offers a petty coconut to the Lord! This is not the way to pray to the Lord. This is not devotion. This is not love. To seek a favor is not prayer at all. Only a selfless person can engage himself in service to society. Only such a person is entitled to serve God. The first requisite is the spirit of sacrifice. This can be developed only through love. A person filled with love is prepared to make any sacrifice, while a person without love will be unwilling to make any sacrifice.

God does not dwell in any particular place. You are God. When you get rid of body consciousness, you will realize your divinity.

Experiencing the Divine in the Waking, Dream, and Deep Sleep States

In the waking state, you have various experiences relating to the phenomenal world. All these experiences are through nineteen agencies—five organs of action (*karmendriyas*), five senses of perception (*jnanendriyas*), five life breaths (*panchapranas*), mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*/higher mind), will (*chitta*), and ego (*ahamkara*). Only when all these nineteen agencies are present can you enjoy the experiences of the physical world in the waking state.

The *Atma* (inner divinity) principle that is conscious in the waking state is called the *Virat-Swarupa*—the cosmic form. The cosmos is the form of the *Virat-Purusha*, the Cosmic Person. In this form, the Divine is called *Viswa*. As the universe has emerged

from *Viswa*, it is called *Viswam*. Another name for *Viswa* is *Viraja-Swarupa*—one who confers joy, stands out as an ideal to the world, and is the embodiment of being, awareness, and bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*).

When you enter the sleeping state, you have dreams. Even in the dream state, the nineteen agencies are present, but in a subtle form. Wherefrom do dreams arise? Dreams come from the dreamer himself, who is also the experiencer. The Divine Principle in the dream state is called the Effulgent (*Tejasa*), the Golden-Wombed One (*Hiranyagarbha*), meaning one who contains all within himself and projects all from himself.

The third state is deep sleep. What is experienced in deep sleep? Forgetting oneself in an unconscious condition, the experience is bliss. In that state, only constant integrated awareness or *Prajna* exists. “*Prajananam Brahma*,” declares the Upanishad.

This state of awareness is equated with *Brahmam* (God). The Divine Principle of which one is aware in this state is called *Prajna*.

Experience the Divine Naturally through Love Alone

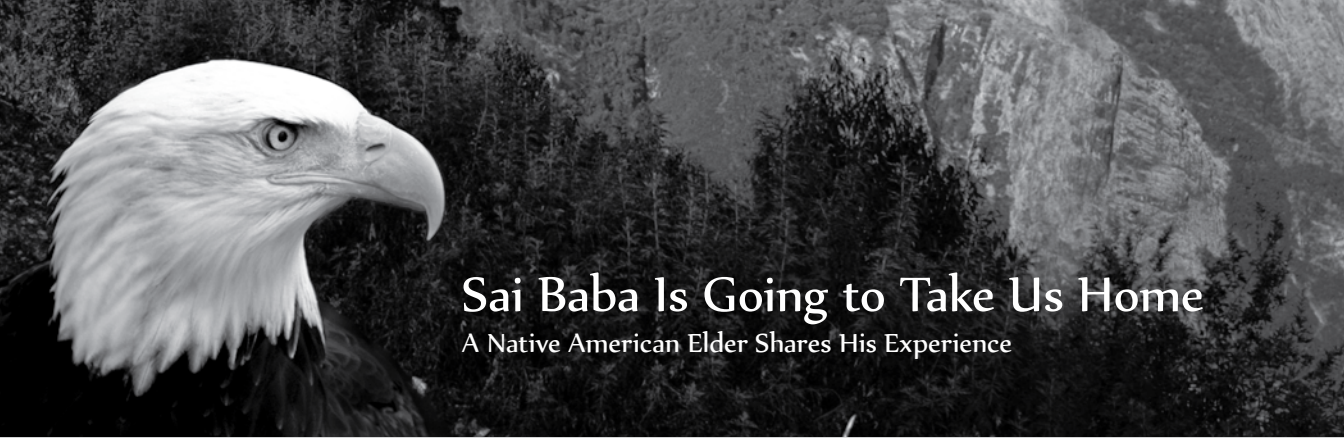
The *Viswa* present in the waking state, *Tejasa* present in the dream state, and *Prajna* present in the deep sleep state—all three are one only. When the states of consciousness are dispensed with, we have only one experiencer, present in all of them. That is the unity of the Divine, indicated by the dictum *Tat-Twam-Asi* (“That Thou Art”).

Every person has this Divine Principle in him. There is no need to search for the Divine elsewhere. He is everywhere, omnipresent. Forgetting one’s inherent divinity, man searches for the Divine in the external world. Even in this search, the primary requisite is pure, selfless love.

Chant the name of the Lord with that love. God loves the human form, which is why avatars come in human form. You can experience the vision of God by following the path of *karma* (prescribed actions). The Lord has declared in the Bhagavad Gita, “You are qualified only to perform actions.” A scriptural text says, “Only through the body can you pursue *dharma* (the path to God).” All living beings are bound by *karma* in this world.

The Divine is being worshiped as a decorated idol or image, with an artificial form, but the Lord should be experienced in his natural form, in a natural way. All the ornamentation the devotee resorts to does not please God. It may please the heart of the devotee, but God’s heart is not moved thereby. Only through love can God’s heart be moved and softened. The devotee has that power. Without resorting to extravagant adulation of God, not seeking petty favors from God, yearn for God alone, and you will get everything. Endeavor to make God your intimate friend.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
(*Sathya Sai Speaks* 22:34, Oct. 9, 1989)



Sai Baba Is Going to Take Us Home

A Native American Elder Shares His Experience

George Walking Bear Gillette is of the Blackfoot, Shoshone, and Paiute blood heritage. George's spiritual residence, "Four Winds," is in northwestern California, where gatherings of hundreds of American Indians occur annually. George Walking Bear is a spiritual teacher, medicine man, and leader, as well as a respected elder. He has been on the medicine path of spiritual doctoring for approximately 45 years and has had phenomenal experiences with Sri Sathya Sai Baba during his life as an instrument.

Who and what is Sai Baba? He is called an *avatar*, and *avatar* means "God in the flesh." One of the things we must keep in mind is when you see Sai Baba with his great hairdo and fire-red gown, you are not seeing God. His physical form in this physical world can create a delusion, because God does not have a form. If he did, he wouldn't be omnipresent.

The mind given to humans is limited in its ability to comprehend the whole of things. God and the angels never had a beginning, nor shall they have an end. Even though that is true, it doesn't make sense to our limited understanding of such a thing, because we live in a transitory world on the earth.

This limitation was given to us when we fell from grace and became known as the fallen angels. We actually forgot God in our self-centered folly, so now we have to search for him. The ironic part of this spiritual

hide-and-go-seek scenario is, he hid in our hearts.

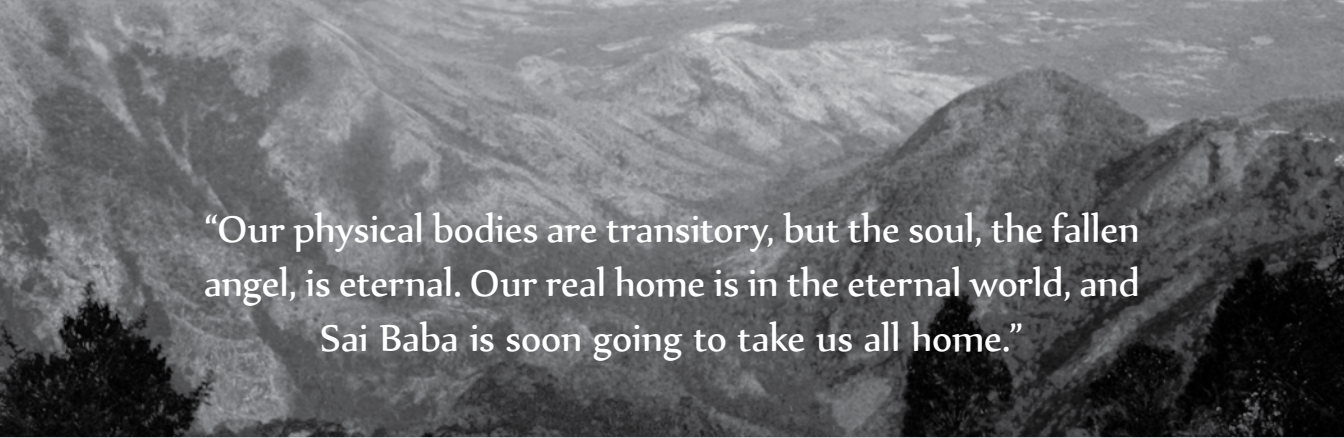
The heart is the doorway to God.

Baba said, "The entrance to God is through the door in our hearts. The voice of God is within the heart."

Jesus said, "So you are in your heart, so you be."

The Hunas say, "That which you seek is within."

Sai Baba is God in the flesh, and when you pray to him, don't ask for something you want or to take away something you don't want. All those things and conditions are what you came to experience to help you go from being mortal to an immortal. You should pray to him every morning or every night and ask him to guide you and give you strength and direction to handle the things you are presented with. You can also ask him for a solution to a problem.



“Our physical bodies are transitory, but the soul, the fallen angel, is eternal. Our real home is in the eternal world, and Sai Baba is soon going to take us all home.”

Sai Baba says that in order to receive God’s bliss, we must serve God. The only way we can do that is to serve our fellow man. He also said, “Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray.” Our fellow human beings are God, because we are a part of him, not apart from him. We are Sai Babas, incognito. As Jesus once said, “...Ye are gods.”*

Over hundreds of thousands of years we have become so accustomed to our physical bodies that we believe we are the physical body. The physical body is just a persona, and *persona* means the mask the actor wears.

Sai Baba sees us as magnificent beings who are about to graduate from this hell on earth. Each and every fallen angel is going to return to Sai Baba’s bliss, to eternity. Our physical bodies are transitory, but the soul, the fallen angel, is eternal. Our real home is in the eternal world, and Sai Baba is soon going to take us all home.

I have had a good many experiences with Sai Baba, and the one I picked for this article also shows his wonderful sense of humor.

*John 10:34: “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?” (referring to Psalms 82:6: “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.”)

He once said that if your God doesn’t have a sense of humor, get a new God.

I was in a sweat lodge with some friends on a reservation when all of a sudden I couldn’t breathe. My asthma picked a bad time to act up, and I couldn’t just get up and go outside. We have a lot of protocol involved in this sacred cleansing ceremony, so I hollered, “Baba, George can’t breathe!”

All of a sudden, there he (Baba) was, coming through the closed canvas door. It is dark in the lodge, but when he came in, it lit up, and he pulled his gown up a couple of inches and did a quick dance around the hot stones.

He then walked toward me, and an eagle appeared in his hands. He held it toward me and it flapped its wings and made a breeze, and I could breathe.

Of all the events I have had with him, this one was comical, and I laughed, which made my asthma act up again for moment or two.

The sweat leader couldn’t believe his eyes and said, “I think I’m a believer.”

—George Walking Bear
Northwestern California

Ruben's Soul Story

May the Great Spirit Guide Us to Enlightenment



Ruben Talavera is of the Yaqui Nation bloodline heritage and is a medicine-man for the people who are full blooded human-beings. He lives in Northern California and is very close to Great Spirit (Sai Baba), as the Creator directs the people to Ruben for spiritual doctoring. He's had countless dreams and visitations with Sai Baba related to his work as a spiritual doctor (instrument).

Being part of the Native American blood heritage (as I am), God's name, *Sathya Sai Baba*, which translates in English as *Truth Divine Mother/Father*, is addressed in the Native American spiritual way of life as *Great Mystery, Great Spirit, Life Giver, Grandfather*, or *Creator*. *Creator* is the most common name used for God among most of the indigenous people of the Americas, yet we have the name of the Creator in our own native languages. Since "i" is the ego, you will find the use of my earth-given name during this introduction. Then we will insert a creative spiritual character, as "Red Bear," to explain how our Life Giver and Ruben came to meet during this earth sojourn.

The Life Giver gave my birth name as Ruben Talavera, a resident of Northern California. Ruben's indigenous heritage is of the Yaqui (ya-qee) Nation, who are located in Southern Arizona and Northwestern Sonora, Mexico. We are more than tribes; we

are nations of magnificent souls temporarily using a body. Ruben is going to share a grueling experience, using his created spiritual character, "Red Bear," as part of the spiritual journey toward his own soul (*Atma*) that Ruben has experienced.

Red Bear's first "reflection" (experience of God as our reflection) during this earth journey toward our Great Spirit took place approximately nine years ago, in 2002. One day Red Bear paid a visit to a Native American spiritual doctor/teacher named Walking Bear, who revealed that the Great Spirit is in flesh (an avatar), living in India. Walking Bear shared the Great Spirit's name as Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and Red Bear was guided to search for Sai Baba's address and wrote a correspondence. Two weeks later, the first visitation or truth dream presented itself, which was a "real" happening. Sai Baba was sitting in his own chair and smiling very graciously.

“An ego is a tool; it’s a tool for misery, and that is experience. There is an appointed time when the ego is conquered and we awaken.”

From that point forward there have been countless truth dreams and day visions with Sai Baba. Zeus is another God who would make his presence known in truth dreams. Other Gods/Lords who have appeared to Red Bear in dreams and visions are Saint Germain, Buddha, Jesus (The White Brotherhood), Lao-Tzu, Shirdi Sai Baba, Lakshmi, Vishnu, Umma, Shiva, Shakti, Ganesh, Sita, Rama, Athena, Apollo, Takasula, and Ares.

Other visitations from Sai Baba were happening in our household, among guests as well. We would see him in our hallway, bedroom, dining area, and outside stairway, in his metaphysical body, as true as a human being in plain vision. Our day visions take place in “reality,” just as if you and Sai Baba were meeting for an interview.

Now there’s a suffering story that needs to be shared, and it’s about a karmic disease called morbid and super obesity. Red Bear had this disease, which could not be avoided! All karmic matters must be met to balance out our misdeeds from the past. Sai Baba began to help Red Bear, after Red Bear’s first visit to Enchanted Acres Institute (a place where informal Sai retreats have been held) in July 2004. This was also Red Bear’s first time to eat the manifested sacred ash known as *vibhuti*.

After the first time eating *vibhuti*, Red Bear felt sharp pains in the stomach. This

began a stage of dealing with some very deep karmic emotions, such as hatred, anger, jealousy, control, envy, greed, lust, self-pity, and self-punishment. Those who come into the body do not suffer innocently.

One evening in January 2005, a message was sent spiritually through Red Bear’s sister, Lisa, [for Red Bear] to eat the sacred ash several times a day. Not too long after this announcement, a short man with afro-hair was seen standing next to Lisa, etherically, completely engulfed in a spiritual lavender color. We recognized Sai Baba as he instructed Lisa to have Red Bear lie down on his bed.

Sai Baba began spiritual surgery, and his hands and arms turned into surgical instruments. Sai Baba had Lisa leave the bedroom as he went to work. A beam of pure white light pierced Red Bear’s stomach. Afterward, Red Bear went to the restroom, as he was coughing up blood (confirming the Life Giver’s action).

Over the next months and years, upon false expectations and hopes, no weight loss took place. Instead, over 90 pounds were gained between 2005 and 2007. Red Bear thought he could escape gastric bypass surgery. One day, Walking Bear took out a crystal to see if the White Brotherhood would send their energy through and help stop the weight gain. Out of Red Bear’s stomach, Sai Baba’s presence came forth, and

he told Walking Bear, “I’m working.” It was astonishing! Some difficult karma arose, and there appeared to be no end in sight.

Depressing, disappointing, hateful, angry, and aggressive feelings were being pressed out. There were moments of wanting to give up life. Between Sai Baba and Zeus, they would not let Red Bear give up life. Sai Baba would show up to give a shot of grace—enough to help Red Bear work through the humiliation.

Finally, in 2007, a visitation came through. Sai Baba summoned Red Bear’s astral body to the ashram. Sai Baba was in his wheelchair and massaged Red Bear’s stomach. Red Bear fell to the floor. A double-pointed crystal came out of Red Bear’s mouth. It was purple-lavender in color, along with many gold nuggets filling the mouth. Then Sai Baba sent Red Bear’s astral body back to his physical body.

In 2007, Red Bear began the process of preparing for gastric bypass surgery. By January 2008 the surgery was completed, and Sai Baba’s presence was noticed. Thereafter,

Red Bear began to climb out of his karmic hell. The soul and Sai Baba are no different; we are one and the same. We are *a part* of God, not *apart* from him.

There are lessons in life that we go through as we come to “touch the hot stove,” and most of the time we cannot help ourselves. We experience, learn truth, and gain wisdom. The statement is the same as Sai Baba’s teaching about who we are: “the one we think we are, the one others think we are, and the true self.” Wisdom, wisdom, wisdom. It’s still the same statement.

An ego is a tool; it’s a tool for misery, and that is experience. There is an appointed time when the ego is conquered and we awaken. Life’s reward is a spiritual practice; service is our soul’s enrichment. The time is near for many who are ready to graduate from this school of hard knocks. May the Great Mystery guide us to enlightenment in the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. AHO!”

—**Ruben Talavera**
Northern California

Worship, with fixity of consciousness and purity of feeling, and free of all extraneous thought, becomes itself the super-conscious state (bhava samadhi). As a result of this, the Lord appears before the inner eye of the devotee, in the form the devotee has chosen for worship. The vision is not merely a matter of imagination; it is a “face-to-face” experience. Without difference of location, the devotee can abide in the presence of the Lord, in the selfsame place. This is called salokya mukti (the liberated state of abiding with the Lord).

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**
(*Prema Vahini*, ch 26 p 95)

Are We the Chosen Ones?

When Bhagavan Baba talks with the students, pearls flow from his mouth. On one hand these exchanges are humorous and practicable; on the other, not only his words but every action and *leela* (divine play, divine sport) is a message for all of us.

On one occasion Swami was sitting with the students around him. Suddenly he asked a strange question. “I am going to give Sai Gita (Swami’s pet elephant) to you. Come on, tell me, who wants her? Who will take her?”

The boys were taken aback. Everyone wanted to say “yes” when Swami asked them something, but this ... ? They thought, how will I take her home, how do I feed an elephant, and so on.

Suddenly one of them said, “Swami, I am ready to take Sai Gita.”

Swami, in his immense love, waved his hand and materialized a small silver elephant and gave it to the boy.



“The next time you come across an opportunity for Sai seva, don’t think twice. ... Grab the opportunity and leave the rest to the all-compassionate Lord of the universe.”

I am sure you can imagine the plight of the other students. Would not each of them have regretted not accepting Swami’s offer? Would not they have regretted that they let their heads think and find obstacles instead of letting their hearts decide? Swami knew very well that none of the students were able to take Sai Gita home and feed her.

But when we are ready to jump at the chances he gives us, he will create a Sai Gita that fits into our hand.

This beautiful *leela* enacted by Swami is for each one of us. It echoes to the entire Sai fold, “Grab every chance Swami gives you,” else you might regret it later. But what exactly is this chance? It is every opportunity we can take to get closer to our Lord, every opportunity to make him happy. Every day, every moment, we are surrounded by opportunities to help others, to put a smile on a sad face, to do some noble deed. But we hardly realize that these are unique chances for Sai seva (selfless service), to get one step ahead

in our journey toward him (which is in fact the journey to our true Self).

Be ready to realize and accept every opportunity for *seva*. Once we lose an opportunity, we may not get it back.

Once, in Sai Kulwant hall, Swami called a professor and instructed him to bring a box of sweets from the interview room for distribution to the devotees. As Swami went to the *darshan* lines, taking letters from devotees, the professor called a student and told him to go get the box of sweets. When Swami observed this, he called the professor and told him, “I might have asked the same of the student. Why have you deputed the work to him? I gave you an opportunity to serve, but you lost it, and you may not get it again.”

If at all we do realize that such an opportunity has come our way, and we decide to do a noble deed, what tends to follow immediately is a train of thoughts, each one finding a new reason as to why it should not be done. The brain is at work, then, and not the heart. We tend to think we are full of limitations, full of incapacities. Put the heart to work, and we realize, “After all, for whom am I doing this? Does not the loving mother know my limitations? Yes, Swami knows what we are capable of doing.”

Once, Swami was talking with the students. Suddenly, he turned to a student and asked, “Are you ready to do whatever I say?”

“Yes, Swami, I am ready,” the student replied.

With a smile, Swami said, “All right. Are you sure?”

The student affirmed, “Sure, Swami. I will do whatever you say.”

Then Swami said, “Go to the balcony and jump down.”

The student, stunned, looked into Swami’s eyes. To fulfill his word given to Swami, he got up and made a dash to the stairs. But before he could get to the foot of the stairs, Swami grabbed him in his arms. He looked at the student and said, “*Bangaru* (Golden One), to please Swami, you need not jump down from the balcony or do extraordinary things. Just be good. Be good, that’s all.”

So, dear brothers and sisters, the next time you come across an opportunity for Sai *seva*, don’t think twice. Swami often says that the mind is a mad monkey. At one moment it will say “yes,” and the next moment it will look for reasons to escape from the work. So, don’t follow the mind. Follow the heart, filled with love and devotion. Grab the opportunity and leave the rest to the all-compassionate Lord of the universe. Remember, we are the chosen ones, the direct messengers of the avatar. If we don’t make a difference in this world, who will?

—D. Sreenivasa Charyulu
Chintalapudi, West Godavari, India

The Inexplicable Call

Ms. Nooshin Mehrabani was born in Iran and worked as a reporter for Iranian National Radio and Television. She continued her career with an Iranian TV station after moving to Los Angeles, USA. Since 1991, when she first heard about Sai Baba, she has made many trips to India and has been blessed with several chances of interaction with Bhagavan Baba. She now lives in Puttaparthi, India.



I was born in Iran, worked in Canada and the USA, and since January 2007 have been living in Puttaparthi, basking in the bliss of being in the physical presence of Bhagavan Baba, my spiritual father and master. In July 2008 I received many phone calls from my mother, asking me to visit Iran and stay with her for a couple of months. It had been over two years since I had seen her, and she was getting older, so I seriously considered making a trip to Iran.

During one of those days I went to sleep with this heavily on my mind, and Swami appeared in my dream. I saw myself in typical western clothes, ready to leave for Iran, when Swami walked into the room and stood right in front of me. Before I even opened my mouth to ask for permission, he shook his finger at me and firmly said, “No! Don’t go to Iran to see your mom.”

When I woke up, I was both happy and a little sad—happy that Swami had come in my dream but sad for my mother. How could I give her this message? She is very attached to me and has always worried about my life in India. Also she was not a devotee of Sai Baba, and there was no way I could explain to her that I was following Baba’s directions.

The idea that I have surrendered my life to my guru and that I seek his permission before making my decisions was completely unacceptable to my family. Now I had no other option but to pray to Swami that my mother did not insist on my visiting her.

A few months later, one day as I was cooking in my apartment in Puttaparthi, the cell phone rang. I washed my hands and went to the drawing room to answer the call. No one was on the other end; instead, I heard the sounds of an Iranian television program. After a few seconds, I did hear a voice. It was my mother. She was asking who was calling her. When she found out that I was on the other end, she was extremely delighted but wondered why I had called her cell phone instead of the landline.

I was really surprised! I told her that I had not even known she had a cell phone, let alone called that number. I had to convince her that not only had I not made the call, but also that I was busy in the kitchen when my own cell phone rang. Then she told me that her cell phone too was also in another room, and the maid had pushed the answer button and brought it to her.

In fact, it was a new phone, and she had not yet given her number to anybody. That is why she persisted with her question, “How did you know this number?” It was very difficult for her to accept these mysterious happenings as Swami’s miracle, even though I knew this to be the case firmly in my heart.

I did try to explain to her that there is nothing Swami cannot do. We talked that morning for 45 minutes, and during the course of this conversation she revealed to me that just two days prior she had visited a holy shrine in Tehran and prayed to God, saying how much she missed me and seeking his divine intervention to see me. And in the next 48 hours God had connected us so amazingly!

I had no doubt all this was the doing of Sai Baba. This was more proof that God is only One, and there truly is no separation whatsoever between Allah, Jesus, or Sathya Sai Baba. And now it was up to the Lord to make my mother believe this miracle. As we talked more that day, she again asked if I could come to Iran to see her. I had to let her know that this was not the right time for me to make a visit.

Then, without having any real hope, I asked, “Mom, why don’t you come to India and see me?” Immediately she said, “When should I come?” I was really amazed. In fact, I had been requesting my family to come and see Baba for quite some time, but they had always been against my spiritual path. Now, seeing her interest, I was pleasantly surprised. I let her know that November

and December would be busy months in Puttaparthi, and she could come in the January of the next year.

Then I asked my mom to remember the date of this conversation. I knew that if I was not charged for this call, and if my mother too was not billed for this long conversation, it was surely Baba’s grace. After a month I received another phone call from my mother, letting me know that she had purchased a ticket to India. She also told me that when she received her telephone bill, there was no record of our conversation!

Many a time I have thought of myself as an instrument in the divine hands, but this incident brought a revelation. I realized that Swami does not need any of us as his instruments. It was his invisible hands that dialed the phone, and it is his grace that gives us the pleasure of imagining that we are his instruments. In reality, he doesn’t need anyone.

My mother arrived on January 2, 2009, and stayed in Puttaparthi with me for two weeks. I don’t know if this turned her into a Sai devotee, but what I do know is that she felt a lot of peace in India staying with me, and it was Swami who had answered her prayer quite inexplicably. When she finally left for Iran, she was more confident than ever that God was indeed looking after her dear daughter.

—**Nooshin Mehrabani**

Puttaparthi, India

Courtesy, *Heart2Heart Journal*
(June 2009 edition), www.radiosai.org

We Must Be Examples of Unity and Love

Mrs. Sharon Sandweiss, Speaker, Ladies' Day, November 19, 2009



Mrs. Sharon Sandweiss was blessed to have an opportunity to speak in the Divine Presence on the occasion of Ladies' Day 2009. In a gesture that is normal for any speaker, Sharon, upon coming to the podium, went up to Bhagavan seeking divine blessings, and in that moment of bliss missed out offering the rose that was meant for Bhagavan. After reaching the podium, upon realizing her "folly," she rushed back to Bhagavan with an apologetic smile, presenting the rose, and what followed in her talk was a stream of unsullied love for the Divine. She spoke about Swami and his love, sharing glimpses from his conversations with the Sandweiss family in interviews over the years.

With deepest humility and love, I offer *pranams* at the lotus feet of our beloved Sai Baba. Respected elders, brothers and sisters, and dear, dear students, I am honored and deeply humbled to stand before you today. I offer my heartfelt gratitude to Sai Baba for his loving compassion.

Thank you, Baba, for your motherly love. Thank you for this wonderful, festive, meaningful, sacred, beautiful, joyful, happy

day when we celebrate the sanctity of motherhood and the courage—the beautiful courage—and the amazing capabilities of women. Women all over the world are happy. Please speak through me, Baba, so that we all feel your love.

Recently, my husband and I tried to express our gratitude to Sai Baba. "Baba, You are always serving others. How can we help you?"

Baba smiled and said, “I don’t need your help. You help your husband. He helps you. You are one. And I help everyone.”

We cried, “Baba we love you *so-o-o* much.” (cheers) “Baba, we love you so much.”

And he quickly responded, “I love you more.” (cheers)

How can we understand this divine love, this irresistible love? It has brought us here from nearly every country and every religion in the entire world. We all love our countries, our sacred books, our family customs, and the traditional cooking spices used in our cultures. Yet we hunger for the same thing. We all want peace. We all want to love and be loved.

Once my husband and I shared an interview with a large group. Baba went around the room asking, “Where are you from?”

“Russia.”

“Where are you from?”

“Russia.”

“Where are you from?”

It seemed as if everybody was from Russia.

Then, Baba came to me and playfully said, “Well, are you from Russia, too?”

I said, “No, Baba. . . . Oh, *yes*—my grandparents were from Russia.”

Baba said, “See the connection? All are connected. All are one.”

Now, at first glance, Russia and America seemed very distant. Yet this distance shrinks when we compare it to the vastness of space. We are all inhabitants of Mother Earth. We

share the same oceans and vast rivers and mountains. We are responsible for each other. When a factory in some small town in the world belches up toxic air, we suffer everywhere. But when we offer love, when we work for the good of all, in one united voice, then we hear the universe rejoice.

Thirty-seven years ago, I was like many others. I worried about life. I worried a lot about death. I worried about our children. I worried about our pets. I was smiling on the outside, but inside I was a very sad and fearful soul facing a universe that seemed so meaningless. Fortunately, I married Samuel, who was always asking, “What is the meaning of life?”

In 1972, Sam went to India, in search of God. He returned transformed. He exclaimed, “God is on earth in the form of Sai Baba. You’re God. I am God. Everything is God. Now our lives are going to change forever.”

What was he talking about? Who was Sai Baba? What was going to happen to me and our four daughters? Needless to say, I was very scared. You have to remember this was in 1972, in the dark ages, before the Internet. Today, we just click a button and we are immediately connected with Radio Sai. We can hear Baba’s words. But back then it was very hard to find literature about Sai Baba. So, I observed my husband. He was truly transformed. He was happier. He was calmer. He was more peaceful. He was more patient, and most important of all, he was more loving. Of course, he was always loving, but he was even more loving.

I was amazed. How could a person change so quickly? I too wanted to have peace. I wanted to have faith. Before I knew it, I was on a plane to India, with my husband.

Sai Baba spared me a life of despair, and he brought sanctity and great joy to our family life. Sai Baba is a living presence in our lives. He knows and loves each one of us. He lives in our heart, as love, and we know that love is all that is lasting. My husband and I were thrilled to tell our daughters, “You are not just the body.

You are divinity. You are pure love. Be bold and brave like lions. Be courageous (and) unafraid. Follow your conscience. Think sacred thoughts. Do good deeds. Seek good company. You may stumble and fall, but remember, problems are your teacher, and your loving Sai is by your side. Talk to him. Speak to him. He is in your heart as love.”

And yet, telling our children is not enough. We must be examples and show unity of thought, word, and deed. We must practice and refine until we sparkle and shine. The following is a brief example of this truth.

When my husband returned from India, he immediately became a vegetarian. Now this was very unusual in America, where most people think a meal is incomplete without meat. I was very offended at first.



**Sai Baba is a living presence in our lives.
He knows and loves each one of us.
He lives in our heart, as love, and we
know that love is all that is lasting.**

He was refusing my cooking. But then I suddenly realized that I was eating an animal. I immediately became a vegetarian. Sai Baba was already helping me live a more thoughtful life. But how could we make our children change their eating habits so radically. Sai Baba says he is the source, not the force. So we decided to tell our

daughters, “You can have meat outside the home, but not in the home, no longer.”

Well, within perhaps a year, our twin daughters, who were maybe seven at the time, came to us and said, “Mommy, Daddy, we love animals too much. We don’t want to eat them.” The younger daughters joined them and said yes too. “We love them; we don’t want to eat animals.”

Can you believe that at the age of seven, they had the sensitivity, the purity in their hearts, to know that all life is sacred? This little example highlighted three points. First, when we become the example, others will

follow. Second, we all hold this wisdom, this truth, within us, and it is our duty as parents and teachers to help children manifest this truth. The third point is that secular life is not different from spiritual life. Everything is sacred when it is done with love, even our eating habits.

We tend to worry about the state of the world. We want our children to be safe and happy. Yet we see greed and disharmony everywhere. Years ago, we brought our concerns to Baba. “Baba, the world is in trouble.”

Baba said, “No, the world is good. The mind of man is the problem.”

“Well, Baba, what should we do about schools?”

He said, “The schools are the same. You have to speak with your children. You have to talk with them. You have to understand what they are thinking; you don’t always know what is in their minds.” In other words, he was emphasizing the importance of communication—open, respectful communication. First, we listen. Then we try to understand. And then comes the hard part. We have to adjust. We have to compromise—perhaps even when it comes to our children.

As Baba was speaking, I had a thought, “Where would this world be without divinity in it?”

Baba interrupted my thoughts and in a very powerful voice said, “Yes. If it were not for me, everything would be lost.”

My husband and I shuddered at the authority and the urgency of his words, “Without divinity, everything would be

lost.” God himself has come to save us from ourselves.

Many years ago, I asked Baba, “Can I do more? Can we do more?”

He said, “Yes, I will give you the power, the strength, and the blessings to do more.” When we have the impulse to do anything good, he will give us the power, strength, and blessings. And then he added, “Home and family.”

Today, on Ladies’ Day, we affirm that family life is the foundation of society. When there is harmony, peace, and mutual love and respect in the family, God is in our presence, and the world is happy. We are all members of one family—one divine family. When we serve our family with love, we will sanctify our lives. When we uphold justice, we justify our lives. When we support the suffering women in the world, we dignify our lives. When we preserve and protect Mother Earth, we purify our lives. And when we offer all to God, we glorify our lives.

Today is such a happy day. Today we are dancing in ecstasy, praising God’s glory. Today, we pray together, “Baba, keep us close. Don’t ever let us go. Grant us the power, the strength, and the blessings to earn your grace and become your bliss. We love you, Baba.”

Thank you and *Sai Ram!* (Cheers)

—Source: http://sssbt.org/Pages/Prasanthi_Nilayam/sharonsandweisspeech.html

Baba Comes to Us in Our Dreams

In this excerpt from the recently-published book, *Journeys to Love: Twenty-one Danes share their experiences of transformation after meeting Sathya Sai Baba*, Pia Hansen, a social and healthcare assistant, and her husband, Raman Budhiraja, a businessman, tell of their experiences with Sai Baba.

Pia: In October 1990, I heard a TV program presenting Sai Baba. I did not see it, but the TV was on in the living room while I was working in the kitchen, and I heard Steen Piculell quoting Sai Baba as saying there is only one God, and that we are all praying to the same God, no matter our religion. When I heard this, I ran from the kitchen to the living room and told my husband, “I like this guy, Sai Baba!” By the time I reached the living room, the program had ended.

This was my first time hearing the name, Sai Baba. I had no idea that he was a divine person, and no idea whatsoever that someday I would meet him and even speak to him. I had no idea he would be Raman’s and my God, the one who always helps us, leads us, and protects us. And I had no idea that I would have many spiritual dreams about him.

My husband Raman did not know Sai Baba either. Raman comes from New Delhi in North India, and Sai Baba lives in South India. Three months after the TV program about Baba, Raman and I went to India. We visited Agra and saw the Taj Mahal. Not far from Taj Mahal is the tomb of a Muslim saint; we wanted to see that place. When we stepped into the temple and saw a lot of red threads, Raman said, “If you tie a red thread here, a wish may be fulfilled.” I am not the type who believes in such things.

Nevertheless, within myself I said, “Baba, show me who you are.” I do not know why I said this; it just came from inside when I tied the red thread.

Back in New Delhi we bought a book about Baba, but I could not read it. Each time I read the first line, something always came in the way. I could see Baba’s picture on the book cover, and that was enough for me. Later on, back in Denmark, I suddenly smelled *vibhuti* (holy ash associated with Sai Baba) in our flat. I did not know what *vibhuti* was. And I could smell jasmine flowers.

We knew a woman who had visited Sai Baba. She gave Raman *vibhuti*, a picture of Baba, and a book about him in Danish, written by a Dane, Jorgen Hougaard, and an Indian, Kailash Kumar. I took the picture home; it gave me peace just to look at it. It made me happy. I began seeing that the picture was changing; Baba began smiling at me. I am a completely normal human being with both feet on the ground, so I thought to myself, “No! Now I am going out of my mind! I am definitely not going to tell anybody; I won’t even tell Raman.” Baba smiled more and more at me from the picture, and the smell of *vibhuti* and jasmine was there all the time. Nobody else could smell it. I became more and more happy.

In the kitchen, I made a small altar for Baba. Now, an altar—that was not like

me, either! I put Baba's picture in a kitchen cupboard, gave him fresh flowers daily, and kept the door closed, so no one would see it.

One day Raman opened the cupboard and said, "I think I can see him smiling." I was glad he could see it, too, because I thought I had gone out of my mind. At that time Raman did not believe in Baba at all.

One Sunday morning, I began reading the book about Sai Baba, which described him as the source of light, love, and bliss, and it said that Baba is God. I ran to Raman, who was still sound asleep, and told him, "Baba is God!" That's it! It was easy. Baba is God. I accepted it as of the first time I read it. It could not be any different. I read that people who were near him could "feel him," feel his energy. I thought this was most interesting. I could "smell him" and got an urge to go and also "feel" him.

An Indian we knew had Baba's picture hanging on a wall in his restaurant in Copenhagen. He also had videos of Baba that we could borrow. I was beside myself with joy that you could watch God on a video film! We were off work during Easter and sat at home watching the films. When we reached the end and saw what is called *arati*, a small ceremony with a light being lit in front of Baba, something most surprising happened to Raman.

Raman: I had watched Pia being infatuated with Baba and taking the lead, but in our marriage I had never ever told her to believe in Indian gods. She had her own beliefs, and I had mine. We were totally neutral as far as

each other's beliefs were concerned. Pia was a member of the national Danish Church, and still is, while I grew up in a completely different tradition. In our flat I had a picture of Krishna on the wall. Pia would wipe the dust from this picture as well as everything else, and she was careful about my Bhagavad Gita, which was breaking apart.

Pia: I knew that Raman was a Hindu, and Raman knew that I was a Christian believing a bit in God, but we never really spoke about it before.

Raman: I told Pia that I could not care less about those gurus in India. I have always been skeptical toward people who claim they can do this and that. When Pia told me Baba was God, I could not accept it, but I did not say so out loud. She could believe whatever she liked. I believed in Krishna and have had experiences with him since my childhood. Then Easter came. We were sitting on the sofa watching a video, *Aura of Divinity*, about Baba. I was smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer.

When we got as far as *arati* in the film, it felt really disgusting to me that a Hindu priest was doing *arati* to Sai Baba, a human being. To my mind, only God can receive that honor. That very same moment, I saw Sai Baba turn his head, and then I saw Baba turn blue and transform into Krishna. I went completely bananas. Krishna is the God I believe in. I jumped up in the middle of *arati* and ran around the living room, yelling, "He is God! He is God!" From doubting, in a flash, I became totally convinced that Sai Baba is God.

A few hours following this experience, I completely stopped smoking, and for the next seven days I hardly slept—well, maybe two hours a night, but I was feeling great.

Pia: It was as if he were on speed. All the following week he would say, “He is God! He is Krishna!” and he slaved at cleaning the house all over. He simply could not sit quietly, because God was on earth.

Raman: My cousin, who also lives in Denmark, came to visit us. I used to smoke the “Look Light” cigarette brand. My cousin used to smoke “Prince,” a shorter cigarette. He opened up his packet of ten to take out a cigarette. When he took the next one from the package, a “Look Light” came out. Now he was the one going out of his mind. The “Look Light” was too long to be in the packet, but nevertheless it came out from it.

I saw this as a sign from Baba: “Look Light”—“look toward the light.” My cousin agreed. He always believed in Sai Baba, but we had never talked about it before.

Following this, many unusual things happened. For example, we experienced Baba walking in our flat all the time. The bedroom turned orange, every day, and we could sense a form walking back and forth as orange light, and hear footsteps. I read a lot of books on Baba at that time, and from every single book, a clear light came out into the living room. Light came out of all the pictures of Baba we had in our bedroom. As this continued, month after month, year after

My brother dreamed that Baba opened his heart, operated on him, took something out, threw it away, and closed it all up again. When he woke up after the dream, he felt a little pain and could feel that something had happened, but then he forgot about it. ...

year, we grew accustomed to it.

Pia: We checked everything thoroughly, to try and find out what was happening, and we asked friends to come and check, too, but we never found an explanation.

Raman: We wore out some stereo sets at that time, as we played tapes with Baba’s *bhajans* (devotional songs) 24 hours a day. The music also played when we were away from the flat. If we made a wish, it was fulfilled. If we wished that a picture of Baba would be in the mailbox when we came home, we could be sure to find a picture of Baba there. We were like two children playing.

Pia: In the car we had an electronic clock. One day I said, “If Baba is the one we think he is, he can change time, too.” And right away, time changed on the clock in the car, showing

I took him to Herley Hospital, where he was examined from a to z. The heart specialist who did the checkup said, “I do not know who has performed this operation, but it is perfect.”

four hours ahead of our time, which was the time in India. We have been incredibly lucky to have had all these experiences, both of us. This is how Baba works; he takes care of everything!

I was at home in Denmark once, when Raman was in India for a month visiting his family; they also visited Sai Baba. Raman did something very unusual for him; he bought me a ring without telling me about it. Baba came to me in a dream and held my left ring finger. I asked him, “What is the matter?” Baba replied in English, “Nothing,” and kept holding my finger, smiling at me. I told Raman about the dream when he called from Puttaparthi, but it was not until he came home that he told me that before I had had the dream, he had bought a ring for me. In Raman’s very first interview with Baba, Baba even blessed the ring.

Baba says, “When I come to you in a dream, it is true!” When I dream about Baba, I often dream about something that is going to happen in the future. Once in Puttaparthi I had a dream about Baba being a baby. I was sitting with him in my lap. He was very ill, with a high fever, but nobody could see this, and no one reacted when I called out. In the dream, Baba looked at me and then sprinkled himself with holy water, after which he recovered.

In the morning I went for *darshan*. A celebration was taking place, but some people were crying when I entered the Sai Kulwant Hall. Baba gave a speech and told about how on Sports Day he had saved one of his young students from a serious accident by taking

the accident upon himself. Baba had been standing in a car that started moving all of a sudden, so he fell down and hurt himself badly. He was bleeding and had walked around all day with a lot of pain without telling anyone. This confirmed to me what I had experienced in the dream—that Baba was ill, but then he healed himself.

In 2002 we were in Puttaparthi for Gurupurnima, a major holiday. Once more, Baba had taken upon himself an illness from one of his devotees. Everyone could clearly see how swollen his face was. In the train on the way to New Delhi, I had dreamed that Baba’s face came close to mine and was all deformed; then he “fixed it,” and it appeared completely normal again. Later in the day I spoke on the phone with someone in Puttaparthi and asked how Baba’s face looked. I was told that Baba had said earlier that the illness would last for 21 days, and that he had healed himself the previous Wednesday. Wednesday was the day I had the dream.

I visited Baba for the first time in January 1992, with my mother-in-law, and was in Puttaparthi for six days. I did not talk to Sai Baba, but I had a lot of dreams of him. I did not eat, I hardly drank any water, and I hardly slept while I was there. I simply was so thrilled to be with God; what else could one want of life! A month later, it was Raman’s turn to return to Puttaparthi.

Raman: During my very first visit, Baba called me, and together with my father I was invited for an interview. Baba materialized a bracelet for me and told me about my

whole life. He looked at me, and my life passed in review for me, mostly my young years. In glimpses I saw how I had made a lot of mistakes. I was tough, a troublemaker who would also push the limits. Baba very precisely named some of the things I had done that nobody knew about. Baba promised to help me with everything and gave me lots of directions and good advice. I was almost 30 years old at the time.

Baba was most discreet, revealing nothing to my father, thank goodness! In this very first interview, Baba told my father and me to build a house in Puttaparthi, and he blessed the project. Besides our parents, we are four sisters and brothers, with spouses, who use the house when we are in Puttaparthi. I had to go back to Denmark, so I asked my younger sister in New Delhi if she would ask Baba to give the house a name when she got a chance. And Baba gave her the name, Sai Flowers.

Pia: The family owned an empty plot of land in Puttaparthi. In a dream I saw Baba walking around, indicating where everything should be. There was where the kitchen should be; there, a bathroom; and there, a top floor with an internal gallery from where one could access the bedrooms as well as look down to the living room—and so on. Finally, I saw Baba sitting down eating in the house. We made plans according to the directions given by Baba in the dream and sent the plans to the architect in India.

Raman: We had engaged an architect to make plans for the house, but we used the plans indicated by Baba to Pia in her dream.

A few practical changes had to be made, but Baba was the architect.

My youngest sister lives in New Delhi. When she heard about Baba, she asked for his address, as she wanted to send him a letter. I told her that he was omnipresent, so she could leave a letter for him anywhere. She wrote a letter, and in that letter she forgave three people who had hurt her badly. When she was halfway through writing the letter, she left it on the table and left the room. When she returned, the room was filled with the fragrance of flowers. She became totally confused and called my brother, who also experienced a penetrating smell of flowers originating from her letter.

My brother was a heart patient. He had been operated on five or six years earlier, but the operation was unsuccessful, so he was very sickly and weak and unable to do anything. He also became interested in Sai Baba, but before his first visit to Baba, Baba came to him in a dream. My brother dreamed that Baba opened his heart, operated on him, took something out, threw it away, and closed it all up again. When he woke up after the dream, he felt a little pain and could feel that something had happened, but then he forgot about it.

About a year later, he visited us in Denmark. One day he was very nervous; I could feel his heart pounding. He was afraid that something was wrong. Like many others, he did not believe in dreams, so he did not believe that Baba had operated on him; he still lived very cautiously, not daring to exercise, and so on.

Pia: I took him to Herley Hospital, where he was examined from a to z. The heart specialist who did the checkup said, “I do not know who has performed this operation, but it is perfect.” Then he added something like, “You can see that it has been in the hands of the Lord.” I was doing the translation and felt quite confused. I told the doctor that the operation some years back had not been successful, and that my brother-in-law had been weak since he was 15-16 years old. “This man,” the doctor declared, “is sound and healthy!” And so he has been ever since.

Raman: Baba has called me for many, many private interviews in Prasanthi Nilayam. In one interview, he told me directly that in the future he would contact me less, physically, and more at the level of dreams. Since then, dreams have had a major importance to us.

When I had my first dream about Baba, I had not yet been to Puttaparthi, and I did not know that Baba had several institutions of higher learning, with the students all wearing white clothing. In the dream, I was standing next to Baba, who placed a helmet on my head; we were surrounded by Baba’s students. Baba gave me a mantra, the Gayatri mantra, which is something ritualistic in India, concerning the relationship between a guru—meaning a teacher—and his disciple. In return for the mantra, I gave Baba a coin, and then the students chanted the Gayatri. The helmet to me symbolizes the protection I get when I recite the Gayatri mantra. Following that dream, I have often found myself in situations where I feel protected and get help when I recite the Gayatri mantra. Baba

has told us in several interviews that he is with us in everything we do in life. Everything we think of is fulfilled at some level or the other.

Pia: We see many of our friends facing a lot of problems in life. I feel that we have avoided that because Baba is with us. When you have met Baba, you have met perfection; then you do not need much else, and you do not have too many desires anymore. With Baba we have had a lot of fun, but [this path] should also be a little serious, so Baba has begun instructing us in our dreams and asking spiritual questions. He has asked me for a definition of God. He does not ask such a question just for fun.

Raman: In the new phase, which has recently begun, we are to learn that all is one. After having experienced innumerable miracles, we now have more seriousness in our lives—in a fun way, actually, if you can put it that way. We both have dreams about unity, and about divinity being way above all differences in the world. There is no difference between Baba and me. I have had two dreams of this kind. In one of them, I met Baba in the form of Krishna with a striking blue color. I tried to touch his feet, which is what we do in India to show respect for our elders. To this, he said, “No, I am the one who should touch your feet.” In this way he tries to tell me that we are one.

In another very long dream, Baba called me for an interview, and we were both wearing blue clothes. “Same color,” Baba said. At that moment I read on a light board

“Uni-analyze.” I interpret this to mean that I should think more of unity.

In an interview, Baba has directly told me, “I come to you in dreams and guide you.” My dreams are so real that sometimes I wake up with a feeling of ecstasy. Baba is a part of everything we do. If we are to buy a piece of furniture, maybe he tells us mentally that we should wait, and then suddenly we are able to get the furniture for a fraction of the price. You may think that this is a coincidence, but we do not think it is a coincidence that we have so very many incredible “coincidences” in our lives.

Since my last visit to Baba, he has confirmed a sign that remains between Baba and us. It is a clear sign that can appear in dreams, or anywhere when we are awake. The sign indicates to us, “I am here,” or “What you do is right.”

Pia: We are deeply grateful for having Baba as an important part of our lives. He has tested us and given us the gift of faith. All the time we are saying, “Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” We are grateful even if on a festival day in Puttaparthi we are able to see him only as a small orange dot or the top of his hair.

Last year I got a seat in the first row all the time. I sat holding my letters to him and pictures to be blessed, but he did not even come close to me, and I thought, “What’s going on?” Previously he had blessed everything I handed to him. Reflecting on this, I remembered that he had said, “You should come to me with empty hands. If your hands are full, I cannot give you anything.”

I can only state that my daily life is permeated with the spirit of Baba. I now consider every single thing that happens in my life as miraculous. In a way, Baba has given me new eyes; I see everything in a new way. I see the power behind everything alive.

Then, when he came walking toward me, I put down everything and sat with empty hands, waiting for him, thinking, “What is it you want me to understand? What is it you want to show me?” He stopped in front of me, looking at me with a wonderful smile. He showed me that he is pure love, pure forgiveness; he is the most humble person I have ever seen. We should not think that Baba should do this and do that for us. We should become one with Baba; that is what we have to learn.

Raman: In one of the latest interviews Baba has given me, he told me that he is more than a human being. And he proved it. He said, “I am God; don’t be mistaken about that,” and showed me his divine form as Shiva and Shakti.

Until you have experienced this in real life—physically and psychically, with all your senses—it is hard to understand that he is *G-O-D*. The experience is so amazing that it takes some time before you can contain it and understand it.

Why does Sai Baba show me who he really is? Why me? Who have I been in previous lives? I have no idea! But he has done so ever since my childhood—just in another form, as Krishna. I had a lot of experiences with Krishna before meeting Baba. I was a very, very, very convinced Krishna devotee. I have never settled for the next best. “If I am to believe in a God, it should be GOD—not a half-god or a guru, but GOD who can do anything. My mother told me that Krishna was the God of Gods. Now I know that Baba is also Krishna, and I have prayed to Baba to show me how he wants me to live my life.

In his interviews, Baba has poured an incredible, overwhelming love on me. He has told me, “I can do anything I want.” Those words were so strong and filled with energy that they hit me with great force. He can do anything!

I have watched Baba from all angles when he is materializing. He can materialize anything, anywhere, and at any time. In a single interview I have seen him materialize brooches, watches, necklaces with pendants, sweets, *vibhuti*—at least ten different things, one right after the other. It was totally unbelievable.

But the greatest gift he can give us is to have faith in him. He has materialized a gold ring with three white diamonds for me, a watch with diamonds, two gold bracelets, and even sweets. I was sitting in the interview room thinking about the time when Baba, as a young man, often materialized hot meals for his devotees when they sat on the bank of the Chitravathi River in Puttaparthi. Then

I thought that it would be nice if he would materialize something edible. I had hardly finished this thought before he materialized a *laddoo*, which is a sweet, round yellow desert, shaped like a ball. On that day, the interview room was packed with people. Baba materialized one single *laddoo* and walked around, handing a piece of it to everybody. He kept on and on giving from that small ball. I was second to last to get a piece of it, and there was plenty for everyone.

Baba is a phenomenon totally beyond comprehension of the human brain, incomprehensible for my intellect, and incomprehensible for my friends and acquaintances, the wise ones as well as all the others. I can only state that my daily life is permeated with the spirit of Baba. I now consider every single thing that happens in my life as miraculous. In a way, Baba has given me new eyes; I see everything in a new way. I see the power behind everything alive. I no longer worry; I have become much calmer. I know that I have a father and mother who take care of me. And they do not live in Delhi! “They” are Baba!

—**Pia Hansen and Raman Budhiraja**

Denmark (from the book, *Journeys to Love: Twenty-one Danes share their experiences of transformation after meeting Sathya Sai Baba*, by Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen, 2008. Reprinted with permission.)

Sai Center Tutorial Project Receives Texas Association of Partners in Education (TAPE) Gold Award 2010

Presented to Sri Sathya Sai Center of South Houston, Texas

Swami's divine grace overflowed in the Texas state capital of Austin on January 26, 2010, when the Texas Association of Partners in Education (TAPE) announced their "2010 Gold Award" for Community Partnerships, Academic Impact category, to the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization for its Elkins High School Tutorial Service.

The Elkins High School Tutorial Service began in January 2008, designed to help Elkins High School students requiring additional tutoring in math and science to pass the TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) examinations. This tutorial service was launched at Elkins High School in the presence of an overwhelmingly cooperative group of parents and eager-to-learn students.

Approximately 15 to 20 enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers from the Sri Sathya Sai Center of South Houston have been tutoring students from grades 9 to 11 on Saturdays, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Students receive help in math and science for an hour each. The volunteers are of varied professional backgrounds, including doctors, research scholars, professors, teachers, IT professionals, college students, accountants, and engineers. Though the volunteers are from different professions, all of them have a common attribute—intense love for Swami and determination to put Swami's teachings into practice.

Every year, the Texas Association of Partners in Education (TAPE), a nonprofit organization, recognizes individuals and organizations contributing to education in Texas. For 2010, TAPE received hundreds of nominations in several categories, from all the school districts in Texas. From this list of nominations, a panel of judges selected nine finalists for the award.

Due to Swami's divine grace, the Elkins High School Tutorial Service was awarded TAPE's "Gold Award 2010," thereby recognized as the best community partnership service in the state of Texas, under the Academic Impact category.

In terms of actual impact on the student community, the school authorities noticed a significant improvement in the students' TAKS scores, which was recognized and appreciated both by parents and the school district.

The volunteers feel that Swami, through this award, recognized their dedicated efforts and reinforced their ongoing responsibility to conduct this tutorial service in an increasingly effective manner. They are praying to Swami to shower his infinite grace on the Houston Sai Center and to guide them at all times to achieve personal transformation through selfless service in society.

—Sai Center of South Houston, Texas

Haiti Earthquake Relief Efforts

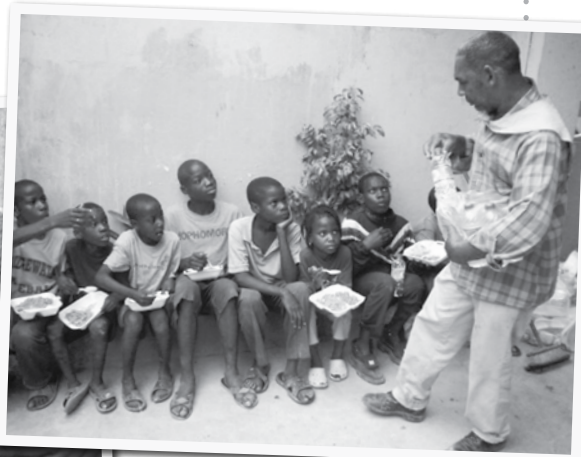
Compassionate Care and Swami's Infinite Grace

On January 12, 2010, a massive earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter Scale struck the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, with its epicenter at the Republic of Haiti's most populated city and capital, Port-au-Prince. The earthquake left a trail of devastation, killing about 250,000 people and rendering about 1.5 million homeless. The Sathya Sai Organization has one Sathya Sai Center in Port-au-Prince. The home of the former president of the Sathya Sai Center, Ronny Joseph, remained intact and served as a shelter and base from which Sathya Sai devotees from several countries rendered help. Neighbor to Haiti is the Dominican Republic, also with several Sathya Sai centers. The capital city of Dominican Republic is Santo Domingo. The two countries share the island and a common border.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, in his infinite compassion and grace, immediately gave

his blessings to help our brothers and sisters in Haiti. Relief efforts by the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization began promptly. An emergency aid committee was formed, and planning for relief teams began. The committee commenced working with members from the Sathya Sai Organization of the Dominican Republic and Haiti to enable swift delivery of compassionate and loving care to the victims. With Bhagavan's grace and hard work by the devotees of Santo Domingo, Latin America, and North America, relief work began promptly. Devotees from Latin American countries arranged for the procurement and transportation of food and water for the volunteers, for the Sathya Sai devotees in Haiti, and for other victims.

By January 19, preliminary assessment had taken place and Narayana Seva (service to God in the form of man) begun, to over 500



people. Sathya Sai devotees from Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Santo Domingo then served 1,100 meals and water to patients at a nearby hospital.

On January 26, two teams of doctors and volunteers from South America and Central America arrived in Santo Domingo and traveled to Port-au-Prince to set up medical camps.

On January 29, a third team of doctors and volunteers from the USA and Canada met the other two teams at the medical camp. The three teams commenced effective delivery of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare, serving about 3,500 patients in the first week. In addition, these teams assessed the local needs and available resources for the planning of future trips.

Following these initial teams, volunteers have been dispatched to Haiti every week since February 6, 2010. Each team serves for one week and consists of about 10 volunteers, including physicians, paramedical personnel, young adults, and general volunteers. These teams have served about 300 patients per day, totaling, by the end of February, about 10,100

patients. In addition to medical care, Narayana Seva has been delivered in the form of dwelling tents, food, and clothing.

The power of Bhagavan's love can be felt easily, even in the midst of devastation and rubble. Several incidents are noteworthy. The first took place when the volunteers were conducting a medical camp. Several U.S. military soldiers came to the camp to seek help in finding a lady who was lost and unable to walk. A search was mounted, and the Sathya Sai volunteers and U.S. soldiers found her. She was weak from having experienced starvation for several days. The volunteers provided her and her starving family with food and water. Within hours, the family was able to walk again and expressed their deep appreciation for Swami.

The second incident involves an ex-military man from the U.S. who spent a few days with the Sathya Sai group. He noticed



their unique way of delivering excellence in care with compassion and love. He remarked, "I have never seen an organization like yours, so committed and focused on the whole individual."

Then, one Haitian resident, who had never before heard of Swami, started writing "*Om Sai Ram*" in a book.

Bhagavan has taken timely care of not only many Haitians, but also his devotees in Haiti and the volunteers. Without much difficulty, the volunteers were able to procure special air transportation from Haiti to Santo Domingo in a United Nations aircraft. Airlines from the U.S. and Canada gladly allowed the transport of tons of medical supplies, and a large medical organization has begun sending needed medical supplies for the Sathya Sai Organization's work in Haiti.

Another incident involves a Sathya Sai devotee from Haiti who speaks only Creole

and French. Her house collapsed on top of her. She shouted "*Sai Ram!*" several times, and the collapsed concrete formed a small encasing around her, saving her from bodily harm though, she was trapped in the rubble. She then began reciting repeatedly one of Bhagavan's names, "*Om Sri Sai Asahaya Sahayaya Namaha*" (Salutations to Sai, the helper of the helpless). In a short while, she saw a source of light ahead and began digging in that direction, which led outside the building to freedom and safety.

Finally, the Sathya Sai center in Port-au-Prince collapsed, except for the altar room. On the altar, Swami's picture remained intact, except for a small tear in the picture over his hand—a telltale sign of Bhagavan's grace, as the tear in the picture was in the exact shape of the map of Haiti.

—**Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation,
International Medical Committee**

A website has now been set up for Sathya Sai devotees to register and volunteer for earthquake relief work in Haiti. This website, through which relief work will be coordinated, is at: <http://sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org/haiti>.



“Offering of Love” from USA Sai Young Adults

On Saturday, November 21, 2009, our dearest Swami graciously received an “Offering of Love” from USA Sai Young Adults.

The Offering of Love consisted of a letter seeking Swami’s blessings for the “Way Forward” Initiative and the many service initiatives being undertaken by USA Sai youth, followed by a summary of the ten “houses” of the Way Forward Initiative.

Also included in the Offering of Love was the inaugural issue of *HeARTS United for Sai*, a “webzine” featuring poetry, essays, photography, and other artistic offerings created by young adults. The Offering of Love was beautifully designed by the members of the Sai ’n’ Arts House.

Please read on for a wonderful account of the interaction between Swami and Dr. William Harvey, USA YA Advisor, and Swami’s words about the Offering of Love, the *HeARTS United for Sai* webzine, and the Way Forward Initiative. As Dr. Harvey noted, this was a profound blessing by Swami for the USA Youth. We express our deepest gratitude to Swami for his grace, and pray that we may deepen our inner connection with him!

You can view both the Offering of Love presented to Swami, as well as the inaugural issue of *HeARTS United for Sai* (as html or pdf), at www.saiyausa.net.

Below is Dr. Harvey’s account of the interaction with Swami:

Swami came close and sweetly gave the opportunity to show him the booklet. Holding it in front of him, I said, “This is from the young adults in America.” He looked pleased, and I proceeded to open the cover and slowly turn the pages. He gave the impression that I need not rush through the pages, as he seemed to be reading them. After carefully perusing the headings (“Going Green,” “Refugee Projects,” etc.), he made several positively-toned comments, such as “Doing seva,” and “yes.” This encouragement prompted me to say, “Swami, the young adults in America—because of their love for you—are doing very good work.” He nodded again and smiled.

When we turned to the page with the heading, “*HeARTS United for Sai*,” Swami made reference to the play on words.

I estimate Swami spent at least three minutes looking approvingly at the Offering of Love, and he definitely appeared highly pleased. I am also happy to say that he kept the booklet and gave it to one of the boys to take inside the interview room.

—USA YA Publication Team
www.saiyausa.net



“I was at the Center, and everyone had left the hall for lunch. As I took out my camera to take a picture of the beautiful altar for Swami, I saw a streak of light entering the bhajan hall. The light made its way through the branches of trees and created a brilliant flare on my camera lens. Capturing the moment, it dawned on me that all of us are brilliant and pure, just like the light. Swami tells us that he has come to show us the way and let us merge back into the source. The picture and the light remind us that the Ultimate Master, Sai Baba, is here to show us that we are that very light: eternal, brilliant, and pure.”

—**Sai Santosh**, Birmingham, Alabama
From HeARTS United for Sai webzine (inaugural issue), www.saiyausa.net

Pluto: I Am That I Am

*It is not the way of the great to swell when people offer worship
and shrink when people scoff.*

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

“The first rule is to keep an untroubled spirit. The second is to
look things in the face and know them for what they are.”

—Marcus Aurelius

Roman Emperor (121-180 CE)

“Pluto Demoted to Dwarf Planet” Many such news headlines appeared in late August 2006 about Pluto. At its 26th General Assembly meeting in Prague, Czech Republic, the International Astronomical Union voted to demote Pluto from planetary status. After years of wrangling and a week of bitter debate, as an article in the New York Times described, astronomers voted on a sweeping reclassification of the solar system.

Based on this news, I conceived the following hypothetical scenario as occurring between the Earth and Pluto. Upon hearing the news, Earth called Pluto via satellite radio to cheer her up, and the conversation between them proceeded as follows:

Earth: Hello, dear sister, Pluto! How are you?

Pluto: I am fine. What a surprise! It’s been so long since I last heard from you—76 years, in fact. I remember receiving your greeting card after my “discovery” in January 1930 by the American astronomer, Clyde Tombaugh. Of course, I was born along with you, but it took a long time for earthlings to find me! I suppose you thought of me because of the “breaking news” (as earth-newspapers like to characterize such things!) about my so-called planetary status.

Earth: Sister Pluto, you are always in my thoughts, but life can be pretty hectic here. I decided to set aside my earthbound concerns and call you, because the news about you came as a big surprise. I suppose Clyde Tombaugh would be upset if he were alive today.

Pluto: I suspect he might be heartbroken; after all, I am his “darling daughter.” The wrangling about my planetary status has gone on for years, because humans are unable to make up their minds (a trait unique to humans, it appears!) about the definition of a planet. I am not worried what they think of me or what they call

me. What I really care about is what my heavenly Father thinks of me. Anyway, I am glad you called after such a long time. But what are the hectic earthly concerns you are referring to?

Earth: Among my many children is the species *Homo sapiens*, which means, literally, “the wise men of genus *Homo*,” but I am beginning to doubt whether they deserve such a glorious description, because of their behavior. They are losing their sense of human values by succumbing to the lure of desires and materialism.

You must have heard stories of the discord and disharmony among my children in the name of nationality, race, ethnicity, color, and religion. They seem bent on ruining my pristine resources, such as the atmosphere, oceans, lakes, rivers, glaciers, forest, mountains, and wildlife.

You are aware no doubt of how their genuine curiosity about the structure of atoms got out of hand, resulting in the dreadful atomic bomb that was used in Japan to end World War II, causing millions to perish. Now every nation wants to be a nuclear power.

Further, some of my children are casting their intentions on colonizing space. Some have even started writing guidebooks about living on Mars. I hope they will not lose their minds and make space the next frontier in the arms race.

Pluto: I can understand your concerns. I am sure the Sai Avatar, comprised of Shirdi Sai Baba, Sathya Sai Baba, and Prema Sai Baba, will certainly alleviate

your distress, as their combined declared mission is to re-establish the “eternal path of righteous living” (*sanathana dharma*) among humanity.

By the way, of all the many space probes and instruments your children have sent up thus far to inquire into our solar system family members and beyond—a kind of snooping in which your children seem to have achieved notoriety!—our cousins around here find the Hubble Space Telescope very enjoyable, because it reminds us how small our Milky Way galaxy is, while revealing the vastness of our universe.

Further, I understand the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of the USA launched in 2005 the “New Horizons” spacecraft to gather information about me. If everything goes well, it is supposed to knock on my door in 2015!

I am glad I am some 40 times farther away from the Sun than you are. Still, I do not feel comfortable with the prying eyes and desire-filled intentions of earthlings! But I do not worry about human invasion any time soon, because I am very cold (-233° C) and covered with an inhospitable atmosphere of nitrogen and methane gas.

Earth: Thanks for comforting me. I know my survival and the preservation of my hallowed status as Mother Earth is in the hands of God (Sai Avatar).

Pluto: I have always wondered why people call you Mother Earth.

Earth: Well, I am called Mother Earth because God has chosen me, for reasons known only to him, to implement the G-O-D plan for the Generation (birth), Organization (growth), and Dissolution (death) of life.

In Indian culture, the deities in charge of these three are thought of as Brahma (the Generator), Vishnu (the Organizer), and Maheshwara (the Dissolver), kind of like cabinet ministers in a government.

Pluto: I suppose you have a point, but don't you think it is egoistic to limit *life* as existing only with you. To me life means "pure cosmic consciousness," the pristine energy pulsating through the entire universe, as the Vedas declared and Sri Sathya Sai Baba reiterates.

Earth: Oh, I do agree. I am so glad you are aware of the Sai Avatar. All one's sins are washed away by merely uttering those three holy names. You are blessed. How did you get to know them?

Pluto: Well, the entire cosmos is aware of them. Sri Sathya Sai Baba visits with us everyday, even though he is with you physically. Shirdi Sai Baba did the same thing. We are sure Prema Sai Baba will continue the tradition.

Earth: You don't have to rub it in! I know I am tormented and appear to need Sai's physical presence with me. But where did you get such wisdom?

Pluto: From Sri Sathya Sai Baba and his predecessor, Shirdi Sai, for one! My cousins and I tune in constantly to Sri Sathya Sai Baba's discourses and his

interesting conversations with people in the interview room.

Earth: Did I hear you right? How can you tune in to private conversations between Swami and the interviewees? Nobody is allowed to do that.

Pluto: Well, Swami allows us because he knows we are eager to absorb every word of his spiritual wisdom and put it into practice. Also, I am confident he knows that we do not waste time gossiping—unlike your children!

Let me tell you, I get a lot of benefit from Swami's pithy sayings, such as:

If you look to me, I'll look to you.

*If you take one step toward me,
I'll take ten steps toward you.*

*Love all, serve all;
Help ever, hurt never.*

*Money comes and goes,
morality comes and grows.*

*There is only one race,
the race of humanity.*

*There is only one language,
the language of the heart.*

*There is only one religion,
the religion of love.*

*There is only one God,
and he is omnipresent.*

*Atheists say God is nowhere;
theists say he is "now here."*

Meditation is rising above desires.

*God is neither distant nor
distinct from you.*

I believe these are potent capsules of spiritual medicine for countering the debilitating effects of materialism.

Earth: I wish my children understood Swami's teachings and put them into practice the way you do!

Pluto: I believe your children are inherently capable of doing so, but they are so blinded by the lure of sense-gratification that they cannot tune in to Swami's spiritually-uplifting message. The scriptures warned humankind of such a catastrophe occurring in the Kali Age.

Earth: You are correct, my dear little sister. Holy texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita declare that my children are endowed with "immortal minds."

Sri Sathya Sai Baba vouchsafes mankind's divinity because he gave his mind to man. The Bible states that God created man in His image. With such a rich heritage, I cannot understand why my children are lured and lulled by the material world and forget even their Creator!

Pluto: I do not doubt the inherent divinity of man, or for that matter the inherent divinity of everything in the universe. However, I believe the divinity in man is masked by the overwhelming power of his sense-influenced-mind.

Your children should understand they have the inherent capacity to lead a righteous life, and that God incarnates only to keep company with them and remind them of this truth. They should

realize it is more precious to have God as a constant companion rather than as a rescuer from troubles!

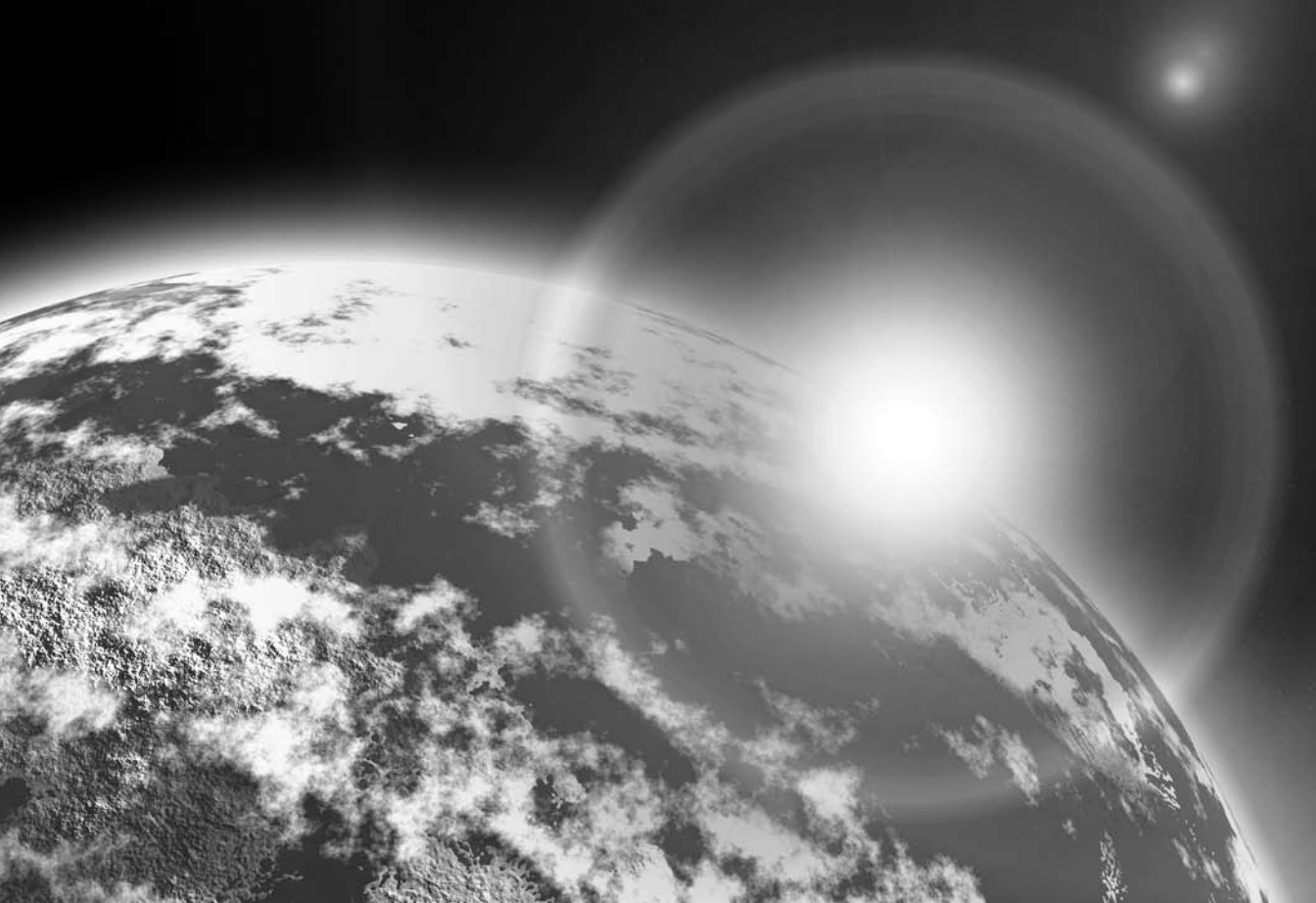
To drive home this point, I believe Swami says, "I will never abandon you, once you have surrendered. I am always above you, below you, beside you, behind you, and in front of you."

Also, I believe Sri Sathya Sai Baba has changed his exhortation from "My life is my message" to "Your life is my message," to warn humankind of the perils of improper conduct and overindulgence in materialism. I wonder whether your children can grasp the significance of this subtle shift in Swami's strategy. Maybe not; otherwise why would Swami continue to characterize them as part-time devotees?

Earth: You really are blessed with much spiritual understanding, my dear little sister. That is why, I guess, you are able to take the decision of the International Astronomical Union with such benign indifference.

Pluto: You are correct, my dear big sister. By observing what is happening in every nook and cranny of the universe, I have understood that birth, evolution, and dissolution is an eternal cyclical process. As stated in the the Upanishads, "Death is certain for everything born."

Further, I am not worried about being called a dwarf! The avatar Vamana (one of the ten major avatars in India's history, who demonstrated his awesome power to King Bali, the grandson of the sage Prahlada) was a dwarf. Prahlada,



an ardent devotee of Lord Narayana, was the son of the demon king Hiranyakasipu. The lesson I learned from Prahlada's story is that the pious can be the offspring of the wicked, and vice versa!

Speaking of Vamana, Swami cautions us not to underestimate his power just because he has a diminutive physical form.

Earth: Wow! You seem to be conversant not only with developments in modern science, but also the holy texts, and the scriptures of all cultures.

Pluto: Do not worry about the so-called loss of my ephemeral status, big

sister! I have absorbed fully the message of Sai about the inherent divinity of everything in creation; therefore, I can declare, with faith in myself and faith in Sai: "I AM THAT I AM," in the words of Sai.

Earth: Little sister! I certainly will make it a point to contact you more frequently. Now that my expert children in science have demonstrated the unity of the electromagnetic, strong nuclear, and weak nuclear fields, and are working hard to rope in the gravitational field, I hope to plug into some nifty tools—perhaps a "Gravity Net,"* to communicate even

more easily with other worlds. Not all science is useless, and not all scientists are atheists!

Pluto: I know. Great scientists such as Newton, Maxwell, Einstein, Planck, Heisenberg, Bohr, and many others have paid homage to God while discovering the secrets embedded in creation.

For example, I recollect the words of Einstein (famous for the “theory of relativity”) and of Heisenberg (famous for the “uncertainty principle”). Einstein once said, “I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this or that element. I want to know His thoughts; the rest are details.”

When Heisenberg’s wife asked him how he wanted to be remembered, he said: “I was lucky enough to be allowed once to look over the good Lord’s shoulder while He was at work.”

But before I say goodbye, I have a question for you. All the members of our family except you and your satellite, the Moon, bear the names of Roman gods. I understand my name, from Roman classical mythology, refers to the god of the dead and the underworld. Also, I understand that Venetia Burney, an 11-year old school girl in Oxford, England, suggested the name Pluto for me, because I am such a cold and dark thing in the heavens, and the discoverers accepted

that name. Of course, later my name was commercialized by the Disney enterprise as Pluto the dog!

Earth: I presume that I didn’t get any Roman god’s name because the Romans took me for granted, as do many of my children.

Pluto: Anyway, I am glad you didn’t get a fear-inspiring name like I did.

Earth: Goodbye, my dear, petite sister. I’ll look forward to being in contact with you.

Pluto: Goodbye, dear big sister. I would love to hear from you more often. Please convey my personal, humble salutations to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, even though I feel his presence every day in the form of pure cosmic consciousness.

Earth: I certainly will convey your personal salutations to Swami. Please convey my love to all our cousins in the gorgeous universe.

*MAY ALL THE BEINGS IN ALL THE
WORLDS BE PEACEFUL AND HAPPY!*

—Sastry V. Pappu
Hazelwood, Missouri

*Gravity is a ubiquitous albeit weak force field in nature. It is believed the concept of quantum gravity is necessary to rope in gravity to get a unified picture of all the known force fields. *Gravitons* are the quanta of the gravitational field, just as photons are the quanta of the electromagnetic field. The term *Gravity Net* is coined to convey that future communication technologies might harness the power of gravitons.

Sai Spiritual Education Lesson Plan

Pluto: I Am That I Am (Group 4)

VALUE: Truth • **SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE:** Omnipresence

QUOTE: *God is neither distant nor distinct from you.* —Sri Sathya Sai Baba

PRAYER/MEDITATION: Practice the “Light Meditation,” expanding the light out to encompass the Earth, and on out to the entire solar system and beyond, with an emphasis on feeling oneness with all creation.

DEVOTIONAL SINGING: Ask students to choose songs or create a program of songs that reflect the theme of God’s omnipresence, such as “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”—adding new verses, “...the universe in His Hands,” “...little, bitty Pluto in His Hands,” and so on.

READING: “Pluto: I Am That I Am” (on pp. 35–40) Provide copies for all the students.

DISCUSSION: Ask students to review the story and highlight portions of the dialog that show what Pluto has learned about omnipresence. Discuss how knowing about divine omnipresence might affect daily life, and how this awareness can relate to right action. *Would the world be any different if people truly believed God were present in all their activities? What would happen with politics? With lawyers? With CEOs? With people caring for the environment? Do you feel truth would be more prevalent in people’s thoughts, words, and actions if they knew without a doubt that nothing could ever be done in private, that an all-seeing eye is watching them? Would people treat others more as equals? How would it affect people’s decisions, words, and actions?*

ACTIVITY: Have students make a list of what could happen in all these areas of life, if in general people had an awareness of God’s omnipresence. If time allows, or in a followup lesson, they might design a poster campaign reflecting these ideas.

LIFE APPLICATION: Have students practice awareness of God’s omnipresence in every aspect of life during the week. Emphasize that there is no “distance”—God is their constant companion. All and God are one. Keep repeating, “I am God, I am God, I am no different from God.” Have students look for incidents where this awareness helped them make right decisions.

EXTENDING ACTIVITIES: • **Relate to Peace/Equanimity** Discuss how Pluto’s awareness of omnipresence helps her maintain her happy disposition, no matter how scientists on Earth change her “status,” or label her as this or that. Role-play a few scenarios of being “demoted” in worldly terms—a “friend” suddenly taking offense toward you; blame coming your way for something that didn’t turn out well, despite all your best efforts; getting fired from a job; and so on. *How does knowing about God’s omnipresence affect your ability to maintain equanimity in such a situation?* • **Radio Play or Reader’s Theatre** Let students prepare a reader’s theatre, multimedia, or “radio play” presentation of the dialog between Earth and Pluto.

USA Retreat and Pilgrimage Dates, 2010

Regional retreat updates and information may also be viewed at the official Sai website:

<http://us.sathyasai.org/> or <http://us.sathyasai.org/infoconf.htm>.

USA Pilgrimage, Group 1: June 23-July 2, Prasanthi Nilayam, India. For information and updates, please consult the USA pilgrimage website at www.saipilgrimageusa.org.

USA Pilgrimage, Group 2: July 5-14, Prasanthi Nilayam, India. For information and updates, please consult the USA pilgrimage website at www.saipilgrimageusa.org.

Region 1 (Northeast): May 28-30, at Russell Sage College Campus, Troy, NY. Theme: *The Sai Ideal—God Is; I Am I; and Love All, Serve All*. Speaker: Sunder Iyer. Contact: Glenn Rothbart, 508-872-6899 (h); 774-249-5623 (m).

Region 3 (Southeast): May 28–30, “*Explore, Experience and Enjoy Sai*,” at Best Western High Point Hotel, High Point, NC. Contact: RSCRetreat@yahoo.com or Anuradha Mudipalli, 919-469-5254, 6-9 pm.

Region 4 (Mid-Central): May 21–23 (weekend before Memorial Day holiday weekend), at Camp Wyman, just outside St. Louis, MO. Further details to be announced.

Region 5 (North Central): Sept. 3–6 (Labor Day Weekend), the 20th North Central Region Sai Conference and Retreat, at Camp Henry Horner, 26710 W. Nippersink Road, Ingleside, IL 60041. Contact: Vijay Sai Reddy, Phone: SAI-RAM-1043 (724-726-1043); E-mail: info@sathyasaicenters.org; Website: www.sathyasaicenters.org.

Region 6 (Pacific North): The Grants Pass Sai Family Reunion, usually held over the July 4 weekend, will be held over the Memorial Day holiday weekend instead, May 29-31. This is to avoid a conflict with the USA Pilgrimages to Swami, which will dovetail around the Fourth of July. Further details to be announced.

Region 7 (Northern California): A one-day retreat, combined with a public meeting, is being planned for either Saturday, Sept. 4 or 11. Further details to be announced.

Region 8 (Southern California): June 4-6, at Buckhorn Camp, Idyllwild, CA. The theme is, “*Love in Action*,” and speakers include Dr. S.K. Upadhyay from London, and Ms. Arunima Pant from Florida. Registration forms are available at www.Region8SaiCenters.org, or contact Dr. Bruce Bouche at 805-649-9818, bruce.bouche@roadrunner.com.

Region 9 (Southwest): Sept. 3-6, New Mexico “Land of Enchantment” Retreat at Bodhi Mandala Zen Center, Jemez Springs, NM. Contact: Elaine Hausman, 505-660-0283, ehausman@rockridge.biz. Further details to be announced.

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SELECTED BOOKS

Journeys to Love, by Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen, compiles the stories of 21 Danish devotees, who explain how their lives have been transformed after meeting Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Soft cover, 360 pages. BI-325 \$6.00

Love and Suffering: My Road to Liberation, by Nooshin Mehrabani, is the engrossing story of an Iranian woman who grew up in Iran and then lived in Iran, Canada, the United States, and Puttaparthi. Raised as a Muslim, she depicts the events of her life before and after learning of Sai Baba, explaining how she had to reconcile the differences between her Muslim religion and what Sai Baba has written and requires of his devotees. To quote her: “I was not familiar with the idea of karma. In the Muslim religion, no one believes in past lives...we come into this world only one time and die only one time. We go to heaven or hell, and there the story ends.” She carefully explains how her spiritual life began to change after her first visit to Baba, and how she has been graced with receiving spiritual inspiration and guidance from Swami frequently in her dreams. Her long spiritual trek, through ups and downs of life, repeated trips to Prasanthi Nilayam, and deepening devotion to Swami, are expressed vividly in her writing. Further enriching the book are accounts of many interviews with Swami and short, heart-felt Sai quotes included after each significant event in her life. Soft-cover, 252 pages, 1 color plate. BI-325 \$5.00

Nazzanine, Soussan Warner (written and published in Farsi) relates her experiences as an Iranian woman who first met her beloved guru Sri Sathya Sai on Christmas of 1981. This book focuses on both the inner and outer aspects of this ongoing encounter—his miracles and teachings, the gymnastics of the mind, the ups and downs of being “brought up” through spiritual lessons, and the opening of the heart. BW-115 \$7.00

With Love Man Is God, by Prof. Samuel Sandweiss, covers the author’s personal experiences in the company of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and how Baba’s teachings are put into practice in daily life, including a chapter by Mrs. Sharon Sandweiss. BW-231 \$11.00

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: A Yugavatar, by Dr. K. Hanumanthappa, distinguished educator and scholar, highlights the Sai system of education, Swami's message of love and the unity of religions, his personal experiences in the divine presence, and a special vision Swami gifted him of the Bhagavad Gita. 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

2010 Festival Dates - India

May 6, Thursday: Easwaramma Day May 6 each year commemorates the anniversary of the passing of Easwaramma, mother of the physical body of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

May 27, Thursday: Buddha Purnima or Vaisakh Purnima, observed by Buddhists worldwide, commemorates Gautama Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and attainment of Nirvana, each of which took place on the auspicious full moon day in May.

July 21, Wednesday – Ashadi Ekadashi (11th day after the full moon of Ashadi and associated with the worship of Vishnu) sees multitudes from the states of Maharashtra and Goa make the pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam to celebrate this holy festival in the Divine Presence. Devotees from the states of Maharashtra and Goa commence their *dindi yatra* or foot pilgrimage from the town of Dharmavaram, about 40 km from Puttaparthi), reaching Prasanthi Nilayam on the morning of Ashadi Ekadashi for *darshan* of Bhagavan. This is often followed by a cultural program presented by the Bal Vikas children of Maharashtra and Goa.

July 25, Sunday – Guru Purnima (the full moon day of Ashada, falling in June or July), is a day to express love, reverence, and gratitude to our spiritual teachers and the great sages of yore, for the precious gift of wisdom received from them in the form of the scriptures. Also called *Vyasa Purnima*, this day honors the birthday of the revered sage, Veda Vyasa, compiler of the vast body of Vedic knowledge into the four Vedas—Rig, Yajur, Sama, and Atharva—and scribe of the 18 Puranas (ancient Hindu legends), also completed by him on this day.