

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



"The Inner Voice"

Sai's Message: Listen to the Inner Voice	Sri Sathya Sai Baba	2
Inner Messages and Communications	Diana Baskin	3
Many Voices and "The Voice"	Sri Sathya Sai Baba	5
Hearing the Inner Voice	Edith Gregory	10
Q & A with Seema M Dewan.....	Ted Henry	13
"A Prayer to Embrace".....	Seema M Dewan	17
Experiences with the Inner Voice.....	Thorbjörn Meyer, Eufemia Hanna Gisladdottir,Steig Meincke, Steen Piculell, and Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen	20
"Your Mission Has Begun"	Charles Penn	24
Lessons from God: Colin and the Minibus & "Judge Not, Lest Ye Be Judged"	Amarjit Singh	30
Young Adults: World Youth Conference 2011.....	International Sai Youth Council	32
USA Conference & Retreat Dates – 2011	USA Regional Presidents	34
Prasanthi Nilayam Festival & Conference Dates – 2011	USA Regional Presidents	34
Find Steadiness Within: Sai's Words on Natural Calamities	Sri Sathya Sai Baba	35
SSE Group 4: Importance of Water Conservation		39
Story: How I Learned to Conserve Water	Sraavya Undurty, SSE Group IV	39
Ceiling on Desires Study and Life Application: The Environmental Impact of Plastic Water Bottles.....	SSE Matters Newsletter	40
Announcement: New USA National Officers	Phil Gosselin, David Gries	42
Sathya Sai Book Center of America: Featured Selections	Book Center Volunteers	43

SAI'S MESSAGE

LISTEN TO THE INNER VOICE



***I** IS YOUR FOREMOST duty to put into practice the dictates of your inner voice (antarvani) and follow the good qualities that are within you. . . . Never ignore your inner voice. It is your true property. When you develop the ability to listen to your inner voice, you will make great progress in life. . .*

In fact you can attain everything when you follow the values that originate from your heart. You will be immersed in worldliness when you go against the inner voice. Indulgence in worldliness will take you away from your inner voice and innate values.

Following the inner voice is true spirituality. You should not hurt anybody, nor should you get hurt in the process. . . For those who adhere to their inner voice, all-round well-being is assured.

True spirituality envisages that you should not act contrary to your inner voice.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Discourse of Jan. 14, 2009 (Sanathana Sarathi, Feb. 2009)

Inner Messages and Communications

Does Swami give inner messages and guidance?

MANY YEARS AGO, when my husband Robert and I had a Sathya Sai Baba Center in our home, we became acquainted with a devoted young couple. They were involved with and committed to Center projects, and their children were, together with ours, enrolled in the Center's Bal Vikas (now Sai Spiritual Education) program. Outwardly they appeared a happy, well-balanced family, but we soon learned otherwise. The husband asked our opinion and confided to us that his marriage was in jeopardy, and apparently it was all Swami's will! He told us that his wife was receiving inner messages from Swami, telling her she should divorce. The wife claimed it was not her desire to divorce; she simply wanted to obey Swami's inner command.

Many people claim to receive inner guidance and messages from Swami. This is such a subjective and personal matter that usually, except in cases of blatantly absurd claims, the veracity of such inner communications cannot accurately be evaluated by others. We could not help the husband except to offer to take up the matter with Swami, if we had an opportunity, on our next trip to India. This was a most distressing time for the husband, as the continuation of

his marriage depended on the verification of the wife's inner communication with Swami.

On our next visit to India, Swami gave us the opportunity to ask about the "inner messages." I started by asking Swami if he spoke to people inwardly, to which he replied, *Yes, sometimes.*

Then I explained briefly the situation with this couple and the claims made by the wife.

Swami's immediate and emphatic reply was, *No. It is her imagination, created by her desire. Swami always unites. Swami does not separate.*

I then asked Swami if we should tell them what he said. He consented, adding, *Tell them; it is your duty.*

Knowing the wife, I had no doubt that she had heard an inner message. But after speaking to Swami, I understood that she had heard the voice of her own desire and not that of Swami. It was a great lesson in how our desire can warp our reasoning.

When I asked Swami about this couple, I was not taking sides and only had an interest in hearing the truth. I had learned that Swami will often, in his answers, mirror back to us a reflection of what we desire to hear. Also during that same period of time,

I had witnessed another interesting case of “inner voices.”

A mysterious book that was not sold in bookstores started circulating in the ashram. The author claimed the book was a series of esoteric revelations by Sathya Sai Baba, written through him. Many of the declarations in the book were controversial, and there was much debate among the few devotees who managed to obtain a copy. Jack Hislop introduced us to the author, who appeared to be a man of honesty and integrity, with wisdom and knowledge far beyond the average spiritual seeker. Still, we wondered, was he really receiving dictation from “the Divine Voice”?

Due to the questionable claims of divine interpretation of Hindu scriptures in the book, three prominent devotees each independently decided to put an end to the speculation by seeking a ruling from Swami, the veritable “Divine Voice.”

The answers from Swami that the three men received to their question, asked on different occasions, were characteristic of Sai’s reflective nature. To the believer, he answered, *Yes*; to the skeptic, *No*; and to the most neutral of the three, *Perhaps*.

I have observed that Swami is especially reflective and elusive when questions of intellectual theories and curiosity are posed to him. Being the greatest spiritual teacher of our times and having delivered thousands of discourses over the past 65 years, he has told us all we need to know. All else, if carefully analyzed, is intellectual entertainment. Even the question of the validity of a book is superfluous, as knowing the answer would

not make us better human beings but only satisfy our curiosity.

Swami does not teach “secrets” or esoteric mysteries. Such fascinations can become major distractions from the ordinary work needed to walk on the path of truth.

An aspect of Swami that many have observed is that he will sometimes etch his index finger in the air, as if writing on an unseen tablet. He may do so while moving about giving *darshan* (opportunity to see a holy being) or while talking with devotees. During the years I saw him daily in Brindavan, I observed that he would do so even when alone, without devotees obviously watching.

Once, in an interview, Swami was particularly other-worldly and closed his eyes as if observing a world unseen to us. He began to etch his index finger in the air. When he was done, he turned to our son David and said, *You are wondering why it is Sai Baba is doing that. It is my work—intercom, intercommunication.*

He then began describing to my son: *Sometimes you fall, but always pick yourself up. But no depression or disappointment.* Swami then tenderly took David’s hand and softly said, *Anywhere, always, for whatever reason you need help, ask, and Swami will help and bless.*

—Diana Baskin

Excerpted from *Divine Lessons from Sathya Sai Baba* (Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, Books & Publications Division, 2009), pp. 76–78

Many Voices and "The Voice"

How do we distinguish the ideal activities and the one true guide?

OF THE BILLIONS of living beings, man alone has the privilege of being entitled to investigate the truth of the universe and to merge in the bliss of its realization.

But man is lost in the pursuit of wrong goals; he struggles in the fog of doubt and divisive loyalties; he fritters away energy and time in activities that bind him still further in the tangles of material wants.

This type of activity, called *moha karma* (illusory action), flows from delusion and leads to further delusion. Man must outgrow this tendency and turn toward *dharma karma*—virtuous activity, ideal activity, activity that sublimates the lower instincts and impulses and transforms every deed into an act of dedication to God. When this attitude is confirmed and consolidated, all action (*karma*) becomes godly action (*Brahma karma*, dedicated activity). Then, man merges in the universal and loses the inhibiting individuality. That is the karma the Atma (indwelling divinity) craves for and delights in.

Even while in the first stage (*moha karma*, attachment/desire-oriented activity), man should endeavor to charge it with *prema* (divine love). For, *prema* will correct imperceptibly the karma, into the path of *dharma* (virtue), and lead systematically

into the further stages of human progress toward divinity.

Reach for the Sublime, Divine Love

What then is divine love? It cannot be earned or acquired; it is the natural endowment of man. It cannot be refused or thrown off the mind. It cannot be taught or learned. If directed toward sensual objects, it may well spell ruin; if directed away from them, it can well insure salvation.

Prema or *love* is a much-misused word. Any positive response to an attraction is termed love; any feeling of attachment, however trivial or transitory, is likewise characterized as love. We must certainly coin new words or set aside specific words to indicate the varied forms of love! The attachment of parents to their children or of children to the parents must be called *affection*. Responding to the attraction of sex can be best described as *fancy*, *fascination*, or *delusion* (*moha*). The feeling of kinship or comradeship evokes *dearness*. The pleasure one gets through a sense of possession, especially of material objects, can be known as *satisfaction*. The yearning to reach for the sublimity that lies inherent in Truth—this alone is entitled to be called by that holy word, *prema* (divine love). For, that is man's sweetest, most charming, most satisfying possession.

Above all, one must listen to the Voice of God within.

Divine love is strong and steady enough to leap over all obstacles, confront with equanimity all changes of fortune, and defeat all attempts to delay or deviate. It does not judge one incident as good and another as bad; it does not ascribe them to different agencies. Just as the same sun causes both day and night, the same divine will causes joy and grief; so, the devotee does not wince or exult, whether ill or well.

The “Many” vs. the One

The fault lies in man’s fascination for the “many,” instead of the One; he pursues the diverse and forgets the unity in the universe. Really speaking, the “many” are but different vehicles for the expression of the One.

Take the example of electric current. When the fan whirls, we say the current is flowing; when the fan stops whirling, we note the absence of current. When the light bulb is on, we notice the presence of light; when the bulb is off, we note its absence. But the current, by itself, is “invisible”; it is formless (*nirakara*). It activates various things, and so we recognize its existence. So, too, divinity is in all things and behind all activity. To understand divinity and to recognize it, we need instruments, vehicles, and such limiting disguises (*upadhis*).

Clear Away the Cataract of Ignorance

The eyes see, but can the “eye” organ see? It cannot function without the prompting of the divine Atma (spirit) within. The brain thinks, but can the cells perform the process by themselves? No, they must be activated by the Divine within. The One is the basis, the cause, of the manifestation in the many. Through divine love alone can the inherent and immanent One be recognized. For, the Divine *is* love, more than anything else.

“All is enveloped by me, activated by me (*Isha vasyamidham sarvam*),” says the Lord. All is one. The one appears as many, to the prejudiced eye. Clear the eye of the cataract of ignorance, and it recognizes all as one. In fact, you see, with your eyes, only yourself, everywhere. You talk only to yourself, whomsoever you address. You are pleased with yourself; you hate yourself; you harm yourself. There is no other!

Even when divinity comes down as an avatar (divine incarnation), man is unable to pierce the veil and revere the Divine.

Lord Krishna said that people were unable to recognize his divinity because they deemed him merely human. Only those who are aware of the current within, the Atma, can identify the Source of power before them.

Listen to the Voice of God Within

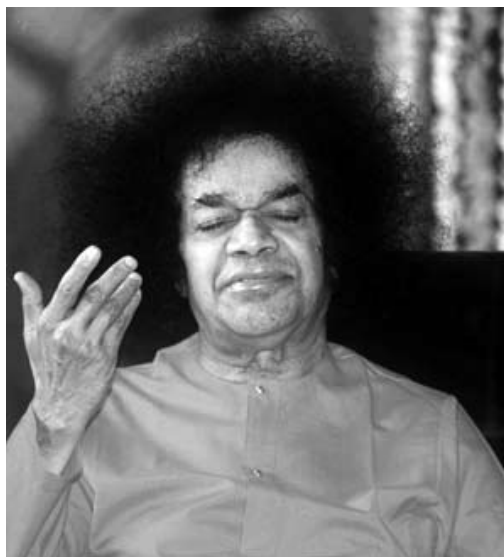
Three disciplines are essential in order to become aware of the divinity in all and in the Avatar: no activity should be taken

up with individual aggrandizement in view; intellect and emotion must be directed to the revelation of the Resident in the heart, the Atma; and every act should be done sincerely, with love, with no yearning for acquisition of personal profit, fame, or benefit. Above all, one must listen to the Voice of God within.

As soon as one contemplates a wrong act, that Voice warns, protests, and advises giving it up. It pictures the shame that has to be suffered, the punishment that has to be faced, the disgrace that the act entails.

It would appear as if one has two personalities inside, one that prompts and another that prevents. The warning signal, the timely advice, is given by the *jangam* (the spirit of right) in the *angam* (the physical body). It reminds you of the absurdity and the danger inherent in the identification of the Self with the body; it encourages you to discriminate between right and wrong. It is God, enthroned in every heart as the Highest Wisdom, the Supreme Consciousness (*prajnana*), the Eternal Witness, whom you can contact easily in the depths of meditation (*dhyana*).

In fact, when you examine your mind, you will find there, holding sway, not one but many "counselors," with their contrariness causing confusion. For example, no sooner have you planned to come to Puttaparthi to



have *darshan* (vision) of Swami than these counselors start playing their game.

One voice advises you to start out only after ascertaining whether Swami is actually present there (in Puttaparthi). Another voice suggests that you can put through a call to so-and-so and discover whether Swami is at Bangalore or Puttaparthi. A fourth voice lays before you alternative routes and means of transport, causing a good deal of headache. This is the *sangam* (group), around the *jangam* (right prompting), the group of voices that play around the spirit of right, trying to distract it.

In fact, when you examine your mind, you will find
there, holding sway, not one but many "counselors,"
with their contrariness causing confusion. ☸

Cultivate the Vision Directed Inward

Yet another voice might say, when the others have finished, “Well, my dear! Consider from all points of view, this desire of yours. You may go there, putting yourself to a lot of expense and bother, but consider this also—you *may or may not* get an interview with Swami.”

Then another voice might interject, “Oh! In light of all the wrongs you have done and the faults you have committed, it is very doubtful that Swami would grant you an interview.”

But then, in the wake of this voice, another will begin an argument of assurance. This voice will comfort, saying, “No! Swami is the very embodiment of compassion. He will certainly pardon all errors.” This principle, which guides and guards you along the spiritual path, is the *lingam* (symbol of the formless divinity), in the center of the *sangam* (group of voices) clustering round the *jangam* (right spirit).

The *lingam* is in the very core of one's heart, as the sole purveyor of bliss, power, and illumination. Cultivate the vision directed inward, so that the *lingam* might grant you these three. The mind will then be illumined with the cool, comforting light of love, which is wisdom. That is why the mind has as its presiding deity the moon (*Chandrama manaso jathaha*).

Hence, . . . unless you cleanse the mind with love, the full moon of spiritual wisdom cannot shine therein. The recital of the Name, the observance of vows and vigils, of fasts and festivals, may scintillate on the

inner sky of the mind, as stars stud the sky, but until the lamp of love is lit, the darkness will not vanish.

Guru Means Remover of Ignorance

Who is the *guru*? How can a person who has not reached the goal guide you toward it? When he himself is groping in the dark, how can he illumine your path? Most gurus who profess to lead are themselves not quite sure of the road or convinced of the rightness of their path.

Gu means darkness, or ignorance; *ru*, its removal. So, the guru must know the process by which ignorance can be removed in another. How can he do it when he has not done it for himself? The blind cannot lead the blind.

Guru has a further meaning, too. *Gu* means *gunatitha* (beyond the three qualities that define the cosmos) and *ru* means *ruparahitha* (devoid of any particular form). Now, no mortal has transcended either *guna* (quality) or *rupa* (form). God alone can be described as unaffected by these. And, God is *the* Guru, right in your heart, ready to lead and enlighten. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-pervading.

Scatter the dark clouds of ignorance and egoism that cover the face of the Sun shining in the sky of your heart. Your parents might disown you; your kinsmen might desert you; your friends might give you up; your treasured possessions might be lost. But God will be ever near, ever dear, ever ready with counsel and courage.

People will gather around you as long as you have pelf and power; you will be left severely alone when you lose these. They are

I want you to cultivate not these external ceremonies
and festivals but the internal spiritual practice,
the inner vision, the spiritual longing. ☸

like swarms of frogs that infect a full lake, croaking flattery but disappearing when the lake is dry.

Honor the Guru on Any and All Days

You rush here for the Gurupurnima Festival, but, there is no need to wait for this annual event to revere the guru. People spend this day worshiping the guru and seeking his directives, but this can be done all days of the year! Selecting a special day smacks of superficiality and exhibitionism.

I wish to discourage this attitude of yours; I want you to cultivate not these external ceremonies and festivals but the internal spiritual practice, the inner vision, the spiritual longing.

I do not claim that I am a guru or consider you as disciples or pupils. When I Am All That Is, who can be separately specified as guru and who as disciple or pupil? Ignorance of the One leads to this dichotomy; realization of the Truth will end this distinction. No one need teach; no one need learn. Fundamentally, all are awareness (*chith*). This is the reality.

The *teacher*—which is the more correct appellation—should not feel superior; the

pupil should not feel inferior. Both are Atma in reality. There is no high or low. All are waves in the ocean of bliss.

When your body is healthy, charming, and fully content, consider how happy you are! Now, know that the bodies of all beings are you—in truth. And when all those other bodies are happy, healthy, strong, and full, calculate how much bliss you can cherish in your heart!

The vision of the the Cosmic Form (*Virat*), is given for those who surrender their ego and take refuge in the Lord (as Arjuna did) and who imbibe with care the Geetha (song/message) sung by the Lord in the silence. God is omnipresent; he is the Inner Motivator of every particle in the universe. To declare that God is amenable only to your style of worship, that he will answer only to the Name you have learned to use, is to insult his omniscience and his glory.

See God in all; serve God in all; revere God in all. Pray, “Let the whole world prosper; let everyone be happy.”

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
July 1974, SSS 12:42



Hearing the Inner Voice

How Do We Know the “Source” of That Voice

This article is reprinted from the *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA*, Summer 2000 issue.

MY HUSBAND, CHARLES, and I were invited to participate in a conference [in the late 1990s] on “Selfless Service” for our Northeast Region by sharing in a workshop. Our service experiences were working with the elderly. We accepted the task and prepared for it. The Sathya Sai Regional Retreat/conference was a great success, and our workshop did not fare too badly.

However, what induced me to write this article was neither the conference nor our workshop but a question asked by our then regional service coordinator.

While sharing some of our experiences with the audience, both Charles and I mentioned a number of times that Swami was “telling or guiding us within,” to do specific things, and that we were frequently communicating with Swami on the “inner” level. Quite understandably, as soon as we finished our talk, our regional service coordinator inquired, “How do you know that it was Swami who talked with you?”

It was not a question I would have anticipated at that point. But it was a very familiar question, one I have been asked many times. Even Charles used to press me

on this subject, until eventually he too began hearing Swami’s voice within himself.

At that particular moment, due to the fact that we were running out of time, I could only explain that I had always heard the voice within me and had learned gradually to live by its guidance. After these experiences, in interviews with Swami, he repeatedly confirmed to me that it was indeed his voice. On several occasions Swami had told me something very meaningful in my heart and then repeated it verbatim to Charles and me a day or two later during a private interview.

Charles, recalling his own experiences, asked Baba, “Swami, during the past year I have been asking you many questions on the inner level, and I feel that I have received clear answers from you. Is that just my imagination, or is that really you?”

Swami replied most reassuringly, *No, no, not imagination. I am in you* (his finger pointing directly at Charles’ spiritual heart, located in the center of his chest). *I am your conscience. I answer all your questions.*

During the workshop, Charles also mentioned that Swami had manifested a beautiful *lingam* (oval-shaped symbol of the formless divinity) during an interview for us, which we regarded as additional confirmation

as well as encouragement to continue fostering our inner contact with him.

At that point, the time allowed for the workshop had run out, and we left it at that. For days afterward, though, the question of how do we know if it is Swami's voice guiding us kept lingering at the periphery of my mind. I began to suspect that many people must find it confusing to hear someone say, "Oh, Swami told me so and so. . . ."

How often do we hear Swami's name or the word "conscience" misused as a justification for blatantly ignorant or selfish behavior? How often do we base our criticism of small defects in others on our own sense of righteous judgment that seems unwilling to accept those flaws? We often appear totally blind to far greater problems in ourselves.

I recall from my own experience the rigorous self-examination I put myself through regarding the indispensable process of *making certain* that I was accurately discriminating the voice of God within my heart, and the wily suggestions of my crafty ego.

Ego, which is the personification of body consciousness, is the employer of all our lower emotions, such as resentment, envy, jealousy, pride, dislike, and anger. But of course the ego is smart enough to know when we have become aware of the negativity of such undesirable qualities. It therefore brings into play all its capabilities to ensnare us. The ego works with admirable subtlety and willfulness to masquerade as the voice of God for the purpose of achieving its selfish ends.

It requires the purity of selfless motives, as we persistently practice the difficult art

of discrimination. Unless we are sincere in our endeavor to control our restless mind and senses and become still within, success in our efforts to reach this goal is by no means assured.

Then how do we know when Swami is talking in our hearts as our conscience, and when it is our manipulative ego? What criteria should we use to distinguish the former from the latter?

Most of all, it is very important to understand that Swami is not just that beautiful form we see in India. For true Sai devotees, Swami is God, Universal Consciousness, permeating all that is. He is the divine spark in each one of us, which, under his loving guidance, may blaze into a flame able to spread light all around. Action based on the voice of God in our heart will always manifest itself as selfless and pure love, beneficial to everything and everyone around. It will demonstrate unity, harmony, and oneness.

The voice of the Lord, whom we have had the privilege of knowing in the form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is the voice of divine love, ever teaching and inspiring us to *help ever, hurt never*, no matter what the circumstances. Even if we feel that some situation (for which we may have responsibility) needs correction, the voice of God within, as our conscience, will counsel us to wait patiently for ways to accomplish this. The situation then will be resolved in a manner that will not cause unnecessary heartache to anyone; nor will it destroy the underlying unity and harmony that form the

essential base of operation for the achievement of any worthy goals or projects.

When we are emotional, resentful, or angry about an issue or a situation, we can be certain that as long as we entertain these emotions, we will be unable to hear Swami's voice clearly. At that point, we should make the effort of calmly and honestly analyzing our feelings and the voice we seem to hear. We must hold what we hear against the light of Swami's teachings, and if it still looks right, then we must view it with the lens of foresight to recognize its consequences. If the consequences spell discord and divisiveness, we must be willing to accept the likelihood that we are being fooled by the craftiness of the ego.

Whenever we, even innocently, allow the ego to misrepresent itself as our conscience, we permit it to govern our action in the name of Swami. Thus, the ego tries to get away with whatever ignoble or selfish behavior it may be obsessed with. When discord and unhappiness begin to sprout up all around us as a result of our failure to identify the ego-trickster, we should then at least be humble enough to acknowledge our mistake and do all we can to correct it.

Sometimes we use Swami's name as the motivator of our action but fail to properly distinguish between God's voice and that of our ego. When our unity and harmony have been turned into ruins and chaos, we are then making Swami responsible for our actions and their consequences. Every time we misuse Swami's name as our conscience, without deep self-examination to uncover our true motivation, we are undermining Baba's public reputation and his mission.

Swami is constantly at work to help each one of us become sufficiently still within, so that we may hear him. Once we have learned to distinguish His Voice from all the other chatter in and around us, he can teach and guide us from within our own hearts. But until we have become skilled at correctly making that distinction, we should voluntarily desist from employing Swami's name in any way that would make him appear responsible for our personal problems and misdeeds.

Swami has said, *The lights have to be switched on in the heart of man rather than in the house where the image of the Lord is installed and worshiped.*

—Edith Gregory
Lyme, New Hampshire

Your conscience knows the real source of joy; it will prod you toward the right path. Your job is to take it as a "guide" and not disobey it every time it contradicts your fancy.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 1:15, 91; Peddapuram, Mar. 9, 1958)

Q & A with Seema M Dewan

Video Producer Ted Henry asks the author, “How does one ‘hear’ inner messages?”

ON A FEW OCCASIONS, we have produced some inspirational messages received by Seema M Dewan as audio-video presentations and posted them as part of our video archive on *vimeo.com* (under the search term, SOULJOURNS).

Some viewers immediately began asking how it is that Mrs Dewan “receives” messages from Swami. They asked, “Was it during meditation, or sent by Swami through the mail to her, or just how did she receive this message?” They were curious about the method in which Seema “hears” Baba.

This can be a sensitive area, since Baba has told many that he speaks through no one, yet he also has said repeatedly that he is in everyone and advises us to listen to the inner voice. What to do? What to think? How does one answer this question? I put it to Seema, and our correspondence was as follows:

Ted: *Seema, I get a few questions a day from viewers who are curious about how you can “hear” messages from Swami. But I don’t comment since I’m not quite sure how to address them. Can you explain?*

Seema: Bhagavan resounds in this entire existence, within us and all around us, in vibrations. Communication with the Divine is not a process, nor is it

received by a practiced method. Those who practice methods like yogas, *asanas* (postures), or meditations receive a minute flash of the vibrations.

This is not something that I have practiced or achieved by intellectual reading. My communion with the Divine has come since the beginning, since birth. Truth comes to me in a flash. It is a series of waves that fill my being with vibrations that could fill a thousand books in an instant. Most of it I do not record, for it is impossible for me—I would be writing all day . . . all night . . . for even when my body sleeps, my state of consciousness is still receiving the divine vibrations that translate into different forms of truth.

Moment to moment, I am immersed in this communion, so much so that my routine is not done by thought. Vibrational waves lead me to do what I have to do, and I am not aware if things are going as I desire. I am aware that I am taking the steps where the divine energy leads me.

It is like holding the hand of your beloved and living your entire life in bliss, without knowing much about what the path was, how the time was spent, what you received, or what you did . . . yet in the midst of it all you are filled with a love so pure . . . and that love leads you to higher truths.

And those truths emanate a point of focus that goes beyond thought, reason, or emotion . . . and even though you are aware that your body is in this plane of existence, you can swallow this entire universe, and all that remains are the fires of divine consciousness.

To understand this is not possible . . . and impossible for me to speak of. I do not know what meditation is. My communion with the divine is instantaneous.

Ted: *Thanks, Seema. This is beautifully expressed. Would it be all right if I share this with others? My thinking is that it would be helpful on two counts: (1) It could help others understand how such beautiful thoughts could come to you; and (2) others, upon understanding better how this happens to you, might learn to open themselves up sufficiently to one day allow the same to happen in themselves.*

Seema: You are welcome to share this, but just remember . . . this answer is incomplete. It will always be incomplete to the one who wakes up to the higher mind.

It is like this: if I were to ask you, “Do you love Jody?” (Jody is Ted’s wife.) And you answer, “Yes,” and then I ask, “Ted, where is this love, exactly? How does it travel? Are you sure it is love? What do you feel in that love?”

You would begin to answer me, but in the midst you would stop. Why? Because you would lose the love in explaining it.

Only the one who has loved will know the love . . . will feel your love. In the same

way, only the one who has faith in his awareness of the Divine is in communion with the Divine and will know it to be true.

There is not a single being who is not in communion with the Divine. It is not even that one has a higher level than another. We all come with the same awareness, the same consciousness. The difference lies in how much we have faith in it . . . how much we follow it . . . how much we utilize it . . . how much we realize it . . .

When one experiences love, even on the physical plane, one feels a feeling of fullness. But where is this fullness? Is it in the body? In the mind? In the intellect? We call it spirit . . . soul . . . Atma, but where is that, too? Can anyone say?

At every moment, every being is in communion with the Divine, but when you doubt it, you weaken the link and your vision of your path becomes a little blurry. Soon you become accustomed to the blur, and you accept blurriness as your normal vision. It is just like those who have a cataract; they do not realize their loss of vision and compensate without their knowing. Only when they get sensitive to light do they realize that something is wrong.

In the same way, we begin to realize that when the lower mind starts to destroy our peace completely, we seek knowledge, but until we merge with the knowledge and reach Truth, until then, the knowledge itself will become a source of doubt. But, when we start to realize that our doubts are the reason for our hopelessness, we will then with all our

strength turn to simple faith, and peace will return to our mind, and our mind will rise to the higher truths . . . which will give us the confidence to love. And with that, we will be able to see our oneness with the Divine.

Please feel free to share. If this is able to help anyone, I would be humbled . . .

Ted: *Can you share something about how all this started for you?*

Seema: God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, and the energy of God pervades all of this universe. Every speck, every atom is born from him, remains in him, and returns to him. This is the law of existence, and all beings and nature follow the rule.

Whatever form you love him as, it is through that form he shows himself to you. Pure unconditional love is the bond between Atma (soul) and Paramatma (God). He exists as universal consciousness, and in it he has placed the Word of Truth, and whoever is able to receive even a tiny bit of the sweet, honeyed love in that Truth basks in bliss.

God is in the heart of every soul. Prayer is a voice of one's self that speaks to the depth of one's soul. When love for the Divine precedes all other desire, then from that comes a two-way conversation, in which one's consciousness asks and receives in vibrational energy the answers in which are revealed higher truths.

You can call God by any name that pleases your heart. For example, if it is Jesus you love, then the subtle form of Jesus shall

come to you and guide you, love you, and fill you with bliss.

As a young child of four, even before I knew of Baba, my inner communion with God started. I could feel his love for all his creation in every cell of my being. I could feel his presence, whether it was in a temple, mosque, or church. For me, God was one Love . . . one Truth . . . one Mother for all.

Of course, each of you has felt that love silently in your heart. I am no different. Most are silent about their love. I too have loved my silent communion with God, until Baba asked me to record it and share it, only so that you are able to realize that the inner voice of God is the same in all souls.

Since the age of eight, Sai Baba has been present in my life. My prayer to see God in a human form was answered, and I have had 36 years of blessed experiences with him, both on the physical plane and the spiritual. He is more "me" than I can ever be, and he guides me in the smallest requests I make of him. He is always there. He reminds me when I weaken; he encourages me when I strengthen. He reminds me that my life is for him . . . and that all his children are his.

Record all your inner conversations with me, he had said to me. *They will benefit mankind one day.* This was in August 1990. Of course, I did not know what to record, for I conversed with him (internally) all day.

By 1992 I was married; in 1995 I visited Swami with my husband. He blessed me many times that trip and asked me to return with my children. As soon as I returned to the U.S., I came to know that I was pregnant

with twins—*my twins*, as he would often refer to them.

On June 12, 1997, I started the book, *Sai Darshan*. I would hear profound truths while asleep . . . while awake . . . while cooking . . . while cleaning . . . while caring for the children. His work had started for me, and all day long I walked around with pen and paper. I did not want to miss any of it.

In September 1997, I visited Baba for eleven days. He blessed the manuscript outside in darshan eleven times, and twice he poured *vibhuti* (manifested holy ash) on it.

Baba also called our family for an interview and asked me to leave the manuscript with him. I did not even have a copy of it for myself. I thought to myself, if he keeps it, that's okay, too—it is his work. However, the next day he sent it back, and I was called to Mr. Chiranjeevirow's office to pick it up. Baba had returned the manuscript and inserted with it a pen!—a message to write more . . .

That's how my writing began. Several interviews followed, and Baba asked me not to go anywhere: *Stay at home . . . write . . . and take care of children*. So that is what I have done for the past sixteen years. In that time I have received nine books completed, and five are in the works.

I do not in any way claim that Baba speaks *through* me. He resides in my heart as much as he does in everyone's. He speaks to you from within as much as he speaks to me. Whenever I would cry during my interviews with him, he would say, *Why are you crying? I am going home with you*. He is with all . . . with each and every one.

With his permission alone, I have recorded all my inner conversations. He has poured his grace; how can I keep that all to myself? It becomes my duty to share it.

Ted: *Thank you, again, Seema.*

—**Ted Henry**
Pepper Pike, Ohio



S*ince God is in every heart, the Inner Voice is the signal that dharma (righteousness) gives while approving or disapproving any line of action. The dharma that you have to follow is indicated by that Voice. That is the swadharma (personal dharma) for you. It is the Inner Witness, that is, the real I, which illumines the eye, the ear, the taste, and the touch.*

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba** (SSS 10:12, June 1, 1970)

"A Prayer to Embrace"

Inspirational Writing by Seema M Dewan

Seema M Dewan is the author of several books, including *Sai Darshan*, a series of inspiring spiritual messages heard internally.

The opening page of *Sai Darshan* introduces her writings thus:

"I SANG THE GLORY OF THE LORD with none else in the mind—and none other but Him in the heart—until one day I found the Voice of the Master within. Then there was only the silence of bliss and the hunger for hearing even more. . . ."

—Seema M Dewan

MAY 13, 2011, 9:45 am

I WOKE UP THIS MORNING
With a prayer on my lips:
"O Mother Sai,
Who walks on this earth
With truth in your every word
And love in your breath. . .
I ask you, dear Mother,
How do I spend
The moments that are left
Without seeing
The magic in your smile
And the promise of your strength?
Who do I ask . . .
Who do I tell . . .
How shall life be ahead, my Sai,
Without you being beside my self?"

And as the tear
Dropped from my eye,
There was a voice
That spoke from within . . .

The voice of Sai . . .
It filled my heart,
It shook my soul,
And I took her word Divine
And offer it to you whole . . .

She said,
"O Child
Who cries
To be by my side,
I have held you
In my arms . . .
So close . . .
And I shall hold you
All your life . . .
Hear, my child,
Listen carefully,
For your soul speaks.
It echoes My Truth,
It shines with My Love,
And if you were to follow

*This path divine,
It shall bring you
Instant peace . . .*

*Do not fear,
For in the moments that come,
I shall still walk with you,
And you shall see
That whenever you shall smile
And be brave and courageous,
I shall smile beside you
And set you free . . .*

*You can still ask me, O Child,
And I shall answer;
You can still tell me, my dears,
And I shall transfer to you
The Word of Truth
That shall make you
Do the right
At the right moment.*

*Nothing has changed.
Why do you cry?
I still am
And shall always be.
I can always see you,
And with your love
You shall always
See Me . . .*

*Do you know
That I came
On this earth for you . . .
Do you know
I have left my footprints
In all the waters . . . and the ground . . .*

*In all the sand . . . and in all the snow,
And you shall walk
Upon them, my dear,
For within each of my footprints
I have left within
The secret of Truth
You have yet to taste . . .
You have yet to know . . .*

*Do not worry
Or doubt my presence.
I can do all for you,
As long as you
Stay close to my lessons . . .*

*There is no difference
From then and now . . .
Then . . . when I was there
In body and form,
You only thought
You followed Me*

*Now that I am
In the fires of consciousness . . .
Supreme . . .
Within and around you . . .
Above and below you . . .
You shall follow
While you are within
The brilliant fires
Of the Spirit Universal . . .
For I am the spirit
That contains the spirit of all,
And while it appears
That this universe moves,
In reality
It is still within me . . .*

Remember my love
For you always,
And whatever you need
Shall come before you . . .
Carry my truth
Within you always,
And there is nothing ever
That can weaken you . . .
There is nothing
That comes in life
To live forever;
All that comes
Must go one day.
Even when the Lord
Takes a body,
The rule he makes
Is the rule he obeys!

I have not left you,
Nor ever will I.
I watch over you
And protect you moment to moment.
Have faith in that
And return to strength.
There is no more to cry
And no more to lament . . .

The last . . . for now . . .
I shall leave you with:
Sai is not the body
That came . . .
Sai is not the body that left . . .
Sai is
The Eternal Mother,
Who, once she has given her word
Of protection and love
To her children,

Shall keep it,
Until her word
Shall shower its grace
And give her child
The long Eternal Rest . . .

It is a new day
For you today.
Wipe your tear . . . from now,
O Child of Sai,
For she has heard
The silent sobs
That you have cried . . .

Bring back the smile
On your face,
For she has come
In this test of time
To give to you
her love divine . . .
You must fight
The battle of fear
That makes you weep . . .
That makes you tear . . .
And whenever
Your heart shall shake,
You shall lift yourself
With this prayer
And turn the hands of time
Toward the miracle
Of faith!

—Seema M Dewan



Experiences with the Inner Voice

In Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen's book, *Journeys to Love: Twenty-one Danes share their experiences of transformation after meeting Sathya Sai Baba* (2008), a number of the stories mention episodes of being guided by the inner voice or intuition. Here we have excerpted a few of those passages. —Ed.

“I” and the “Other I”

Thorbjörn Meyer

A FRIEND, JORGEN, AND I were staying in Bangalore while Sri Sathya Sai Baba was at his ashram, Brindavan, in Whitefield. One day, upon entering a taxi, a voice inside me said, “Today you will give a talk to the students.” My intellect and feelings protested, but the voice continued. It was like a dialogue between two persons. I came to think of the late great American poet, Walt Whitman, who wrote *Leaves of Grass*. He had had some deep spiritual experiences and spoke of “I” and “the other I.” In order to describe this, you might also say that [my] trained academic mind was now experiencing that “the other I” or “the higher I” was intervening.

I did not feel like giving a speech, so I thought of all kinds of excuses, but I was clearly told that this speech should be given, and I had better prepare for it. There was no doubt who had the last word in this “dialogue,” in which now and then I was yelling. (I wonder what the driver thought!)

When I reached the ashram, I was invited to *bhajans* (a session of devotional singing) right away, along with the students.

Here I foolishly tried to hide in the back of the hall. After a few songs and an instrumental interlude, Swami called me to his side and asked me, *Well, have you decided what you want to speak about?*

I had decided nothing at all. I felt confused because I was experiencing exactly what Baba had told me previously, namely, that the Divine was inside me as well as outside me and next to me. In some way or another I succeeded in pulling myself together and answered, “Whatever Swami decides.” He answered, *Discipline. Talk about discipline!*

Following this, I heard myself giving a talk about self-discipline, and while doing so, my understanding of the subject was increasing. This was a new experience. This time, the “higher self” certainly came through. . . .

Then one year Marianne and I had played a little with the thought of going to Prasanthi for Christmas, but nothing had been decided. One day, the “other I” clearly came through: “You are going to speak in the Poornachandra Hall on Christmas Day!” I was speechless. Was this my “monkey mind”?

Everything went fine, and we left for our beloved *sadguru* (true teacher of enlightenment), Bhagavan Baba. On Christmas Day I was resting in our flat when a man knocked on the door at about 1:30 pm with a message from Swami: *Please speak in the Poornachandra Hall at 3:00, and kindly be there ten minutes in advance.*

I answered, "I will! I am honored and will be there right on time." Actually I had not prepared anything in advance, but I remembered the words of Jesus from the Gospel of Mark, where he says, "Do not worry in advance about what to say, as it is not you who speak but the Holy Ghost." (Mark 13:11)

Following a quick shower, I put on my best clothes and had 20 minutes left for collecting my thoughts. I sat down with paper and pen and a blank mind. In less than 15 minutes everything came to me directly from the "other I." I only had time for a few notes, but the theme was clear to me.

I arrived at the Poornachandra Hall on time and waited less than five minutes before Baba came. He walked directly up to me and said, *Do you now know what to say?*

My answer was simply, "Yes, Swami, I do."

The discourse went quite well. To speak the truth, there was not much of me in it; actually I was only responsible for a few sentences right at the beginning, and they were not too clear.

Afterward, Swami told me, *A good speech; very, very happy!*

It was not my speech; I had just been an instrument, and in this he showed me what

he meant by, *There is only one language, the language of the heart.* That is the "other I" Walt Whitman had talked about, the higher consciousness inside, which gets the opportunity to express itself. The great masters have more constantly been in this consciousness of oneness. This is where Baba is, and this is the place he is helping us to reach.

After Swami's own discourse, a group of American devotees were performing a theatre play. I was allowed to sit by my beloved Baba's lotus feet in the middle of the hall. A choir was singing, and the word *Hallelujah* was heard time and again.

Suddenly Baba leaned forward and asked me, *What does "Hallelujah" mean?*

Being in the proximity of Sathya Sai usually has the effect on me that my brain becomes completely empty. Not knowing what to answer, I began focusing outside, listening to what others said.

Those sitting closest to Swami discussed the question. Some thought it was Latin; others, Greek. In some way or another, I knew that this was not the case. Then I understood why the brain turns blank near Swami. It is this "nonbrain" condition, as Aldous Huxley spoke of, that is necessary in order to be able to be "thought" by the "universal brain."

I stopped thinking and, turning the attention inside, I heard myself answering, "Swami-ji, it is the language of Jesus; it is Hebrew and means, 'Praise the Lord.'"

Swami smiled in agreement. Once more I had experienced the difference between

listening inside and outside. I was ecstatic. The theatre play continued totally unnoticed by me. . . .

With Swami, you should only speak the language of the heart. Metaphorically speaking, he takes each one of us by the hand and teaches us to listen inside and trust the inner voice. Baba's [smallest] innocent question may be considered as a divine gesture giving us the possibility of going inside and intuitively giving an answer from the heart. ☁

Baba Is My Closest Friend

Eufemia Hanna Gisladottir

MY PATHWAY TO Sri Sathya Sai Baba is actually my pathway to God and my pathway to myself. . . . In 1983, I had no conscious relationship with God, even if I have always had divine ideals for my life. But after the death of my father, I discovered that I would be talking to him while walking in the woods, and one day it struck me that I was not talking to my father but to God. Since then I have been talking to God, and I have always been able to hear God's answers. . . .

One day I was sitting in a café when a friend who is a Baba devotee came in carrying a poster announcing a talk about Sri Sathya Sai Baba by Thorbjörn Meyer. I understood this as a clear invitation to me from Baba. . . .

The moment I arrived at the talk, I felt God the way I knew him. He was present.

God and Baba were one and the same. This was a deep inner knowing that had nothing to do with the intellect. Since then I have never doubted in the least who Baba is. . . .

I decided to visit Sai Baba and . . . reached India in December 1992. Before Sai Baba came out the first time I attended *darshan* (opportunity to see a holy being), I heard him say inside me, *Eufemia Hanna, when I come out I will not pay any attention to you, but we are always together.*

Baba has never given me any [physical] attention. I have never had an interview. I told him quite early on, "I only wish what is real and nothing else." Then we started working very profoundly together. . . .

I had to get down to the painful darkness [that was causing pain and suffering in my life] . . . , experience it, and get through it, together with Baba. I have always looked upon my stay(s) in Puttaparthi as a stay in a sanitarium where you have to accept the treatment. Otherwise there would be no reason for being there.

With his help, I have transformed that darkness. . . . With Baba, step-by-step, I have learned to live the life my soul wishes to live. There is no teacher more supreme than Baba. He meets me exactly where I am and where I need him. He does this with everybody. He speaks to me in my language and to others in their language. He knows exactly which way you must go in order to obtain what you want, and if you do not wish to walk that way, he shows you another one. . . .

Sai Baba is all-embracing, universal. He has an identity with everybody; therefore

he always knows everything about us and knows exactly what needs to be done. I have had [inner] conversation with Baba for more than ten years. I hear him as—and identical to—my own soul. He tells me directly what I need to know. In the beginning, his voice mingled with other voices; this never happens any more.

The only thing needed is the courage and the will to follow his directions. Right from the beginning, I have surrendered to his guidance. . . .

Contrary to most people who come to Prasanthi Nilayam, I have never studied Sai Baba's teachings or read many books about him, as I have always had this direct communication. When reading books about Sai Baba, I could feel the author's experience of him, and when reading his discourses, I would feel that what he told me directly was more suitable to my needs, as it always fitted perfectly, here and now, in exactly the situation in which I was.

Sai Baba is my personal friend, guide, and healer; I do not need to read anything at all. I know that Sai Baba leads me to happiness. Whatever he does is perfect. ☞

An Experience with the Inner Voice

Steig Meincke

WHEN SRI SATHYA SAI Baba turned 60, my wife Birgitte and I spent three weeks in Prasanthi Nilayam. So many people were there that some had

to be accommodated in Baba's schools. I was staying with a lot of other men in a physics classroom in the secondary school. Returning from darshan one day, I heard an inner voice saying, "Now you should buy yourself an ice cream in order that you may become sick."

I thought this sounded absolutely crazy. I definitely did not want to become sick, but as an observer, I saw my body go and buy an ice cream. Less than half an hour after having enjoyed the ice cream, I fell very sick. Soon I did not perceive anything around me. The only thing I noted was that my body was truly suffering, while my real Self was feeling wonderful.

When, after several days of illness, I got well again, it was Baba's birthday. I had great difficulty in getting up and walking to the balcony of the school, arriving just in time to see Baba enter the stadium in a coach drawn by white horses. I felt that he looked up at me, followed by the characteristic movement with his hand, blessing us. I had been in a coma for three days and nights and had had nothing to eat or drink.

Birgitte had not been allowed to enter the men's room where I was recuperating. Under normal conditions, she would have been very persuasive in asserting her right to take care of me, but she felt incapable of acting and was unable to do anything for me.

Instead of taking part in the celebrations at the stadium, with difficulty I went and sat in the temple yard. On my way back to where I was staying, I met two Danish doctors, Dag

Continued on page 26 . . .

“Your Mission Has Begun”

The inspiring message reproduced below was received by Charles Penn in 1979 and has often appeared in Sai Baba lore without explanation of its source. It was first published in *Golden Age 1980* (55 papers and essays in honor of Sai Baba's 55th Birthday) (Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books & Publications Trust, 1980). It later was included in *Divine Whispers: Eternal Letters That God Wrote Man* (Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Hostel for Senior Students, 1st edition, 1991; 2nd edition, revised and expanded, 2003). In 1990, Mr. Penn included this message in his book, *Finding God*, with the following introductory remarks. —Ed.

AT 4:45 PM ON AUGUST 3, 1979, at my office, then in Los Angeles, Baba revealed to me our mission. His profound revelation has now spread around the world. It is even more understandable today than it was a decade ago. The avatar on the march has a mission for each devotee to perform. The divine message that follows now finds a place in this book. It was first published in *Golden Age*, November 23, 1979.

—Charles Penn

Finding God: My Journey to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba,
Prasanthi Nilayam, India: Sri Sathya Sai Books & Publications Trust, 1990, pp. 177–180

My Dear Devotees:

Your mission has begun. These are my words to you. Each one of you has a unique and valuable part to play in this lifetime. Only those whom I have called can serve me.

My mission has reached that point in time when each one of you now has a work to do. This planet has a purpose in the galaxy in which it is held. That purpose is now unfolding before our eyes. I call upon you to radiate the devotion within

you so that its unseen power envelops all those who come into your orbit. To successfully perform your part, always remain centered upon me. Allow yourself to impart that purity of heart within you toward all human beings and all living creatures and do not crave for the fruits of your work. This part of my mission is performed in absolute silence. You are my instruments, from whom my love will pour. Be always aware that the moment

you let your ego descend upon you, my work ceases. When you have overcome your negative unmindfulness, you will again become my source.

The multiplication of my love will be felt throughout the world. I have prepared you for this work over many incarnations. I have drawn you to me. I have made great steps in my mission over these past incarnations. My work is ceaseless and so your work, too, is without end. Know that I am within you and without you. There is no difference.

My darshan will pour forth from me, to and through you. You may be unaware of this constant action. Be ever pure of heart and soul, and mankind in your lifetime will benefit from your unique qualities. Others too will join me. The

time is approaching when all humanity will live in harmony. That time will be here sooner than one expects. It is not what anyone alive can imagine. It is not something that one can try to aspire to.

Before it arrives, be prepared for it, as it is beyond all comprehension. I can say that its beauty is magnificent and beyond all dreams. And as each of you perform your silent work, I will embrace you to my heart, and henceforth your soul shall reveal my presence within. This I say to all my devotees, from the Lord's mountaintop where all the universes become one. My beloved devotees, your breath will carry the scent of the blossoms of heaven. Your example will be that of angels. Your joy will be my joy. 🌸

—Inspirational message received by
Charles Penn, August 3, 1979, 4:45 pm



It is only when the mind is completely under control that we can grasp our real identity. Then all troubles and travails, doubts and dilemmas, come to an end. We can then overcome all sorrow, delusion, and anxiety, and become established in the holy serenity of peace. Spiritual life is not a matter of meaningless talk. It is an experience of pure bliss. ☸

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba, *Spiritual Diary*, p. 140

and Jorgen. They looked at each other, and Dag said, “We have to admit something. We have betrayed the Hippocratic Oath. If we had been home in Denmark, you would have been hospitalized and kept in intensive care long ago, but we agreed that this whole town is an ‘intensive care unit’ and that the ‘Doctor of doctors’ is in charge, so we knew that everything would be all right.”

I have no doubt that we are experiencing a karmic clash when we live through serious illness. Previous incarnations may make their appearance; they show up when we are ready to work with the “messages” we get, which can result in greater understanding, a transformation that should hopefully lead to our developing into a better human being. It is all about becoming one with the Divine. 🌸

In Tune with the Divine

Steen Piculell

ONE YEAR, BEFORE taking a winter vacation to the Canary Islands, I went to Strube’s bookstore (in Copenhagen, Denmark) and asked Mrs. Strube whether she could recommend some books for my vacation. She showed me a book about Sri Sathya Sai Baba. My reaction was, “No, thanks!” India and gurus—that was not my cup of tea. In my thoughts, India was a dirty, poor country, very far away, and gurus were money grabbers whose only intention

was to cheat. I had once seen a guru who visited Denmark and who sat on a throne. People gave him money, and I felt that was all wrong. It did not appeal to me.

I bought two other books and then on a sudden impulse said, “Give me that book as well.” The book was *Sai Baba, Avatar*, by Howard Murphet. I brought it with me on vacation and sat on the beach and read it from cover to cover in one day. Every time I turned a page it was as if there was something I recognized. I had come home!

I felt that everything I had not been able to understand with my brain was now clear, and I knew instinctively, or somewhere in my subconscious or soul, that what I read was true. I knew that Sai Baba was true. I knew that what he stood for was true. Of course he could perform miracles; otherwise he would not be who he said he was.

But it was the words he spoke—the philosophy he presented and the spirituality of his speeches reproduced in the book—that caught me completely and embraced me in the realization that divinity had come to Earth, and that this divinity was Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

This naturally had a strong impact on me, and the same evening I went to the beach and thought about this miracle I had just experienced, when suddenly Baba spoke to me telepathically. I did not see him, but he spoke to me, and I knew that it was him.

I asked him questions, and he answered me. The essence of our conversation was that Baba said that the Earth, our Earth, is one large organism that breathes in and

out—just like our lungs. He told me that the universe also breathes. It was not something I knew at the time, but I read later that there is a scientific theory to the effect that the universe expands and contracts; that is to say, it breathes.

Baba went on to say that the Earth exhales into the universe. The Earth is a part of a whole, an integrated unit. Baba said that the breath of the Earth is so polluted that it has a detrimental impact on the breath of the universe, and that this must be changed—and that I, Steen, like many others, would take part in this work. This is the essence of what happened.

I looked at the waves and found I could keep them back. I experienced many other supernatural things. It was a vision, a revelation. It was a very strong experience for a most ordinary human being like me. But that was how it was. I did not doubt for a second that the experiences were real and that I had talked with Sai Baba. . . .

Baba says that each atom is divine truth, energy, love, and consciousness. Atoms are everywhere. As they are also in me, I may, by attempting to still my thoughts and reach the peace within me, reach the divine consciousness where I can ask any question. When we learn to listen in the right manner, we may receive answers to any question. The answer may not come straight away. I have experienced Baba saying, *Wait*, when I have asked about something inside myself, [undoubtedly] because the time was not ripe for understanding or appreciating the answer.

Baba says, *If you take one step toward me, I will take a hundred toward you*. That is to say, if we all move just a little on the spiritual path and make a little effort and take steps toward the cosmic, higher divine consciousness, we will get answers. To me, the proof of God's existence is that he answers your questions and your prayers. He is in your life every day in many ways.

An example of this took place at one of Baba's birthday celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam. I met a lawyer who sat in a tent and registered people who were doing service, *seva*. He did not have Baba's darshan because he had to be on duty all the time. Since he was such a lovely person who gave his time working for Baba, I felt like giving him a present.

I went out into the village, to the best jeweler's shop, where I bought a beautiful gold amulet to be worn around the neck, with Baba's picture on it. I went to the tent to give it to him, but the tent had been dismantled.

Another day when I was in the village to buy some flowers, he was suddenly there in front of me. "This is for you," I said and gave him the little box with the amulet and went on my way. He had my address from earlier, and a month or so later I received a letter from him in which he wrote that it had been wonderful to do service for others at Prasanthi Nilayam for Baba's birthday, but he had of course missed seeing Baba, except on the last day for darshan.

He had really wished to get an amulet with Baba's picture on it and had looked for one everywhere but had not been able to

find one. So on the last day before leaving, suddenly he met me, and I gave him the small box with the beautiful amulet with Baba's picture on it. He thanked me because I had made his prayer to Baba come true. But I had only been the "mailman," Baba's instrument. I had only followed my intuition, which had told me this was the right thing to do. 🙏

The Sai Christmas

Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen

THE DATE WAS OCTOBER 27, 2010. The phone rang at 9:30 pm. I was in bed, very tired after the previous night's flight from London to Bangalore and a busy day unpacking in our flat in Prasanthi Nilayam. Peter answered the phone. "Yes, John." Peter sounded more than puzzled when he told me that John Behner, a devotee from El Salvador, wanted to speak to me.

I had no clue but got out of bed. "Hi, John?"

"This is Santa Claus speaking," the voice said. Now I was even more surprised—Christmas was almost two months away.

John had seen that we had arrived at the ashram, and as soon as possible he wanted to invite me to give a speech in Sai Kulwant Hall on Christmas Day. I became wide awake and in a flash I recalled myself in Sai Kulwant Hall on Ladies' Day the previous year, 2009.

In this flashback, I had sat in "Arch 1" and watched a lady go to the microphone on the dais right next to Swami. At that very

moment, in my head I heard a voice, loud and clear, say, "Some day you will also stand there, speaking." I was amazed then. Never before had I heard a voice in my head. Where had this inner voice come from? Could it be Sai Baba? It had to be him!

Speaking in Sai Kulwant Hall certainly was not something I had been secretly thinking or dreaming of. On the contrary, the thought had never entered my mind. I was used to expressing myself through my writings; I was definitely not the kind of fluent speaker I was hearing at that moment. With Peter I had spoken at Sai meetings in Denmark and other countries. We had also given talks in different countries about our research on spiritual-based leadership and our book, *Leading with Wisdom*, but always with a slide presentation and many quotes as support. No, I was not the kind of speaker "the voice" had suggested. And so I forgot all about it—till October 27, 2010, at 9:30 pm.

I told John that I would give him an answer the next day, well knowing that, with humility, of course I would accept this opportunity of a lifetime to talk about the glory of Bhagavan. At a subconscious level Swami had prepared me. But in the back of my mind I knew that it would not be easy to walk in the footsteps of former great Christmas speakers like Father Charles from Nigeria, Ted Henry, Sylvia Alden, and others from the USA, who had also had the advantage of speaking in their mother tongue.

When I told Peter what the phone call was all about, I also mentioned the message

in 2009 from the inner voice, which I had disregarded right away and therefore never talked about. Peter was truly amazed.

Then, in December, one day John Behner and other members of the International Christmas Committee came to our flat. We talked about the theme of my speech, which I had been working on. They opined that the devotees mostly want to hear about Swami and his miracles. “You could also talk about the incident with the airplane.”

“Airplane? Which airplane?” I asked. All of a sudden I remembered how Peter had “landed safely.” But how did they know the story? “You mentioned it,” one said.

“Not at all!” Again, Swami must have set the stage and changed the play by adding just one word. Here is the airplane story.

Before returning home from his second visit to Prasanthi Nilayam on August 1, 1990, after some very powerful spiritual experiences while at the ashram, my husband silently had asked Swami to give him a safe landing. If Bhagavan had not delayed my husband’s flight from India back to Europe with Kuwait Airways, Peter would have been in Kuwait Airport waiting for a flight connection to Europe at exactly the same time as the soldiers from Iraq took passengers in the airport as hostages. Thanks to Swami’s intervention, Peter avoided such a frightening and potentially very dangerous experience. Swami made sure that Peter “landed safely.”

When on Christmas Day John Behner introduced first me and then Cass Smith, the American who would sing beautiful songs

he had written to Swami, I got up from my cushion on the floor in Sai Kulwant Hall with only the Lord on my mind. I went to him, gave him a rose, talked to him, and listened to his sweet words.

His face, so close, was unbelievably soft. I am tempted to say that it was “not of this world.” I was not able to hear everything he said to me, but what I did hear contained a powerful personal message. Then he allowed me to take *padnamaskar*, and I kissed his tiny feet, soft as a baby’s cheek. When I went to the microphone, I spoke for 12 minutes, and all went well. I did my best; Swami did the rest. I had the opportunity to tell my beloved Lord that I love him, and he showered his love and grace on me. Can one wish for more in this life? What a Christmas present. Thank you, Swami!

Interestingly, on December 26, 2010, when *saidevotees_worldnet* wrote a few lines about my speech, they mentioned the incident about the airplane and Kuwait. It must have been Baba’s wish that it should be narrated. ☸

—All stories except Ms. Mikkelsen’s were excerpted from *Journeys to Love: Twenty-one Danes share their experiences of transformation after meeting Sathya Sai Baba*, by Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen (2008)



Lessons from God

Two Stories from Amarjit Singh

Colin and the Mini-bus

IT STARTED OUT like any other evening. I was with some friends—Colin, Elaine, and others—for our monthly meditation in London. As usual, we sat down, prayed, and invited all the masters to attend.

When we sit and pray and meditate, we find the enlightened masters sit with us. They seem to wait for this chance to bless us, especially when we pray without *ego*!

As the divine *shakti*/holy spirit rose in our group, I saw Sri Sathya Sai Baba standing next to Colin, along with a minibus.

The minibus then spoke. “Tell Colin we do not want him to drive us any more!”

This was amazing! I spoke to Colin and passed the message.

Colin was very quiet. He then explained, “I drive a minibus, transporting disabled children, along with another lady. We had a huge argument a few days ago, and I was very angry and shouted at her. But how could this affect the minibus?”

The minibus then replied, “We also have feelings, as we are a part of God



consciousness! We do not want him to drive us any more. This job is for someone with love, not for an angry person.”

Colin was crestfallen and asked for forgiveness. The minibus replied that they would observe his behavior over the next few weeks and then consider the issue again.

Colin is still driving the mini bus!

This proves beyond a shadow of doubt that any emotions we show affect all objects around us. Think of all the battles that have taken place on our holy Mother Earth. Is it any wonder Mother Earth is ill? So, in the future, try to remember whenever praying to ask that any traumas in Mother Earth be released.

What a profound consciousness, to see God in all things, at all times, and to understand that “in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Bhagavad Gita 17:28). ☸

“Judge Not, Lest Ye Be Judged”

WE WERE SITTING in court with the tribunal judges in Ashford, South England. The judges were presiding over allegations against our flying school by one of our self-employed flying instructors, whom we had made redundant (let go) due to the recession. She was refusing to be made redundant and had hired a lawyer to sue us.

Sai Baba appeared to me and told me not to judge the instructor suing us, lest I be judged, saying, *Both the parties believe themselves to be totally correct. Each party can only see the truth in their own way. You see the truth in your way, and she sees the truth her way. Judge not, lest you be judged!*

I thought, it's so easy for you to say this, Baba, but for me to practice it is mountainously difficult. Most of us, even me, are constantly judging people.

With Baba looking at me, I had no choice: I told my sons not to judge but to trust in God. We prayed and asked God to allow a fair hearing.

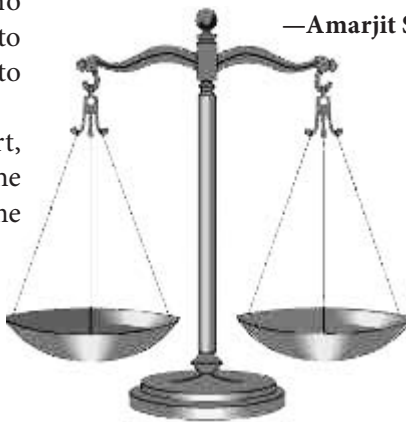
After the hearing as we left the court, I noticed some rubbish on the floor of the courtroom. I picked this up and at the same

time spontaneously thanked the building for allowing us to sit within. As I picked up the rubbish and thanked the building, I was suddenly shown the heart of the building opening up and blessing us all. It was surreal. This showed me again that God-consciousness is in all creation and that we are all part of a living matrix of energy.

When the court's decision was handed down two months later, all the charges against us were judged to be false and were dropped. The claimed damages against us of over \$40,000 were quashed, and the complainant had to pay her own solicitor's fees, which amounted to more than \$15,000.

So, dear divine angels, realize the God-consciousness is in all as we tread this holy pathway, knowing that even the pathway itself is a living energy, and respecting others, “judging not, lest we be judged.” ☸

—Amarjit Singh Bamrah
Kent, England



World Youth Conference 2011

Further details from the Prasanthi Council – International Youth Council

After the Prasanthi Council report of March 16, 2011, by Dr Michael Goldstein, on the results of the 9th World Conference of the International Sai Organization, we are happy to provide details of the upcoming July 2011 World Youth Conference.

The conference theme is “Ideal Sai Leadership.” As you are aware, in 2009–2010, Zonal Youth Conferences were held throughout all nine international zones of the Sai Organization. Youth leaders gathered from all corners of their respective countries to discuss how they can become spiritually transformed, better support elders in charge of the Sai Organization, and take Swami’s teachings out into the world.

Since the last World Youth Conference in 2007, the International Youth Program has successfully completed the following:

- Zonal and National Youth Conferences around the World.
- Regular meetings of the International Youth Council with the Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation and Prasanthi Council, every year since World Youth Conference 2007.



- Increased youth participation in the organization over the past four years, particularly in the fields of education and service.

- Successful integration of youth working across all wings of the organization and,

in some countries, in greater leadership positions, such as Chair of the Central Council, Central Coordinator, Deputy Central Coordinator, and other key national positions.

- Coordination and assistance by youth in organizing various national pilgrimages in 2010 to commemorate Bhagavan’s 85th birthday.
- Youth playing a crucial part in taking Swami’s teachings and mission into local communities.

Bhagavan blessed and approved a World Youth Conference to take place this July 13–14, 2011, just prior to Guru Purnima. Bhagavan has repeatedly told the youth that they are the leaders of tomorrow. To become the leaders of tomorrow, clearly we must be worthy participants today.

Important Information About World Youth Conference 2011

Aims/Objectives: The aims and objective of the World Youth Conference, as outlined by Dr Goldstein in his report of March 16, 2011, are:

It is helpful to develop the necessary skills through instruction and workshops for officers at all levels—center, national, and international. Thereby we learn to become competent Sai leaders. These are lessons to be learned from the experience of others.

It is essential to become inspiring and exemplary Sai leaders through individual spiritual practices: selfless love and service, prayer, devotion, meditation, study. These are lessons to be learned from our own spiritual hearts. It is imperative that we learn the distinction between competent and exemplary, between instruction and inspiration.

Conference Dates: July 13–14, 2011

Theme: “Ideal Sai Leadership”

Format: Workshops/Study Circles

Attendees: 400

Those Eligible to Attend:

- National Youth Coordinators (past and present)
- Deputy National Youth Coordinators
- Regional Youth Coordinators (past and present)
- Senior Youth leaders ages 30–40 who have held positions of responsibility in the Youth Wing

- Former Sai Students or Alumni, presently holding office in the Organization, who are in the Youth age range

Zonal Youth Representatives & WYC Planning Committee Members:

- Zone 1: Aparna Murali
- Zone 2a: Daniel Strauss
- Zone 2b: Malala Jaumandreu
- Zone 3: Alvin Leo
- Zone 4: Parani Kumar
- Zone 5: Anjali Daswani
- Zone 6: Ivan Bavcevic
- Zone 7: Mathias Seital
- Zone 8: Dmitry Medev
- Zone 9: Shitu Chudasama

Sai Youth leaders who meet the above criteria should send their names directly to the President of the Central Council, who in turn will consult with the respective Zonal Chairs and Zonal Youth Representatives before forwarding their national lists to us.

The World Youth Conference will thus enable us to take a fresh look at the Organization and the structure for its youth wing. With your wisdom and love, we believe that you will feel the need to make a contribution toward upholding the spiritual authenticity of this organization. Having attained this degree of wisdom, your compassion and love will surely light lamps of love wherever you go.

Lovingly,
—International Sai Youth Council

USA Retreat & Conference Dates – 2011

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>.

Region 5 (North Central): Sept 2–5 (Labor Day Weekend, Fri 4 pm–Mon noon), the 21st North Central Region Sai Conference and Retreat, at Camp Henry Horner, 26710 W Nippersink Road, Ingleside, IL 60041. Speakers: Ms Dana Gillespie, Dr Aroon Yusuf. Contact: Vijay Sai Reddy, phone: 224-484-0724; e-mail: admin@sathyasaicenters.org; website: www.sathyasaicenters.org.

Region 9 (Southwest): Sept 2-5 (Fri 6 pm–Mon 10 am), New Mexico “Land of Enchantment” Retreat at Bodhi Manda Zen Center, Jemez Springs, NM. Theme: “God is with, in, around, above, and below you . . . always!” Speakers: Arthur & Poppy Hillcoat of Australia; Srinivas & Vijaya Raghavan. Contact: Elaine Hausman, 505-660-0283, ehausman@rockridge.biz.

Prasanthi Nilayam Festival & Conference Dates – 2011

For more information about the festivals observed at Prasanthi Nilayam and a sampling of Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings about each festival’s significance, please see:
<http://srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/festivals.htm>.

July 11, Monday – Ashadi Ekadashi (11th or *ekadashi* day after the full moon of the Indian lunar month, Ashada, and associated with the worship of Vishnu) has been typically marked in Prasanthi Nilayam by pilgrimages from the states of Maharashtra and Goa to celebrate this holy festival.

July 13–14, Wednesday–Thursday: World Youth Conference Theme: “Sai Ideal Leadership.”

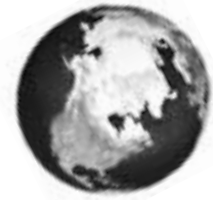
July 15, Friday – Guru Purnima (full moon or *purnima* day of the lunar month, Ashada, falling in June or July) is a day set aside to express love, reverence, and gratitude to our spiritual teachers and the great sages of yore. This year the Mahasamadhi of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba that has been under construction will be unveiled and dedicated.

July 22–24, Friday–Sunday: Sri Sathya Sai International Orthopedic Conference, to be held at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Puttaparthi.

August 22, Monday – Sri Krishna Janmashtami (8th or *ashtami* day after the full moon of the Indian lunar month, Shravana) is the birthday festival of Lord Sri Krishna, Avatar of the Dwapara Age.

Find Steadiness Within

*Sai's Words on Earthquakes and Natural Calamities –
Excerpts from Various Discourses*



The entire cosmos is under the control of the Divine, but the Divine is bound by Truth. Truth is under the control of high-souled persons. These persons are the embodiments of the Divine in the world. (TELUGU POEM)

THE UNIVERSE IS infinite and marvelous. But, unable to comprehend the nature of creation, man becomes prey to divisive forces. Creation proclaims the will of the Divine and is known as *prakriti* (nature). Man, who is a child of nature, should have a divine nature. Man is born in the world to proclaim the will of the divine. Man is a part of creation and bound by all the material objects in the world. His awareness is based on his perception of the world. Man has to order his life for the purpose of furthering the creative process.

Unfortunately, today, as a consequence of scientific and technological progress, humanness has declined and man considers the world as only intended for his enjoyment. As a result, the powers of nature are being used in a manner that poses a great threat to the world. The world has not been created for mere enjoyment. Abusing the resources of nature and forgetting his own basic human nature, man is going against the purpose of creation. Many natural catastrophes are entirely due to man's behavior. Earthquakes,

volcanic eruptions, wars, floods, famines, and other calamities are the result of grave disorders in nature. These disorders are traceable to man's conduct. Man has not recognized the integral relationship between humanity and the natural world.

In the human body, all organs—the eyes, ears, mouth, and so on—are integrally related to each other. Just as these organs are important for man, man is equally important for society, as a limb of the social organism. Man is a part of the human community. Humankind is a part of nature. Nature is a limb of God. Man has not recognized these interrelationships.

Man is a kind of stage-director of what goes on in nature. Forgetting his responsibilities, man fights for rights. If deep inquiry is made, it will be realized that man has no rights at all in this world. He has only duties and no rights. It is foolish to fight for rights without discharging one's duties. All the chaos and conflicts in the world are due to men forgetting their duties. If everyone discharges his duty, the world will be peaceful and prosperous.

Sai's Discourse

When the master performs his duties, the employees will work well. When the parents discharge their duties, the children will realize their responsibilities. When the children do their duties by the parents, the latter will be honored. Likewise, when teachers discharge their duties, the students will conduct themselves well. When the students perform their duties well, the authorities will secure due respect.

Today mankind forgets its obligations. The cosmos is an integral organism of interrelated parts. When each one performs his duty, the benefits are available to all. Man is entitled only to perform his duties and not to the fruits thereof.

—SSS 25:37, Nov. 22, 1992

Man should put a ceiling on his desires. As man's conduct is perverted, today we find natural calamities taking place. You are aware of the devastation caused by the earthquake in Gujarat (in 2001). Thousands of people lost their lives. The reason for this is that man is entertaining excessive desires. God maintains perfect balance in His creation. In God's creation, the earth and the oceans are endowed with balance. But man is indiscriminately exploiting the earth for extracting oil. Every day tons of fish are caught from the oceans. This indiscriminate exploitation of nature results in imbalances in the earth, which is playing havoc with human lives. Only when man is free from unsteadiness (*kampam*) within, will he not be troubled by earthquakes (*bhukampam*).

Not only the people of India (Bharat) but also the people of the entire world should strive to maintain balance. The five elements are nothing but manifestations of the divine. Man's life will be secure only when he realizes this truth and acts accordingly. A few days ago, I sent truckloads of rice, lentils, and so on, to the earthquake victims of Gujarat. Some people asked, "Swami, why should you take the trouble of spending so much money for sending the relief material to Gujarat. You could have as well averted the earthquake."

I replied, "My dear, man has to blame himself for the earthquakes. Due to excessive greed for wealth, he is disturbing the balance of the earth—hence, the earthquake." That is the law of nature.

One must express his love for man by helping the needy. Love is your nature. Just as balance is very much essential for nature, so also love is very much needed for man. Know that whatever God has created is for your own welfare. You should enjoy nature according to your need. You should not rob nature of its resources to satisfy your greed.

Here is an example. Once a greedy person owned a goose that used to lay a golden egg every day. One day, he ripped open the stomach of the goose, thinking that he would get all the golden eggs at once. Today man also is indulging in such foolish and greedy acts. Instead of being satisfied with what nature is giving him, he aspires for more and more, and in the process, creates imbalance in nature.



Only when man is free from
unsteadiness (*kampam*) within,
will he not be troubled by
earthquakes (*bhukampam*). 🌀

Today scientists are interested in new inventions. The advancement in science and technology has also led to imbalance in nature. As a result, there are earthquakes and no timely rains. Science should be utilized only to the extent needed. Science has its limitations, and crossing those limits leads to danger.

Students! You have a long way to go. Adhere to truth and righteousness. Our ancient sages said, “Speak truth, speak pleasantly, and do not speak unpalatable truth.” (*Sathyam bruyath, priyam bruyath, na bruyath sathyamapriyam*). Make proper use of natural resources and do not put them to misuse. Help everybody and make them happy. Share all the good things you have learned with others. This is your foremost duty.

—SSS 34:03, Feb. 21, 2001

We are prone to taking creation for granted, thinking that it is but insentient nature and thereby ignoring the sentient principle that regulates nature and imparts balance among its various constituents. For

example, the oceans contain air needed by the earth for more than ten years. One lightning bolt in the sky emits enough electricity to power the entire world for 20 years. But scientists and technologists, in pursuit of selfish interests as well as name and fame, utterly disregard the security and welfare of the society and the nation by upsetting the balance in nature, which results in various accidents, calamities, losses, and misery to the public at large.

By building gigantic dams and storing gigantic quantities of water in one place, the earth sinks down in that area and consequently rises up in another area, like a seesaw. The indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources by scientists and technologists, such as mines for extracting minerals, mica, coal, petroleum, and other oils, results in imbalance and pollution of the five major elements, leading to catastrophes like earthquakes, volcanoes, and so on.

The rapid and excessive proliferation of industries, factories, automobiles, and so on, with the attendant pollution of the atmosphere, is responsible for the increasing incidence of diseases like eosinophilia, asthma, deafness, pneumonia, typhoid,

Sai's Discourse

and so on. However, science per se is not bad; what is necessary is for man to put it to proper and judicious use.

—SSS 25:17, May 26, 1992

What are the present-day scientists and technologists doing? Have they any idea? They assert that all that is found on the earth is for use and exploitation by man. Indiscriminate mining of all kinds of minerals and ores is carried on for the so-called benefit of mankind. But the earth is spherical. Systematic removal of material from one side causes imbalance, as the other side becomes heavy. It is divine dispensation that maintains balance. This balance should not be disturbed. The loss of balance is the cause of earthquakes and other natural disasters.

Man is not only causing imbalance in the earth; he is also polluting the oceans with industrial and urban waste. Water pollution has reached a stage where people are forced to drink polluted water.

Science helps you develop and sharpen your intellect. There are many scientists; many of you are also students of science. You must know that the knowledge that comes from within is at the top level. At the second level is skill, at the third is balance, and at the fourth is insight. Swami tells you to convert your knowledge into skill, not to kill it. When knowledge is killed, imbalance ensues. Why is there such a loss of balance in the world today? It is because you have killed your God-given knowledge instead of turning it into skill.

—SSS 32-2:15, Nov. 22, 1999

Today in many parts of the world, nature is causing various disasters such as earthquakes, famines, floods, and volcanic eruptions. What is the reason? The spiritual lapses of man account for these calamities. Disturbances in the heart (human heart) are reflected in earthquakes.

Fill your minds with good thoughts and engage yourselves in good actions. Chant the Lord's name. When the ether is surcharged with the vibrations of the Divine Name, the entire environment gets purified. Those who breathe this sanctified air will have pure thoughts. Purify the atmosphere that is now polluted.

—SSS 26:31, Oct. 7, 1993

Understand that matter combined with energy is God. Make use of the things in the world with the awareness that it is all God's creation, and you should be grateful to the Divine for everything. Have everything within limits, including your desire for comforts. Even the five elements must be used within limits. Otherwise they will spell danger. . . . Students! Work for the peace and prosperity of society without selfish motives. You have to put these things into practice and shine as ideal students.

—SSS 28:15-1, May 30, 1995

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba



SSE Group 4: Importance of Water Conservation

Story:

How I Learned to Conserve Water

The sweat rolled off my body at only 7:00 am. We had just reached my grandparent's house in Visakhapatnam, India, and already I missed having air conditioning and running water. We only see our relatives in India once every two years, and these short visits always bring my grandma and mom to tears. So, while I didn't want to complain about my discomfort and ruin the moment, the idea of walking through the streets with an Afro didn't appeal to me, either.

Even though I had lived in India for a short time, I no longer empathized with the culture and lifestyle. Thrown suddenly into a different environment during these visits, I began to realize the conveniences of my own life in America. I had never experienced a drought in my Iowa home, so I didn't realize the value of water and took its presence for granted. In fact, only through the solvent of this cultural immersion would I truly dissolve my ignorance of water conservation.

I had prided myself for remaining connected to my Indian roots while growing up in America, and I thought I had my culture all figured out. When people around me connected Hindu gods with Greek mythology, I cringed at the misconceptions, but I myself didn't know as much about my culture as I thought.



My parents, speaking from their own experience growing up in India, often lectured my brother and me about wasting resources. In our house, the air conditioner is used minimally and we never use our Jacuzzi. "It's not how our parents raised us," they say. Though I kept my parents' words in the back of my mind while visiting India, appreciating the importance of water proved difficult in my frivolous life.

To truly understand my heritage, I had to immerse myself in it. During this trip to India in 2007, the Indian heat made me wish for the Iowan winter, and, to top it off, the electricity went out at least once a day. As soon as I would wash my hair in cool water in that humid, sticky climate, I felt so relaxed that I just couldn't resist washing my hair every day.

In my grandmother's apartment, the water is turned on only for an hour, during which my grandma and aunt run about the house filling up buckets as tall as my

waist. This water must last the whole day and night, but I shot through a fourth of our supply each time I washed my hair. I didn't realize the problem until one day my mom told me of my grandmother's worries that the water would run out; after all, eight other people had to use that supply. Though I quickly adjusted my ways, the importance of water here shocked me. I finally understood the significance of my parent's lectures.

Water conservation may seem a small issue, but experiencing the importance of water firsthand in a different culture left a lasting impression on me. That trip humbled me, for though I considered myself well versed in Indian culture, I learned that my own cultural and environmental awareness is an on-going process.

—Sraavya Undurty, SSE IV, Des Moines, IA
Reprinted from *SSE Matters Newsletter* (USA Region 5), Issue 9, March 23, 2011, p. 10



Ceiling on Desires

Study and Life Application: *The Environmental Impact of Plastic Water Bottles*

While finding ways to conserve water as well as drinking plenty of pure water for good health, consider also the impact of disposable plastic bottles on the environment.

The next time we reach out for a water bottle, let us imagine that it is filled a quarter full with oil. That's about how much oil was needed to produce and transport that bottle to us!

And, before we take a drink of water out of that plastic bottle, let us be mindful that three times that amount of water was used in creating the bottle.

1. Every year, we humans recklessly throw away 40 billion plastic bottles—out of the 50 billion that we buy—into landfills, lakes, and oceans. Plastic in the ocean is smothering millions of marine organisms and leaching toxins linked to reproductive issues and cancer in humans and other organisms.
2. Every year we squander 47 million gallons of crude oil, spending \$4 billion and generating massive amounts of greenhouse gases by manufacturing, transporting, and buying bottled water. The energy so wasted could be used to power 190,000 homes annually.

3. Bottled water (40% of which is tap water) costs 240 to 10,000 times more than tap water, priced at as much as \$2.50 per liter (about \$10 per gallon). Few people realize that bottled water costs more than gasoline.
4. A study found that one-third of the bottled-water companies were in violation of their own industry standards for water quality. Nearly 38 different contaminants were found in ten brands of bottled water. One suggestion is to get a water filter or get one's water at the health food store with reverse-osmosis filtered water in refillable containers.

Is our health, life, and the natural balance of Mother Earth worth the steep price we are unwittingly paying for the convenience of bottled water? Let us make a conscious choice NOT to contribute to the global problem of climate change. Instead, let us be part of the solution!

What Is My Right Action Regarding Bottled Water?

The Four R's: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

- **REFUSE** to purchase goods or use services when we don't need them. Lovingly refuse free offers of bottled water at Sai retreats and workshops. When we refuse, our energy intensity footprint reduces —and we can add LOVE meanwhile!
- **REDUCE** dependence on bottled water. If we forget our reusable bottle, then we can find the nearest drinking fountain or borrow a cup and wash it before giving it back.
- **REUSE** a stainless steel water bottle for the rest of your life—in the car, when outside, at the office, in a park, during devotional singing, and at all get-togethers.
- **RECYCLE** all plastic bottles that you had no choice but to use and any bottles that you may find unclaimed along your way.

Through all these practices, we can place a ceiling on desires and put into practice our spiritual ideals.

The world is losing its ecological balance, as man, out of utter selfishness, is robbing Mother Earth of her resources like coal, petroleum, iron, and so on. As a result, we are seeing natural calamities take place. Human life will find fulfillment only when ecological balance is maintained.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
(SSS 33:15, Sept. 25, 2000)

Credit for the above information goes to the Sai Australia organization and other online resources.

—SSE Matters Newsletter, Issue 9,
March 23, 2011, p. 2, Maithri Malladi
and Sai Lokesh Pagadala, Editors

Announcement: New USA National Officers

All the ten USA Regions have announced their new regional officers, and we are now pleased to announce the new national officers. First we'd like to thank the outgoing national officers: President, Jon Roof; Vice-President, Krishna Reddy; Service Coordinator, Jack Feely; and Devotion Coordinator, Satyam Choudhuri, for their outstanding and dedicated service.

The new national officers are:

President:	Mike Congleton
Vice-President:	Jack Feely
Service Coordinator:	Harish Naidu
Devotion Coordinator:	Vijay Sagramsingh
Education Coordinator:	Berniece Mead

The new regional presidents are:

Region 1:	Satya Atreya
Region 2:	Pritty Bhat
Region 3:	Axay Kalathia
Region 4:	Vijay Surpuriya
Region 5:	Hari Conjeevaram
Region 6:	Ram Pochincherla
Region 7:	Suzanne Slyman
Region 8:	C. Chandradas
Region 9:	David Feasby
Region 10:	Alex Grana

At this time, we wish to thank outgoing National Young Adult Representatives, Sangeeta Lekhi and Daniel Scovill, for serving Sai youth across the USA with love, dedication, and skill. They were ably assisted by a leadership team composed of Ani Bhat, Aparna Murali, Ashwina Kirpalani, Lakshmi Jagannathan, Prasanna Kankanala, Ramya Kumar, Sai Ganeshmoorthi, Shelley Herai, Shriram Bhat, and Vick Advaney. We thank all of these talented people for the valuable contributions they made. We expect that they will be performing in many important roles in the Sai Organization in the future. In addition, special thanks are extended to Daniel Scovill, who also served as the Zone I YA Representative and provided key leadership during and after the 2007 World Youth Conference. We now welcome Aparna Murali as the new National YA Representative and Zone I YA Representative.

Please let us join in thanking those who have given selfless service and let us pray for Swami's guidance and blessing in all our future Sai activities and endeavors.

With thanks to all, may Swami's blessings overflow to all,

—**Phil Gosselin**, USA Sai Central Coordinator

—**David Gries**, International Zone 1 Coordinator

Sathya Sai Book Center of America

Complete online catalog available at: www.sathyasaibooksusa.org

305 West First St, Tustin, California 92780-3108

Phone: (714) 669-0522 Fax: (714) 669-9138

E-mail: info@sathyasaibooksusa.org

Book Center Hours: Mon–Fri 10:00 am – 4:00 pm, Sat 12:00–3:00 pm

Online ordering, including *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* subscriptions:

www.sathyasaibooksusa.org

Recent Arrivals & Featured Selections

BOOKS

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 42, contains 18 invaluable discourses given by Bhagavan in 2009. Topics include the importance of festivals, upholding morality personally and in society, the origin of the mind and its power, and many other subjects. BA-042\$6.00

Sathyam Sivam Sundaram, Vol 7, is a continuation of the biographical series on the divine life of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, covering the years 1994–2001. BA-209\$8.00

Divine Lessons from Sathya Sai Baba, by Diana Baskin, author of *Divine Memories of Sathya Sai Baba*, is based on four decades of interactions she and her family members have had with Baba. Beyond the many wonders and insights she gained over those years, this book conveys the miracle of Swami's love for his devotees and how it transforms each person on the spiritual path. BI-361 \$7.00

Divine Memories of Sathya Sai Baba, by Diana Baskin, is a rare and fascinating glimpse into the daily world of Sathya Sai Baba as told by an American woman whose family members were blessed to live as permanent residents in the ashram for over 20 years. The author generously shares the details of her personal hardships as well as the extraordinary grace shown to her and her family by Swami. BW-050 \$9.00

Sri Sathya Sai Chalisa, by Seema M Dewan, is a small daily prayer book containing verses that can be used at any time we need His guidance and inspiration. BI-298 \$1.00

Journeys to Love, by Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen, is a compilation of stories from 21 different devotees from Denmark, telling how their lives have been transformed after meeting Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Soft cover, 360 pages. BI-325\$6.00

The Child Sai Baba, by Italia Rizzo, is a delightful book for children ages 9 to 99! Written for children, it describes Swami's early beginnings as a child, his teachings, and the miracles he performed. BI-430 \$5.00

The River Flows: Letters to Rhutu, by Purandar Amin, is a series of letters written by the author to his daughter as a wedding present and bound into a lovely book. Drawing from his own life experiences, the author attempts to direct young minds toward the ultimate truth in a most practical way. BI-382 \$9.00

The Essence of Sai: Kodai Visit, 1988, by Ram Mohan Rao, gives a wonderful account of the days a blessed band of students and teachers spent with Bhagavan Baba in 1988, as they traveled with him to Kodaikanal. BI-440 \$6.00

Sai Baba: My Pilot, by Capt V K Sharma, recounts the author's experiences as an airline pilot and the divine experiences he had aboard the aircraft. Since learning of Swami in 1973, Baba's grace has guided his spiritual journey. BI-501 \$15.00

Letters from "J", by Berniece Mead, is the story of Jay Mead, who has been in a coma since 1994. Through a medium who had never met him, Jay transmitted a series of letters to his family, revealing astounding information about himself and his dual life—both in this world and another dimension. His mother, Berniece, was reluctant to talk about the letters openly; however, when Sri Sathya Sai Baba encouraged her to share them, she decided to do so in this book. BW-400 \$9.00

Sai Spiritual Education Teachers' Manual, newly revised in 2011, presents the foundations of the SSE curriculum and teaching suggestions on: the Five Human Values (Truth, Right Action, Peace, Love, and Nonviolence) and their many subvalues; Sacrifice, Unity of Faiths, Brotherhood of Man/Fatherhood of God, Discipline, Ceiling on Desires (Use of Divine Resources), etc.; roles of teachers and parents; and the teaching techniques and structure of SSE lessons, with model lesson plans included for Groups 1–4. Appendices contain forms, handouts, and materials for SSE teachers; prayers and mantras from the world's religions; learning theory and child development; and a bibliography of trade-published stories and books that illustrate or relate to the human values, categorized both by age group and the five main human values. Sai Baba said, "This book is very important." BC-008 \$15.00

CDs and DVDs

Sri Rudram and Purusha Suktam This MP3 CD is an introduction to selected Vedic chants and prayers. It includes the Ganapati Prarthana, Chamakam, Kshama Prarthana, Namakam, and Purusha Suktam. SCE-299..... \$6.00

Shivam the Auspicious, Vol. 1 A selection of instrumental darshan music and devotional hymns of the eminent 17th-century South Indian composer-saint, Tyagaraja. SCE-78.... \$9.00

Sri Sathya Sai Educare (DVD) contains footage portraying how Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) is being implemented in Sathya Sai Schools and Institutes, and in other Sathya Sai educational programs around the world. SCE-321 \$4.00