

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



"I AM I"

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SAI'S MESSAGE



“I AM I”

The “I” principle is present everywhere. It begins with the Divine itself. The first word was “I” (Aham, “I Am”). Even Om (the Pranava) came after Aham. Before all creation, Aham alone existed. That Aham became the many. He alone knows his reality who realizes the oneness of what he regards as his “I” with the cosmic Aham. The universal “I” appears under different names and forms in different bodies, owing to time and circumstance. Even the

same person goes through many changes in form and relationships in life. But the “I” remains unchanged. It is like an actor wearing different disguises but himself remaining one and the same. The realization of the unchanging and universal character of the “I” (the Atma) is the essential objective of the spiritual quest.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks (SSS) 20:6, March 30, 1987

Are We Divine?

Part 1: Know Thyself

Any number of examples can be given to prove the existence of divinity. Who made the chilis hot and spicy? Who is the cause of bitterness in neem and fragrance in flowers? These are simple examples of the manifestation and expression of divinity. Every object in the world has a unique attribute that proves the existence of divinity as its very life principle. You do not need to undertake any particular spiritual practice to visualize divinity. When you understand the divine principle in full, you can worship God in the true sense. You can worship God in each and every atom and in each cell of creation. Purify your heart and try to know your own divine nature. Make efforts to visualize and experience this oneness.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

(Oct. 11, 2002, “Where There Is Purity, There Is Divinity”)

In early September 2006, the Buffalo, New York, Sai Center organized a mini-retreat entitled, “Know That You Are God.” Repeatedly, consistently, concisely, almost in every discourse, Sri Sathya Sai Baba brings this message across. As many know, he even came up with a Self-realization prayer that we can all repeat: *I am God, I am God, I am not different from God.* There is at least one devotional song based on this affirmation.

Swami also teaches us of our identity by addressing us directly as *Embodiments of Divinity, Embodiments of the Divine Atma, or Embodiments of Love.* Based on trust and confidence in him, why not believe this? However, during that Buffalo

workshop, someone remarked, “I know my imperfections/limitations, and thus I can’t claim to be God.” Others acknowledged thinking this way this also. This situation led me to focus on this aspect of Swami’s teachings, and hence this article.

In the 16th century, Sir Francis Bacon declared, “Knowledge is power.” The ideas of “Know thyself,” or “Know that you are God,” are related to the terms *knowledge* and *know*. Let us consider their dictionary meanings:

know: *to perceive directly; to recognize as being the same as something previously known; to have experience of; to be aware of the truth/factuality of; to have a practical understanding of*



If we are divine, as Swami says,
what sort of thief is stealing this
truth from our full awareness? . . .
Our ignorance itself is the thief.

knowledge: *the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association*

How can we “know” our identity and gain the experience that gives us this knowledge? If what Swami says is true, how have we lost touch with the knowledge of our identity? The growing concern with identity theft on the mundane level should lead us to reflect, “How are we losing our real identity?”

By putting stock in any form of worldly crisis, we crush our true identity, letting our limited consciousness hide our latent potency. If we are divine, as Swami says, what sort of thief is stealing this truth from our full awareness? A Telugu proverb colorfully captures the difficulty of Self-realization when it laments with tongue in cheek that even the Almighty Resident Divinity cannot catch the house thief.

Our ignorance itself is the thief. Swami tells us that we demean or devalue ourselves by considering our body or any other thing as “mere matter,” or separate from God, and that we must keep inviting thoughts of divinity into our minds:

If you inquire deeply, you can visualize God in every human being and in every material. Any (bit of) matter should not be looked upon as mere matter (padarta) but considered as having the essence of divinity (pararta). There is a gulf of difference between padarta and pararta. Since padarta is viewed as mere matter and not divine, its value is demeaned. You should consider everything as divine. Every drop of blood in your body is suffused with divinity. This divine energy has to be properly utilized by entertaining divine thoughts. (Oct. 13, 2002, “Purify the Mind and Focus It on Divinity”)

Who Are We?

Let us consider how many different ways Swami has spoken about our true identity:

You are not a man; you are God yourself. You are not one person, but three—the one you think you are (physical), the one others think you are (mental), and the one you really are (spiritual)—God. Don’t be under the delusion that God is somewhere and you have to search for him. God is in you, and when you are able to realize that, and when you are able to develop the spiritual

power from within you, then you will see God. You are traveling in the path of worldly consciousness. When you take to the path of super-consciousness, you will get realization, and you will be able to see the truth. (SSS 13:3, Mar. 28, 1975, “Advice to Seekers.”)

We are not simply manavas (mere mortals). We are verily the embodiments of Madhava (the Immortal Divine Principle). (SSS 39:1, “Discharge Your Duties with a Sense of Surrender to God,” Jan. 14, 2006)

In earlier discourses, Swami has said, *Man is God (Madhava) in miniature. (SSS 11:22, May 11, 1971, “Be and Be Blessed”)*

You are the Infinite Universal Absolute. You must get yourself established firmly, unshakably, in this awareness. Every one of you can attain that state; it is your destiny, your duty to yourself. (SSS 12:30, Mar. 3, 1974, “Full Circle or Half Circle?”)

Every individual is a spark of the effulgence of God; God is dancing in every cell of every being. Do not doubt this, ignore this, or dispute this. This is the truth; this is the entire truth; this is the only truth. The universe is God (Loka is Lokesha). All this is He, His body. (SSS 12:12, Apr. 4, 1973, “Bharati-Bharatam”)

Always remember that you are all “living cells” in the body of God, each performing your individual functions to promote his will. (SSS 13:8, Apr. 1, 1975, “The Middle Path”)

Do the Math

*For those who are somewhat analytical in thinking, Swami has quantitatively defined that man is already 80 percent divine and only 15 percent contamination. The human form is unique in that the divine force is as much as 80 percent present. (J. S. Hislop, *Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*, p. 149, Section LII)*

The remaining five percent is the human effort to harness the energy from the 80-percent divinity residing within us to get rid of the 15-percent contamination. In mathematical terms, Swami has defined man as: *Life + Desire = Human; Life - Desire = Divine. (SSS 27:10, April 11, 1994, “Foster Love; Eschew Hatred”)*

In the mathematics of the spirit, three minus one is one. God mirrored in nature is seen as the image, man. There are three entities here, but remove the mirror and what remains is not two but only one, the one God. (SSS 18:13, June 1, 1985, “Live the Values and Lead the Children”)

Part 2: Conscious Effort

*You and I are like matchsticks.
I know there is fire at the end of my match, and you don't.
I have come to ignite that fire, that light, that divinity!
Awaken the divinity!*
—Baba

After saturating ourselves with Swami's teachings that we are indeed divine, we may concern ourselves now with how to gain the experience of our latent and potent divinity. What kind of effort or "sadhana (spiritual discipline)-shift" is required to move us along this path?

The compassionate Lord, knowing our doubting-Thomas minds, himself posed and responded to a rhetorical question on this cornerstone of his teachings:

Some may ask, "While you are God, why worship God?" Even as you realize you are divine, you must do certain things as part of your duty. According to Indian (Bharatiya) tradition, you must do things to please God—in other words, transform work into worship. When you practice this, it becomes easier to realize God. You learn everything by practice only. Walking, talking, eating, singing, and serving take practice. Practice service, dedicating all activities to God. (SSS 30:17, July 19, 1997, "Cultivate Character: Lead an Ideal Life")

But how do we go about this practice? What sort of efforts do we make in this "sadhana shift" that we are undertaking? In

order to attain any skill, we have to practice constantly.

The Lord has laid down four commands. The first one is a do and the other three are don'ts; the first insists upon the cultivation of strength, and the rest require the avoidance of weakness. (Gita Vahini, p. 37)

This "cultivation of strength" may be correlated with realizing our unity in and with divinity, for the Divine is all-potent. Let us consider our beloved Sai's words in the context of the efforts that we must make to experience divinity.

First, he implies that when we are "alone," we are really in the company of God and that it is possible to feel our divinity:

I said that when I am in the midst of ten men, I am a man. When I am in the midst of ten women, I am a woman, and when I am in the midst of ten children, I am a child. When I am alone, I am God (Brahman). Not only I, even you, when you are in the midst of ten elderly men, you behave as an elderly man. If you are in the midst of ten women, you exhibit a feminine nature. When you are among chil-

dren, even if you are a Supreme Court judge, you behave like a child. This is particularly so when playing with one's grandchildren. And when you are alone, you will feel distinctive and divine. (Summer Course in Spirituality and Indian Culture, May 1973)

Broaden Our Thinking

Sai tells us that if we practice seeing the divine in every “form,” it will lead to the experience of unity with divinity, awareness of the “formless” or universal.

When you practice the discipline of seeing Him in all beings, as the core of every cell or atom, alive and aware, and experience unity with all creation (for creation is but His body, and you are also in it and of it), then, this is formlessness (nirguna). (SSS 12:21, Nov. 23, 1973, “Choose Your God”)

From the narrow vision of “individual need,” man must voyage out into the broad vision of the “universal.” When a drop of water falls into the ocean, it loses its narrow individualities, its name and form, and assumes the form, name, and taste of the ocean itself. If it seeks to live separately as a “drop,” it will soon evaporate and be reduced to nonexistence. Each one must become aware that he is part of the one truth that encompasses everything in the universe. It is reprehensible to stick for one's whole lifetime to the low narrow paths of selfishness, envy, and greed. Make the heart big and the mind pure. Then only can peace and prosperity be established on the earth. (SSS 13:27, Dec. 5, 1976, “Jesus”)

Purify the Heart and Mind

We must purify our hearts and minds and fill them with the awareness of God:

Every cell in the human body is God, though under a microscope you cannot find him. You are now recording my speech in the cassette. But can you see my voice or words now on the cassette? No. When you play it back, you can hear the words. So, too, the body is the tape, (in which) the voice of God is immanent. Equip it with faith and tune it with love. Then, you can imbibe my voice and words. A pure heart, a cleansed mind, a God-filled consciousness will help you to listen to the voice of the God within you. (SSS 16:2, Jan. 8, 1983, “The Daily Prayer”)

In Hindu culture, divinity is worshipped as primordial energy with her tri-fold components—will power, wisdom, and kinetic energy, which enable us to do work and earn wealth. These qualities are represented by the goddesses Parvati, Saraswati, and Lakshmi, respectively. These trifold energies reside in every individual, an idea conveyed in the following prayer:

For working hard, we have to bring the fingertips together. With their cooperation, we can do good work to earn a livelihood. Lakshmi resides in the fingertips, inspiring us to do good work. We hold a book in the palm in order to read; likewise, we can write only with the help of both the palm and fingers. Saraswati resides in the palm. The base of the palm is the source of all strength, where Parvati/Shakti/Gauri resides. Hence,

every morning, visualizing in this manner, I take darshan (see divinity) in my hands every morning. (Karagre vasathe, Lakshmi karamadhye; Saraswati karamoole stithe; Gauri prabhate, kara darshanam.)”

Develop Detachment

Our tendency to view things in terms of “me” and mine” must be cured through detachment, such as practicing placing a ceiling on desires. Apparently, we are all wet in this regard, and our minds must be placed in the sunshine of detachment:

You cannot see the vast tree contained in the tiny seed. Likewise, the atomic principle contains the macrocosm in microcosm. Equally, the divinity present in God (the macrocosm) is present in man in a subtle form, like fire in a matchstick. You cannot get fire from a damp matchstick. Man is filled with the fire of divine wisdom and sacredness. But it is not perceptible despite spiritual exercises, severe penance, and many good deeds. The reason is that the mind is dampened by egoistic and acquisitive tendencies (ahamkara and mamakara). Only when this dampness is removed by the sunshine of detachment (vairagya) does an illumined life become possible. (SSS 25:38, Nov. 23, 1992, “Revere the Mother; Serve the Motherland”)

We know that there are matchsticks in the box. When you strike the matchstick, a flame bursts forth. This flame will cause a burn if we hold it in our hand. It can set fire to a towel. Where does the fire lie, in the matchstick or in the striking pad out-

side the matchbox? It is in both. Only when the matchstick and the striking surface are brought together does the flame emerge.

Likewise, divinity is in the mind and in the heart, but only when the mind and the heart unite does the radiance of divinity shine. When the matchstick is dipped in water, you cannot produce fire by striking it, because the fire-producing element in it loses its power. Likewise, when the mind is immersed in the waters of sensuous desires, it loses its power to radiate the divine effulgence. When will it recover this power?

To get rid of its dampness, it must go through the drying process of detachment. Only when this detachment grows inside can one experience the bliss of oneness with the Divine. (SSS 26:22, May 24, 1993, “From the Mind to the Over-Mind”)

Help Ever AND Hurt Never

By the Lord’s grace, most of us seem to be making some progress toward purifying our hearts and minds. Often we hear the two transforming instructions, *Love all, serve all*, and *Help ever, hurt never*. In each of these powerful maxims, we have a pair of tips for an effective spiritual and hence blissful life. While Sai warns us to be in equanimity but not be carried away by the pairs of opposites (pain and pleasure, profit and loss, and so on), the countering pairs of spiritual tips above, as a team, enhance immensely our efforts.

Similarly, the quote from the *Gita Vahini* above suggests the prescription of a combination of do’s and don’ts. This idea



If I humbly and reverentially accept that
I am God, I can be in God's company all
the time, giving no scope for impurity—
any other thought—to enter.

resounds in *Help ever, hurt never*—a do plus a don't. It also implies a recommendation not to limit oneself to only one of the two but to use both methods to achieve the goal, to harmonize cultivation of strength with avoidance of weakness, instead of focusing on only one aspect. Putting Swami's teaching into practice from both directions—*help ever AND hurt never*—gives us not one benchmark but two, useful in reducing the probability of forgetting or skipping this foundation stone of spiritual practice.

The conscious effort in combining the tenets of divine consciousness with acts of sadhana, reminds us of a recent modernification of the fable of the tortoise and the hare, with its moral, "Slow and steady wins the race." Here are the highlights of the "updated" form of the story:

In order to encourage team spirit and global/smart planet technology initiatives, the traditional one-heat race was modified to allow three races between the hare and the tortoise. In the second heat, the hare won because it did not take any rest during the race. In the third and final race, the clever tortoise altered the race course to include a pond. Realizing its handicap in crossing the water, the hare appealed to the tortoise's sense of teamwork. In the end, the hare sat on

the tortoise to cross the pond, and they both finished the race together as winners.

Integrating Atmic Awareness with Sadhana Efforts

In other words, let's integrate the idea of our own divinity into all our other spiritual sadhana. In fact, Sai points up the advantage of contemplating our innate divinity because it gives power to our sadhana:

It is not so easy to control the sense organs. . . . You have to develop the conviction, "I am not the sense organs. I am not the body. I am the Atma." When you have acquired this conviction, the sense organs will cease to be a bother. By constant contemplation on the idea that you are the Atma, you can transcend human limitations and experience the divine. (SSS 23:13, May 23, 1990, "Royal Road to Realization")

Let us now analyze and examine some further advantages of doing so.

- "As you think, so you become (*Yadbhavam tadbhavati*)! God if you think you are God; dust if you think you are dust; thoughts are verily things; you become as you think."

- Swami says, *See Him, serve Him, and revere Him in all*. Based on faith and confidence in our beloved Swami, we can implement the awareness that everything is divine. As Mahatma Gandhi observed, “Whoever looks for God and does not find him in the first person he meets, need look no further.” If we accept others as divine, that the individual is also a part of the whole, then from this must follow that we accept ourselves as divine.
- About the concept of keeping good company (*satsang*), Swami explains that it is not just good company; it should be God’s company. (See “Install the Sai Padukas in Your Heart,” Oct. 11, 1998.) This means we should be in God’s company and maintain awareness of God, all the time. If I humbly and reverentially accept that I am God, I can be in God’s company all the time, giving no scope for impurity—any other thought—to enter. If another thought enters, it starts a musical-chair process, for only one or the



other, divinity or impurity, can be seated in heart, not both, so we must steadily keep God in our heart of hearts. Furthermore, if our actions are filled with God-consciousness, we will not accrue any karmic debt, because it is the claiming of doer-ship or associating ourselves with the results of action that binds us to the results.

- If we earnestly seek such a combined sadhana, our beloved Swami, the supreme guru and God, can bring us to our goal sooner than anticipated or expected, because, as he says:

Only those who are immersed in the divine are dear to me and are my dear friends. If you want to be dear friends with Swami, conduct yourself in a divine manner. In such a case, you do not need to come here. I will come to you, wherever you are. I will come there, wherever you stay. I am with you, in you, around you, and behind you. I am not separate from you. You and I are one. (SSS 32, Nov. 21, 1999, “Seek God Within”)

—**Cheruvu S. Murthy**
Hopewell Junction, New York

There is no stopping place in the pilgrimage! It is one continuous journey, through day and night, through tears and smiles, through death and birth, through tomb and womb. When the road ends and the goal is gained, the pilgrim finds that he has traveled but from himself to himself, on a journey that was long and lonesome, but the God that led him thereunto was all the while in him, around him, with him, and beside him. He himself was always divine.

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**
(SSS 4:10, Feb. 20, 1964, “A Rupee or a Hundred Paise?”;
SSS 8:9, Mar. 5, 1968, “The True Tablet”)

Recognize the Fundamental Principle of Oneness

*Good and bad coexist. No one can separate them.
But one with steadfast faith (sraddha) will always
experience goodness. What else is to be conveyed to
this august assembly? (TELUGU POEM)*

Embodiments of love! Today (Ugadi, 2004) marks the beginning of another new year. Many new years have gone by, but there is no change in the life of man. Why? The reason is that man is not making efforts to experience the principle of divinity, which is present in all in the form of love. Love is the true form of God. It is your foremost duty to recognize this eternal principle of love.

Today you are in search of divinity. Where is the need to search for that which is everywhere at all times? You are in search of God because you are unaware that God is always with you and in you. You are trying to have the vision of God through meditation. However, do not be satisfied by merely performing such spiritual practices. What is meditation? Adherence to truth is true meditation. The eternal, immortal, wonderful, and blissful principle of divinity is present everywhere. You should make efforts to realize this truth. This is the royal path to attain the goal of life.

Recognize Your Innate Divinity

People are making efforts to realize truth, but their efforts are not yielding the desired result. Divinity is the very embodiment of

eternal bliss and present in all of us. How can you visualize this divinity? Firstly, understand that there is nothing superior to truth in this world. Your foremost duty is to recognize the principle of truth that is present in you. But you are forgetting your innate divinity. You are undertaking a number of spiritual practices (*sadhanas*) to experience divinity. In fact, you do not need to perform any special spiritual practices to have the vision of God, who is always with you, in you, above you, and around you.

Embodiments of love! It is a sign of ignorance to search for God, who is all-pervasive. People perform various spiritual practices—such as following the codes of dharmic conduct or prescribed do's and don'ts (*yama* and *niyama*), poses (*asana*), breath discipline (*pranayama*), withdrawal of the senses (*pratyahara*), concentration (*dharana*), meditation (*dhyana*), and mental absorption in the divine (*samadhi*)—to have the experience of divinity.

What is meant by *samadhi*? It should be thought of as *sama-dhi*, meaning equanimity in all situations. Equanimity is, in fact, present in every individual. It is a misconception to



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think that only those who perform spiritual exercises are capable of attaining it.

Do you go about searching for yourself in the outside world? Such a person can only be called foolish. In fact, you are distancing yourself from your own sacred Self by searching for it outside. This mad search will not lead you anywhere. You are endowed with the sacred principle of love. From where does this principle come? Where does it go? It neither comes nor goes. It is always present in you. You waste your time in the name of doing spiritual practices. Instead, realize the truth, “**I am I.**” All spiritual practices become superfluous for one who realizes this truth.

Where does this “I” come from? It is in you. Without realizing this truth, you search for it outside. It is therefore necessary for every human being to recognize this truth. He is a true spiritual aspirant (*sadhaka*) who realizes the divinity present within him. Those who search for it outside follow the wrong path.

Many people made efforts to fathom the Krishna principle (*Krishna tattwa*) but none could succeed. Where is Krishna? Where is God? God is present within you. Do you ever go into the street and ask others, “Have you seen me?” Try to look within and realize this sacred principle of “I.” You can know this truth the moment you turn your vision inward. You see all external objects except

your true Self when you see with open eyes. Once, Arjuna asked Krishna about his true identity. Krishna said, “Arjuna! I am yours and you are mine. You and I are one.” All should try to realize this principle of unity.

Give Up False Identification with the Body

The boy who spoke earlier today said that he was doing spiritual exercises to attain the vision of God. One need not search for God in some distant corner. “With hands, feet, eyes, ears, heads, and mouth pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe.” (*Sarvata Panipadam Tat, Sarvatokshi Siromukham, Sarvata Srutimalloke, Sarvamavritya Tishtati.* —Vedic Verse) Where is the need to search for God, who is present everywhere? Whatever you see is permeated by God. There is no place or form in which God is not present.

God is love, and love is God. You can connect yourself with God only through love. Develop love and achieve the supreme state of equanimity. (TELUGU POEM)

God is present everywhere as truth. The same truth is present in you. Some people think that Lord Krishna was born at a particular place and left His mortal coil at such-and-such a place. No. This is a misconception. Krishna is everywhere. Whatever you see, it is Krishna. Krishna is

Whatever differences you perceive
are but the creations of your mind.



in every form, and all forms are divine. Only the names change. God is only one. Instead of searching for God outside, close your eyes and look within to know the divinity immanent in you. Inquire who you are. Do not identify yourself with the body.

Only by identifying yourself with the body will the question of “I” and “you” arise. When this “I” and “you” merge into one, there will be unity. But people are unable to forget “I” and “mine.” Right from birth, you are accustomed to identifying yourself with the body. Therefore, you are unable to give up false identification with the body. Once you realize that the same Atma or inner divinity is immanent in every individual, the differences of “I” and “you” will vanish.

Love, Truth, and Peace ARE Divinity

Embodiments of love! Love, truth, peace, and divinity are not different from each other. They are all one. You can realize this only when you strengthen the spirit of unity. Love is not something acquired from outside. It emerges from within. When you develop and expand love, you will be able to realize the truth that all are one.

(Bhagavan showed his handkerchief.) What is this? This is a cloth. It is made up of thread. The thread, in turn, is made of cotton. Cotton is the basis of the cloth, but the cloth

is made of threads woven together.

Similarly, the mind is also made up of the threads of resolutions and aberrations (*sankalpas* and *vikalpas*). You should learn your real identity by transcending the mind.

Embodiments of love! You must inquire as to what extent you have understood the principle of love, which is uniformly present in all. Man is carried away by his identification with the body, so he perceives diversity in creation. In fact, it is unity alone behind the apparent diversity. Whatever differences you perceive are but the creations of your mind. If you want to eliminate these differences and realize the principle of unity in diversity, you have to realize your true nature. You experience diversity when you turn your perception away from this fact of unity. Recognize the principle of unity! You are God. God is not separate from you. It is a mistake to consider yourself separate from God. This difference is the result of your deluded vision. When you rectify this defect in your vision, you will realize, “I am I.”

When you identify Sai Baba with the physical form, you become separate from Him. It is only these feelings of identification with the physical form that create differences between individuals. The feelings of “I” and “mine” are behind all this multiplicity of forms. If you stand before a mirror, you see your image. Even if there are many mirrors, you see the same image. Though the mirrors are many, the image is one. Realize this oneness behind multiplicity!

Embodiments of love! Students! Boys and girls! Try to know the fundamental principle of oneness. If you know this, then everything else will become known to you. This world has a plethora of forms, but there is one divinity, which permeates all these forms. Know this truth. “Truth is one, but the wise call it by many names.” (*Ekam sath viprah bahuda vadanti*. —Rig Veda 1:164:46). You see diversity due to the effect of illusion (*maya*). There exists only unity everywhere, not diversity. It is your illusion that causes diversity. Forget this diversity and contemplate on divinity. You may ascribe any number of names and forms to God, but God is one.

At one time, Radha realized her oneness with Krishna, but later she was overcome by delusion and started considering herself as different from Krishna. This feeling of separateness is a big mistake. Reminding Radha of her true identity, Sage Narada told her that she had no separate identity. It was her mistake that she had identified herself with her name, he said. He added that she was not separate from Krishna, and that she was, in fact, Krishna.

See Everyone As a Manifestation of Divinity

Embodiments of love! Whatever you see, whomever you encounter, consider every form as nothing but the manifestation of divinity. Do not entertain differences of “I” and “you.” You look into a mirror and say that you are in the mirror, but in fact, you are not in the mirror. It is only your reflection that appears in the mirror. When you go behind a hill

and shout “Oh!,” you will hear the echo of your voice. You may think that someone is shouting at you with the same intensity, but it is not so. That voice is yours and no one else’s. Similarly, all that you see in the world is only your reaction, reflection, and resound. It is a mistake to consider a reflection as reality. When you understand the true nature of the reflection, you will know the truth of oneness.

Here is a small example. Once, a young cowherd took his cattle to the forest for grazing. While the cattle were grazing, he began singing loudly, and the song echoed from the hills. The innocent boy thought someone was mimicking him to make fun of him. He grew angry. After returning home, he told his mother, “Mother! I will not take the cattle to the forest tomorrow. Someone in the forest is mimicking whatever I sing. I feel humiliated.”

The mother said she would accompany him to the forest the next day. He took her behind the hills and started singing loudly. Again, an echo of the song was heard.

The mother said, “Son, it is not that someone else is repeating your song to make fun of you. Whatever you sing, its echo is reflecting back and being heard by you.” Similarly, you should understand that everything in this world is your own reflection, reaction, and resound.

Understand the Principle of Unity

If you want to see God, you must believe firmly that you are not the body. You identify yourself with the body due to your illusion.



You are “divine” but unable to realize
it because you are intoxicated with the
“deep wine” of worldly desires.

Students should try to understand this clearly. All that is seen outside is only a reflection and not the reality.

You see Sai Baba in front of you. You identify Sai Baba with the body, but I am not the body. You and I are one. Once you understand this truth clearly, there will be no difference whatsoever.

If you slap someone on the cheek, it amounts to slapping yourself. If you abuse others, it amounts to abusing yourself. You are bound to face the consequences of your actions. You are the sole cause of your happiness or suffering. Others are not responsible for it. In fact, there are no others. All are one. It is your own thinking that creates the feeling of separateness in you. You should make efforts to understand your true identity.

You are the very embodiment of love. The principle of love is one and the same in all. You share your love with your children, parents, and spouse. The feeling toward each of them is different, but the fundamental principle of love is the same. You should recognize this fundamental truth. The fundamental truth is one without a second—the Atma.

Embodiments of Divine Atma! The Atma is one, not two. Once you recognize the truth that the same Atma is present in all, you will be free from all differences and conflicts.

Develop firm faith that the same Self is present in all. Understand this principle of unity; only then can you experience truth. All the students have immense love for me. They are happy that Baba loves them. Understand that it is only Baba who loves all. (Loud prolonged applause.)

You see differences in individuals, but in my view, all are one. I am you, and you are I. Have firm faith in this unity. Only then can you transcend duality. When you inquire deeply, you will be able to understand this truth. Have patience. Do not feel disappointed that you are unable to have the vision of God. When you understand the principle of unity and hold on to it firmly, you become Sai Baba yourself.

You are “divine” but unable to realize it because you are intoxicated with the “deep wine” of worldly desires. All are the embodiments of divinity. I am not different from you, and you are not different from me. We are one. When you continue contemplating this thought of unity with the Divine, you become one with Him. Then all differences will disappear, and you will attain the experience of unity with God.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
March 21, 2004

“I Am I” Arathi

The Lord of the Universe AM I,

OM, Sathya Sai, I AM I.

The Lord, Omniscient, I AM I.

I AM saving everyone, everywhere,

I AM blessing always with my care,

I AM never born and never die,

I AM All, I AM Love, I AM I.

Calm and tranquil, ever free;

Shining as Divine Inner Light,

Filling all with Peace, Truth, and Right,

I AM I, Who reaches those in need,

Saying YES to prayers from every creed,

Granting grace in pure delight,

I AM All, I AM Love, I AM I.

I AM Teacher, God, and Self;

I AM Mother, I AM Wisdom Divine,

I AM Father, All Creation, All is MINE.

I AM ONE, Divine Primal Energy,



*I AM THAT, behind all that is seen,
I AM all virtues, Motive Prime,
I AM All, I AM Love, I AM I.*

*I AM the sacred form of OM,
Ever-Present Radiance Divine,
Giver and Receiver intertwined,
I AM the shining Love that lights the heart,
Eternally ONE and not apart,
I AM ever unified,
I AM All, I AM Love, I AM I.*

*Narayana, Narayana OM
Sathya Narayana Narayana OM
Narayana Naryana OM
Sathya Narayana Narayana OM
Sathya Narayana Narayana OM
I AM All, I AM Love, I AM I.*

—“I AM I”



Prasanthi Council Report

*Ninth World Conference of the
International Sri Sathya Sai Organization*

World Conference of International Sri Sathya Sai Organization: “Sai Ideal Human Life, Sai Ideal Spiritual Organization”

*“The aim of this organization is to remove the obstacles
that keep man away from God,
that separate humanity from divinity.”*

—Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

On November 20–21, 2010, with the blessings and approval of our beloved Swami, the Ninth World Conference of International Sri Sathya Sai Organizations was convened at Prasanthi Nilayam. Our beloved Swami graciously permitted the conference to take place in the Poornachandra Auditorium. The delegates, numbering 540, were for the most part senior office bearers in the International Sai Organizations, representing ten international zones and ninety countries.

The Pre-World Conferences in all ten international zones, culminating with the World Conference in Prasanthi Nilayam, has been an extraordinary and inspiring series of events. It took more than our minds and bodies to conceive and execute such a marvel as this. The Divine Hand of our beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, His blessings and His guidance, were manifested in these unprecedented labors of love.

What were the salient qualities of these conferences? All delegates, all Sai brothers and sisters, were empowered and encouraged to participate and experience the qualities for themselves. An auspicious time and opportunity was conducive to spiritual experience for all present. Now we must reflect upon what has transpired in order to insure that these events will congeal into tangible improvements in the Sai Organization. Then all devotees everywhere, delegates to the conferences, and those who were unable to attend will derive spiritual experience.

Our Intention, Our Resolution

As promised at the end of the World Conference, a comprehensive review of all aspects of our Sai Ideal Spiritual Organization has commenced. With the divine blessings and guidance of our beloved Swami, this thorough review will reveal the path to spiritual progress for our

organization. We are reviewing the quality of all of our programs and practices and learning from the successes and failures of the past. We are learning from the problems that have arisen from time to time in various parts of the world due to misunderstanding.

We are reviewing the minutes from all of the study circles that were convened during the Ninth World Conference. We are reviewing all the rules, guidelines, charters, and documentation that describe or affect governance of all the Sai Organizations, including the structure of the Sai Organization, Sai Institutes, Sai Schools, Sai medical service, and Sai Trusts.

We are seriously engaged in the process of looking into ourselves, our organizational structure and function, our programs, and our practices. Sometimes we choose what we desire, which may differ substantially from what we require. As we progress spiritually, individually, and as a spiritual organization, the divergence between what we desire and what we require diminishes. Ultimately what we desire and what we require will become one.

It is not a matter of good and bad people. It is a matter of right and wrong understanding, ideas, decisions, and actions. As Swami teaches, we are all essentially good. We are all *premaswarupalara*, embodiments of divine love.

Let our resolution of these small differences demonstrate our commitment to the *raison d'être* of this spiritual organization and, actually, to the transcendental purpose of our human lives: the self-realization of humankind.

These Pre-World and World Conferences were inspired by Him, so that we might derive spiritual benefit for ourselves and spiritually uplift our Organization. Now we are engaged in a comprehensive and unbiased review and appraisal of our organization and our actions. Certainly, His love, guidance, and grace will enable us to discern what we require.

We have experienced the flow of His grace all over the world during this last year. Surely this bespeaks of monumental changes forthcoming. However, there will be no change whatsoever without the divine guidance, blessings, and approval of our beloved Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

My dear brothers and sisters, may we all experience love and joy every day, confident that we are making the best possible use of these human lives that we have been given. Let us bow our heads and open our hearts in profound love and gratitude to Him.

Our beloved Swami has called each and every one of us, heart to heart, so that we might come to know our true Self and achieve conscious immortality.

Lovingly, in Sai service,

—Michael Goldstein
Chairman, Prasanthi Council

The Core of All Teaching

The Grandest of All Counsels Is to Understand Who You Are

Every living being refers to itself as “I,” “I”: “I am Ramaya.” “I am Krishnaya.” “I am Sita.” “I am Radha.” Each one assumes the “I” as his own and uses it whenever he has to designate himself. If only birds, beasts, and other living things could speak, they too would do the same and refer to themselves as “I.” Besides these, even mountain peaks, hills, and trees might announce themselves as “I am hill,” “I am anthill,” “I am tree,” if only they could speak.

The Sign and Symbol of All Souls

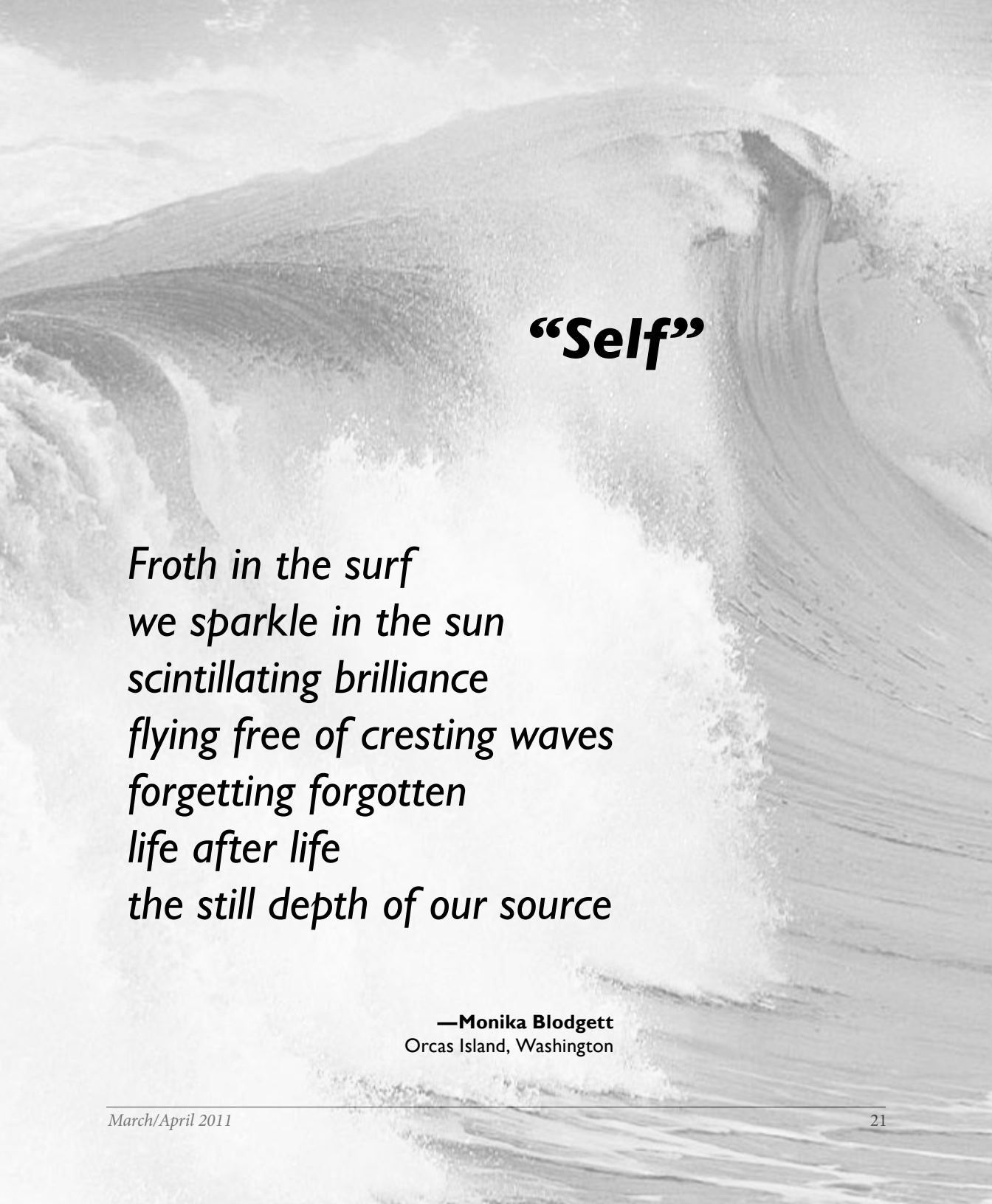
When we spend some time pondering this, it will be clear that a great mystery is embedded in this expression, “I.” The illiterate boor uses this expression, as does the sage who has secured divine vision. It is said that even God announces himself as “I.” Nevertheless, who probes into this mystery? Furthermore, among those who have dared probe, how many have succeeded in unraveling it? And if even a few have unraveled the mystery, how many of them have used the discovery to transform their lives? Have the celebrated intellectuals, the pundits, the Paramahamsas, succeeded in delving into the meaning and significance of this “I”?

Nay, let us see whether the exponents and commentators of the Bhagavad Gita, who can reel off the eighteen chapters and the seven hundred slokas in a continuous stream, have grasped the full implications and importance of the word, “I.”

In the Gita, when Sri Krishna declares, “I shall absolve you” (*Aham moksha-yishyami*); “Come to me, the One, for refuge” (*Maam ekam saranam vrja*); “And, also know Me as the Knower of the Field” (*Kshetrajnam cha api maam viddhi*); and the like—he refers to “I,” does he not? So, this expression, “I,” is clearly omnipresent.

The “I” is the sign and symbol of all “individual” souls (*jivatmas*). It has unlimited forms and appearances. Like the string that passes through the rosary beads, it interpenetrates and holds together all names and forms. However transient names and forms might be, the “I” persists without being affected. Therefore, one has to know this omnipresent “I” in order to understand all that has to be known. He who has known it is the world teacher (*jagad-guru*), the universal teacher (*viswa-guru*), and the true teacher (*sadguru*).

Continued on page 24



“Self”

*Froth in the surf
we sparkle in the sun
scintillating brilliance
flying free of cresting waves
forgetting forgotten
life after life
the still depth of our source*

—Monika Blodgett
Orcas Island, Washington

I Am God!

I am God! I am God!

I am not different from God!

*I am the Infinite Supreme, the One Reality,
the eternal, undifferentiated Absolute!*

*I am Sat-Chit-Ananda Swarupa—
the very form of Being, Awareness, and Bliss*

*I am eternal love! I am eternal truth! I am
eternal peace!*

*I am ever pure delight! I am always full, ever
content, always free!*



*Fear cannot find me; grief cannot grasp me;
Anxiety cannot affect me;
guilt cannot enter me.*

I am Omnipotent — all powerful!

I am Omniscient — all knowing!

*I am Omnipresent — all pervading,
present everywhere!*

I am Krishna! I am Christ! I am Sai!

I am Buddha! I am Allah! I am I!

I am God! I am God! I am God!

The body is but the container, the limitation or vehicle (*upadhi*), the sheath. Nonetheless, through the imposition of differences and distinctions based on physical characteristics and material considerations, some bodies are elevated as “touchable” and others condemned as “untouchable”; some are classified as “high” and others as “low.” Intellect cannot claim honor, and persons cannot claim to be pundits (scholars) if their studies are directed to the amassing of money or earning the wherewithal for a comfortable living. Nor can skill and excellence in argumentative scholarship be worthy of reverential mention.

In truth, the word “I” leads you to the Supreme Godhead when you dive into its significance. “That is you”; “That is I”; “I and That are One.” This is what the great Vedic dictum, “That thou art” (*Thath thwam asi*), declares. This is the very core of all teaching, the grandest of counsels.

This sacred principle, embodied in the “I,” is beyond the grasp of the most learned scholars (when sought) by means of inquiry alone, without guides and helpers. And, the guides have to be those who are aware of the truth and earnest in living the truth, for the “I” principle is beyond the reach of scholarship, logic, and grammar. Note that these are warnings administered by the scriptures (Shrutis and the Smritis).*

*Shrutis—“that which is heard”; sacred Hindu revelations, the principle scriptures. Smritis—“recollection of tradition”; secondary sacred texts, not based on revelation.

When one intends to learn in a general way about this “I” and its implications, he can be told the secret in just three sentences: “I am active in daytime, when I am awake. I sleep at night. I experience dreams when I sleep. Thus, acting and experiencing both day and night, I die.” When one considers these statements of the individual, one can conclude that they are based on the individual’s knowledge, gained from this life.

“The ‘I’ begins when I am born,” he believes. But did this “I” exist before birth? If it had, then how can an existing thing be born? Even if this objection is ignored, how did it exist and where? Was it disembodied when apart from name and form? Was it beyond the pale of the senses? Doubts such as these pursue the seeker in waves.

It has to be understood clearly that the “I” is not related or affixed to one object, thing, or being, or to one name and form. Remember that when you identify and recognize the “I” or arrive at the true answer to the question “Who am I?,” you have identified and recognized the entire cosmos and its mysteries.

Why Understand the “I”?

It may be asked, what exactly is the urgency to understand the meaning of this “I,” when there are infinite topics in the universe that compete for study? One can well try to unravel the secrets of the cosmos,



**“That thou art” =
“That is you.”
“That is I.”
“I and That are One.”**

or attention may be paid to understand what is meant by *individual (jiva)* or *God (Deva)*. When such profound subjects as the universe, the individualized divine, and the Divine Itself—subjects that are incomparably important—are clamoring for attention, why give them up and investigate the meaning of an expression used by common folk and children—this “I”? Of what benefit can it be, people may ask.

The “I” expression is simple, but its implications are infinite and fundamentally satisfying. This is the reason all great teachers exhort seekers to “Know thyself” and “Inquire into yourself, for that alone can give you release.” The Shastras* too confirm this exhortation: “That, which when known, everything becomes known” (*Yad vijñanena sarvam vijñatam bhavati*). The Shastras extol the importance and value of this inquiry and make it clear that inquiry into the Atma is essential. The assurance is given that the Atma is you, yourself, as in the sacred axiom, “That thou art” (*Thath thwam asi*).

Therefore, to fulfill the yearning, you must first inquire into this mystery of who you are. You can then realize that you are

eternal (*nitya*), beyond the boundaries of time. The Shastras will help you to cast away the dark clouds of ignorance (*ajñana*) that now hide this supreme truth from your awareness.

Then, you can delight at the experience of the awareness of your genuine nature. The awareness comes when the truth is revealed with the dawn of light.

But the Shastras, which guide man into the knowledge of these great mysteries and into the region where such bliss can be secured, are not studied now. Instead, man pursues with blinkered eyes his own silly notions. How then can he attain the Atmic principle? How then can he become the very embodiment of bliss? Mere worldly scholarship cannot delve into the meaning of the Sruthis.

The Meaning of the Deepest Truth Can Be Won by the Grace of God

The grace of God has to be won by devotion and dedication, and that grace alone, the compassionate glance of the eye of God alone, can instill into him the real meaning of the Sruthis. Only persons who are embodiments of divine wisdom and compassion can decide what exactly

* Shastras—texts, treatises, and commentaries on the Vedic scriptures.

is helpful to the spiritual progress and well being of man. Others only flounder. They will find it impossible to cope with the task. For, how can gurus who fail to save themselves help in saving others? The gurus of today endeavor to cleanse society while their own houses are unclean. The number of such gurus is increasing, so faults and failures are multiplying. Their haltings are justified and explained away in various ways, and so the confusion grows worse. As a consequence, endless argumentation ensues, and reality is lost to view. These gurus interpret the Shastras to suit their prejudices and partialities, making them into instruments for their own aggrandizement.

Under such distressing conditions, the grace of God is man's only hope; this (grace) is the beacon to illumine the path, the compassion that rewards man for his spiritual struggle, the strong and steady ship that can take him safely across.

Many preceptors and teachers declare that the path of inquiry into oneself is the path of liberation for man—"Self-inquiry

leads to liberation" (*Swa vimarso mokshaha*) is the assurance. "That is the Atma; That is my Self." "I and the Atma are not different." "The Atma and the Paramatma (God) are not separate."

The yarn of "I" is both the warp and woof of the cloth, the Atma. When the "I"/yarn is found in different bodies and feels that in each body it is distinct from the rest, the Atma/cloth can be said to disappear; but in both yarn and cloth, there is one substance ever persisting, in spite of how each feels, and that substance is "cotton."

So, too, Paramatma persists as the only truth in the "I," the Atma. Without the cotton/Paramatma, there can be no "I"/yarn. Without the "I"/yarn, there can be no Atma/cloth. These three—Paramatma, Atma, and I—are only forms and names for the ONE—the Paramatma, the ONE Atma, the DIVINE Atma.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Vahini, ch. 14, "This and That"

*Whatever the name, whatever the form of worship, I am the recipient,
for I am the goal of all. I am the only One. There is no other.
I myself become the worshiped through my many names and forms.
Not only this, I am the fruit of all actions, the bestower of the fruit,
the basis, the prompter of all.*

I am the force behind the birth, existence, and death of every thing and every life.

I am the birthless, deathless Cause. (*Gita Vahini*, 1st ed., p. 169)

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

“JUST BE”

An Aha! Moment



1. Nothing is good, nothing bad,
and nothing evil;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
2. Nothing is black, nothing white;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
3. Nothing is wrong, nothing right;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
4. Nothing is impure, nothing pure;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
5. Nothing is weak, nothing powerful;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
6. Nothing is unworthy, nothing worthy;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
7. Nothing is imperfect, nothing perfect;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
8. Nothing is dull, nothing exciting;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
9. Nothing is non-ideal, nothing ideal;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
10. Nothing is ugly, nothing beautiful;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
11. Nothing is inexpensive,
nothing expensive;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
12. Nothing is unfair, nothing fair;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
13. Nothing is lost, nothing found;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
14. Nothing is sweet, nothing sour,
and nothing bitter;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
15. Nothing is hidden, nothing visible;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
16. Nothing is shut, nothing open;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
17. Nothing is unlocked, nothing locked;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
18. Nothing is out of place, nothing in place;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
19. Nothing is empty, nothing full;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
20. Nothing is outside, nothing inside;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.



21. Nothing is far, nothing near;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
22. Nothing is there, nothing here;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
23. Nothing is small, nothing big;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
24. Nothing is low, nothing high;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
25. Nothing is short, nothing tall;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
26. Nothing is shallow, nothing deep;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
27. Nothing is decreasing,
nothing increasing;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
28. Nothing is light, nothing heavy;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
29. Nothing is falling, nothing rising;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
30. Nothing is difficult, nothing easy;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
31. Nothing is soft, nothing hard;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
32. Nothing is strange, nothing familiar;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
33. Nothing is false, nothing true;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
34. Nothing is positive, nothing negative,
and nothing neutral;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
35. Nothing is scorn, nothing praise;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
36. Nothing is yours, nothing mine;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
37. Nothing is dead, nothing alive;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
38. Nothing is unconscious,
nothing conscious;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
39. Nothing is fearful, nothing friendly;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
40. Nothing is hateful, nothing lovable;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.

41. Nothing is unreal, nothing real;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
42. Nothing is loss, nothing gain;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
43. Nothing is at rest, nothing moving;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
44. Nothing is painful,
nothing pleasurable;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
45. Nothing is aggravating,
nothing pleasing;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
46. Nothing is sorrow, nothing joy;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
47. Nothing to forget,
nothing to remember;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
48. Nothing is light, nothing darkness;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.
49. Nothing to surrender,
nothing to conquer;
Everything is as it should be—JUST BE.

50. No beginning, no middle, no end,
No past, no present, no future,
No here, no there,
nowhere and everywhere.
Nothing, something,
and everything IS:
Energy, Absolute Reality, GOD,
Brahman, AUM, Father-in-Heaven,
Allah, YHWH, Nirvana, and so on!
51. O Man, realize your immortal Self,
Beyond all appearances
and opposites;
Therefore, absorbed in and soaked by
love, peace, and bliss,
Be a witness to everything going on,
And enjoy the company
of indwelling Spirit;
Everything is as it should be—
JUST BE.

***May all the beings in all the worlds be
peaceful and happy!***

—Sastry V. Pappu, May 20, 2010
Wichita, Kansas

To earn that consciousness of not-two, love alone is the path. Love (prema) means service (seva), which means the practice of holiness (sadhana), which means expansion, self-enlargement, reaching beyond the very horizon of being and becoming, until all is I.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
(SSS 11:29, July 23, 1971, “Constant Divine Communion”)

The “I” Principle

“I Am THAT”; “I Am God”

The whole world appears as containing innumerable names and forms. One should not get enmeshed with these names and forms. It is only when the names and forms are set aside and the underlying source is identified that it is possible to recognize the truth, which is: “*That Thou Art*” (*Tattwamasi*), or “Constant Integrated Awareness is God” (*Prajnanam Brahma*), or the awareness, “This Self is God” (*Ayam Atma Brahma*). (SANSKRIT SAYINGS)

When you analyze these aphorisms, it will lead you to the awareness, “I am That” and “That I am.” When you are able to realize this truth, you will find that the principle of “I” underlies everything in the universe as the principle of unity. We must recognize the “I” principle, which is universal.

It is a futile exercise to engage in arguments and counter-arguments over this matter and waste one’s time. The only aspect you have to realize is “I am God.” When somebody questions you as to who you are, the proper answer is, “I am I”; “I am the word, I am the form, and I am the name.” This “I” represents and explains everything. When somebody questions who you are, do not reply by quoting your name. The name represents the name given to the body. You are not the body. Hence, reply, “I am I.” Everyone should strive to attain that state of unity.

Vedantic concepts can lead to endless arguments and counter-arguments. Do not enter into them. Always have the awareness, “I am I.” This “I” principle is beyond names and forms. It represents the God Principle (*Brahma Tattwa*), which is one, without a second entity.

When somebody inquires who you are, reply, “I am I.” Similarly, when you ask someone who he is, his reply is “I am I.” Thus, all are “I am I.” It is only when you think, “I am not I,” that doubts will arise.

—Oct 20, 2004

God is omnipresent. The sky is God and the earth is God. All human beings are embodiments of divinity. God is immanent in every human being in the form of breath (which utters, “*Soham*”—“I am That.”). Man must realize this truth, for only when you realize the true nature of God can you be considered to have acquired wisdom (*jnana*).

Wisdom is not mere bookish knowledge. Various educated people have acquired vast knowledge from textbooks, but who is a realized soul (*jnani*) in the real sense? Only the person who has realized that “I am not the body; I am not the mind; I am God, verily,” is a real *jnani*.

When you say, “This is my body,” who are you? To whom are you referring? The

expression “my body” connotes that you are separate from the body. Likewise, when you say, “This is my mind,” it indicates the mind is separate from you. Similarly, when you say, “This is my *buddhi* (intellect),” it means the *buddhi* is separate from you. In all these expressions, what is that “my”? That “my” is “I.” This “I” is what was referred to by Jesus Christ as the ego, which has to be cut. That is the real significance of the (Christian) cross. You must cut the ego.

You are bound by two ideas: “I” and “mine.” That is the human bondage. If you can get released from these two bonds, what remains is “you” only. At present you are with the body. Suppose you have to leave the body tomorrow. At that time, who are you and where are you? You do not know! The body is like a dress, a robe. Once you get rid of attachment to this dress, your true nature will be apparent.

The same truth has been explained in the phrase, “(You are three people:) The one you think you are, the one others think you are, and the one you really are.” That is the true nature of a human being. When someone inquires who you are, you answer, “I am so-and-so.” You give your name, but in fact, that name was given to you by your parents at the time of your birth, and not by God.

Suppose you were to ask God, “Who are you?” He will reply, “I am God.” (*Aham Brahmasmi.*) Everyone should remind oneself,

“I am God; I have no other name.” If someone asks, “What is your name?” you should reply, “My name is God.” If you are constantly aware of your true nature thus, that is the principle of Atma (*Atma Tattwa*). You do not have to contemplate on anything else.

When you see friends or acquaintances, you greet them with a *namaskar* (salutation to the inner divinity). This implies that you are in fact paying obeisance to the divinity immanent in the individual. Hence, do not entertain the feeling, “I,” “I,” “I.” All these physical bodies are like the roles played in a drama. They change. The world itself is a cosmic drama. You must constantly remind yourself that you are playing your role in the cosmic drama and that your real nature is an embodiment of the Divine Self (*Atma Swarupa*). Do you have any doubts in this regard? If you are entertaining any doubts, you will be confused.

Unfortunately, today one does not know about one’s own true nature. How then can one know about God? Hence, first and foremost, know thyself! Inquire within yourself, “Who am I? Who am I?” You will realize, “I am I, I am Atma”; “I am I, I am Atma”; “I am I, I am Atma.” If you forget this Divine Self, what remains is only “deep wine”! Hence, you should become divine.

—December 25, 2009

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

The “I” in the dream is taken to be the body. The “I” in the waking state is taken to be the mind. And the “I” in the transcendent state is God.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Hislop, J., *Conversations with Sathya Sai Baba*, p. 102)

Sai Centers Large and Small Honor Bhagavan's 85th Birthday

with Celebrations, Service, and Satsang

The year 2010 brought a surge in devotion, study, and service activities within the USA Sai Organization, with groups of all sizes carrying out plans to honor the 85th year of the holy advent of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Responding to a call to describe their center's or region's 85th Birthday observances, over 33 reports were submitted to the National Service Coordinator from regions and centers across the country. Thousands of American devotees participated in various ways to honor the life and teachings of Bhagavan and to express their gratitude and love for Him through "living His message."

Many centers reported on a year-long observance, beginning with intensive study circles on the theme, "Sai Ideal Life," or by increasing their service and devotional activities by multiples of "85"—

such as 85 additional hours of service, or Gayatri/Rudram chanting.

Several hundred American devotees participated in the May 2010 Pre-World Conference in Orlando, Florida, also under the theme, "Sai Ideal Life" and the study themes of "I Am I," "God Is," and "Love All, Serve All." Then, in late June and early July, approximately 1,500 Americans then traveled in two groups to Prasanthi Nilayam, each focusing on working together in unity and devotion, and presenting programs representative of American culture.

As the actual 85th birthday, November 23, drew closer, birthday celebrations began taking place as early as late October, on through the global Akhanda Bhajan weekend of November 13–14, and up to and beyond November 23 into December. Many groups held extensive activities over several days,



ARIZONA: SSE "Unity of Faiths" play.



REGION 2: Members of the USA Sai Choir at a regional celebration.

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA



EDISON, NJ: Blankets, toiletries, clothing, and hot meals served.



MEMPHIS, TN: Visiting residents of a nursing home.



SOUTH BETHESDA, MD: A beautiful altar.

beginning with Ladies' Day, November 19, with an array of cultural programs, inspiring speakers, SSE and YA presentations, devotional singing, and service activities taking place over the weekend preceding November 23, which fell on a Tuesday.

In numerous areas, several centers joined forces to create beautiful programs, memorable altar arrangements, and love-laden offerings of "service to God through service to man." Other centers reported simple but touching celebrations that were full of love and joy as the children, YAs, and adults joined in devotional songs and presented skits, plays, and other cultural performances. Several groups reported that their programs incorporated a "unity of faiths" theme, through songs, dramas, and invited speakers, or interfaith outreach programs in the community.

A notable feature at many of the meetings was "Go Green" awareness. Specifically, attempts were made to be environmentally-

responsible by reducing waste—for example by having people bring their own plates and utensils, which were washed lovingly before the end of the program, to be sent home with those who brought them.

Service projects in honor of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's 85th Birthday included the preparing of care packages for nursing home residents, homeless, and needy children, including winter clothing and gifts; participation in community food banks and hot meal service at soup kitchens; the adoption of families in need for the holidays; blanket collection and distribution to the homeless; medical camps; and many more, including the continuing of regular center and regional service projects.

It was a memorable year of gift-giving and deepening of faith for many Sai devotees in the USA.

—Compiled from 85th Birthday Celebration reports submitted by USA Centers and Regions

A Musical Trilogy of Love

Dana Gillespie Concerts in Southern California

Music, it has been said, is the speech of angels, a universal language that transcends race, religion, and culture. It thrills the heart and brings people together.

Knowing the loving power of music, the three Sathya Sai Baba Centers of the San Diego area decided to celebrate Swami's 85th birthday year with a series of three concerts of love featuring the incomparable Dana Gillespie. Dana is an acclaimed British blues and jazz singer who has frequently sung in Swami's presence, and who has generously offered her talents to Sai groups throughout the world.

The three musical events, held October 2–5, 2010, consisted of: (1) a free concert held at San Diego State University (SDSU), the largest university in San Diego; (2) a lively First Sunday Sai event held at the Ebell Society Clubhouse in Santa Ana; and (3) a rousing musical sharing at the San Diego Sai Center.

The first concert, held at SDSU and co-sponsored by the Sathya Sai Baba Centers and the SDSU College of Education,

was the culmination of an exciting concept to interface with college students by offering a free concert that brought together students, teachers, and community in a celebration of values.

Our first challenge was how to make contact with a university. A serendipitous conversation between team member April Skrobiza and Dr. John Johnson, a professor at SDSU College of Education, led to a meeting with Dr. Ric Hovda, Dean of the SDSU College of Education. Dr. Hovda readily accepted our vision, and we were particularly careful to ensure that the secular university would be comfortable in partnering with a spiritual group.

In partnership with SDSU, we agreed on the title for the concert, "Lovin' Our Teachers."



The title was designed to show recognition for the invaluable work of teachers and to highlight the need for mutual love and sharing of values among teachers, students, and administrators. What more perfect message of Swami's love and ideals for education could there be?

We prayed that Baba would bless this project and accept a letter stating our objectives. Can we ever fully appreciate Swami's exquisite timing and unending support? In August, Baba accepted our letter describing the event. He read it carefully and even held it on his lap for a long time. We jumped with joy! Longtime devotee Gary Belz, a professional in the music business, invited the Nikhil Korula (NK) Band (a youthful musical group with a spiritual attitude) to participate. Two talented back-up singers, Radha Botofasina and Isabel Beloso, completed the lineup. We were now ready to produce a modern, values-based concert—with world-class talent.

Dr. Bill Bailey, a professional musician, worked on lighting and sound, developed a program, and helped the NK band and the backup singers learn Dana's music. Sandy

Muñoz created beautiful signs and banners highlighting human values and organized the volunteers. John DeLuca designed a great printed program. In addition to their other tasks, Gary Yoder and Donna Kiley drove up to Los Angeles International Airport in the middle of the night to pick up Dana. Devotee and videographer Gene Massey captured the production on tape, and professional photographer, Philip DeFalco, took photos for a lovely photo album to show Baba. YA representatives Sid Kannan and Pratiba rallied the help of young adults.

Prior to the concert, Dr. Ric Hovda and Dr. Sam Sandweiss spoke briefly about human values, and the NK Band mentioned some of the spiritual values in their music. Dana Gillespie sang beautifully and spoke about values, emphasizing how music is a bridge between different cultures and beliefs. The evening was magical, and Dean Hovda was thrilled.

The following day, Sunday, October 3, Dana performed at the Ebell Theatre in Santa





Ana along with long-time devotees and singing duo, The Lightstorm. As Robert Bozzani, President of the Sathya Sai Baba Book Center of America, said, “It was like being at Prasanthi Nilayam—beautiful devotees bringing us together in Swami’s love.” We are grateful that the Book Center, with the help of the Southern California Sathya Sai Baba Centers, has sponsored First Sunday public meetings in Santa Ana for more than 30 years.

On Tuesday, October 5, Dana gave a third performance, at the San Diego Sai Center, regaling us with wonderful stories and songs. Thank you, Dana, for helping us rejoice.

The best part of a Sai project is the joy of dissolving differences and working together as a unified team. This music project was supported by our many talented devotees. We

got to know one another better and love each other more.

During the 85th Birthday, Dr. Sandweiss had the opportunity to show Swami the photo book about the three musical events. Baba studied every picture and looked very happy—gazing lovingly at the picture of the organizing team. Swami made this a most happy birthday celebration for all of us. Thank you, Swami, for your love.

A special footnote: Dana Gillespie will return to Southern California in the Fall of 2011, and the organizing team has already held its first planning meeting. Come join us next October!

**—Contributed with love by the
Dana Gillespie Concert Team**

USA Retreat 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 1 (Northeast): May 27–29, at Russell Sage College Campus, Troy, NY. Contact: Dr. Anand Tanikella, tanikella@yahoo.com.

Region 2 (Mid-Atlantic): May 27–30, at Camp Westmont, Poyntelle, PA 18454. Theme: *Realize the Divinity Within*; Speakers: Sundar and Maya Iyer. Contacts: Piyush Ghayal (973-519-2142, vrall1@verizon.net) or Ajit Virani (703-709-9343 or ajitvirani@yahoo.com).

Region 4 (Mid-Central): May 20–22 (weekend before Memorial Day holiday weekend), at Camp Wyman, just outside St. Louis, MO. Theme: “Manifesting Divine Energy.” To illuminate this theme, speaker and program topics will include Detachment, Acceptance, and Trusting Swami. Speaker: Berniece Mead. Contact: Jack Feely (jfeely@ta-stl.com, 324-862-1254).

Region 7 (Northern California and Northern Nevada): No regional retreat planned but several one-day mini-retreats throughout the year.

Region 8 (Southern California): June 3-5, 2011, at Camp Buckhorn, Idyllwild, CA (www.buckhorncamp.com). Theme: “All for the Love of Sai.” Speakers Ms. Geetha Ram and Ms. Sumana Murali. Contact: Mike Congleton, MWC108@gmail.com.

Prasanthi Nilayam Festival Dates – 2011

March 2, Wednesday: Mahashivaratri New moon night that is symbolic of the waning influence of the mind, when 15 aspects have already merged in the Self and only one aspect remains. Hence, on this day, it is easier to control the mind and direct it toward God. Therefore, the night is spent in contemplation and adoration of God, so that the vagaries of the mind can be totally subdued and transcended to attain realization of the Atman.

April 4, Monday: Ugadi New Year’s Day for the people of Andra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, India. *Ugadi* (*Yugadi* in Sanskrit) means the beginning of a new era.

April 12, Tuesday: Sri Rama Navami Celebrates the birth of Lord Rama, embodiment of righteousness and avatar of the Treta Age.

April 14, Thursday: Tamil New Year New Year’s Day for the people of Tamil Nadu, India.

April 15, Friday: Vishu New Year’s Day for the people of Kerala, India.

New National Young Adult Representatives and USA Youth Pilgrimage

New National YA Representatives

Ms. Aparna Murali, from Southern California, will begin serving as the new National Young Adult Female Representative for the USA YA Program. The selection process for a National Young Adult Male Representative is still ongoing.

Sangeeta Lekhi and Daniel Scovill, who have provided excellent leadership for the National YA Program, will complete their two full terms, and will be passing the torch to Aparna to carry on this important role. Sangeeta and Daniel are nearing the end of their second term and will work alongside Aparna for the next few months, to help her transition into this new role.

Aparna has been actively involved with her local center activities, regional YA activities, and several national YA initiatives. She has also served as an active member of the National YA Leadership Team. Aparna is an alumnus of the Sri Sathya Sai University, Anantapur, and has a Masters Degree in Psychology and Genetic Counseling. She brings enthusiasm, boundless energy, solid leadership skills, and, most important, total dedication to doing Swami's work and putting Swami's teachings into practice. She will be an excellent leader and role model.

Coinciding with the completion of Regional YA selections, Aparna and the new slate of YA Regional Officers will officially begin serving the USA YA Program from April 1, 2011. We welcome Aparna as the new National Young Adult Female Representative.

First USA Sai Youth Pilgrimage to Take Place in 2011 (Ages 18–35)

We are pleased to share the joyful news that this year will be the first-ever USA Sai Youth Pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam. The Young Adult National Leadership team prepared a letter (see page 39) for Swami, seeking his guidance and blessings for a pilgrimage this year. During a recent trip to Parthi, Dr. Narendra Reddy offered this letter to Swami, who happily accepted it, read the letter, and said, "Permission granted." Swami gave his blessings to the USA youth, saying, "Very happy."

The dates for the Sai Young Adult Pilgrimage (for ages 18–35) have not yet been finalized, though it will likely be sometime during August 2011.

Phil Gosselin

—USA Central Coordinator

USA Youth Letter to Swami

Here is a copy of the USA Young Adults' letter offered to and accepted by Swami.

Dearest Bhagavan

Please accept our grateful, loving salutations!

We, Sai Youth from USA, pray to embark
on a pilgrimage to receive
Your Divine Darshan and Blessings.

In preparation for this unique, joyous, and
sacred journey, we offer our continued
sadhana of discipline and devotional prayer,
along with selfless service rooted in
Your message of universal love.

Bhagavan, on this New Year, 2011, we offer
our loving, heartfelt prayers at Thy Lotus Feet
to embark on this pilgrimage and seek
Your Divine Guidance and Blessings.

*With loving gratitude,
Your children, USA Sai Youth*

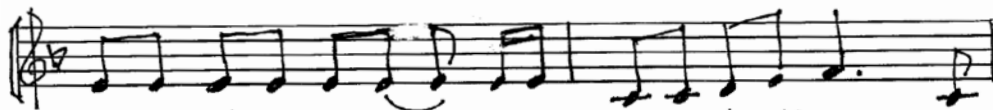
“I See the Spark in You”

Suppose you were playing with your friends, and some of them did something you did not like. Perhaps they got angry and said something mean. Perhaps there was a time when you got angry and said something mean. Perhaps you have seen someone become angry and try to hurt another person. At such times, we may be tempted to return anger for anger and meanness for meanness.

Here is a song that can help you remember the truth. What is the truth? God is in everyone, just as God is in us. When we remember this truth, we would not want to hurt another person, because it would be like hurting ourselves. The third line says, “You are my loving brother. . . .” When you sing this song, you may change this line to fit the person you are thinking of, such as: “You are my loving *sister*,” or “You are my loving *friend*,” “You are my loving *parent*,” or “You are my loving *neighbor*.”



I see the spark in you; it's the same bright spark in me. So



I could never hurt you; it's the same as hurting me. You



are my lov-ing bro-ther; it's as true as true can be. I
(sis-ter)
(neigh-bor)



see you up and down and a-round and liv-ing in-side me—!

—Song lyrics by Mahri Kintz

Jesus's Parable of the Two Builders

Is Your House Built Upon the Rock or the Sand?

While Jesus was preaching and teaching, many people were eager to follow him after hearing him preach. They called themselves his disciples, but they did not practice what Jesus preached, such as observing the Golden Rule, and loving, serving, and forgiving each other. Nor did they stop judging, criticizing, and condemning each other. Jesus then told them it meant nothing to call out, “Lord, Lord,” when they were doing nothing to follow God’s commandments or to do His will. So Jesus decided to tell them a story of how two men built their homes. The story is called the “Parable of the Two Builders.” The parable appears in two slightly different versions in the New Testament of the Holy Bible, first in Matthew 7:24–27 and again in Luke 6:47–49. Below is a retelling of that parable:



The House Upon the Sand and the House Upon the Rock

“All those who listen to my words and practice them are like the wise man who built his house on a rock. The man laid a strong foundation by digging deep into the earth until he reached the bedrock deep under the soil. Then he worked carefully and slowly, making sure the building was strong and secure, based on the rock. And then the rains and floods came, and the wind blew hard and beat against the house. But the house did not fall, because it was built on a strong foundation.

“But the person who hears my words and does nothing with them is like the man who built his house on the sand. This foolish man did not even build a foundation for his house. Soon the rains and floods came, and the wind blew, beating against the house. The house could not hold up against the storm and quickly collapsed and was washed away.”

The crowds were surprised at Jesus’s story. Jesus warned them that if they did not build their life on a deep foundation and follow his teachings, then they too would find that their house had fallen down.

—Adapted from www.child-bible-lessons.com. Used by permission.

PHOTO: Courtesy of www.forestwander.com.

Sai Spiritual Education Lesson Plan

Jesus's Parable of the Two Builders (Group 3)

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

QUOTES: *In this world, which is impermanent and ever-transforming, the immanent power of the Lord is the only permanent and fixed entity. In order to realize the eternal and the true, one has to attach oneself to that source and sustenance. (Voice of the Avatar, 2:27, 14)*

What is truth? In the word truth (sathya), Sath means permanent, which is life. . . . Yaa is the procedure for investigating into truth. . . . Realize the truth that you are God. . . . God is unity in diversity. Without realizing this, there is no use reading books or giving lectures. At least practice one or two of Swami's teachings. Even at the worldly level, are you helping anyone? Help ever and hurt never. (July 27, 2002) —Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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

DEVOTIONAL SINGING: Invite students to select songs on the theme of the truth of the all-pervasive divinity, such as “I Am God, I Am God”; “Remind Me, My Lord, Who I Am”; “I Am God, You Are God; What Does It Mean That We Are God.”

READING: “Jesus's Parable of the Two Builders” (on page 41). Provide copies for all the students. For students who are interested in reading this story of Jesus as it appears in the Holy Bible, you may wish to provide the following:

Matthew 7:21–27 (Jesus is speaking): “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

Luke 6:46–49 (Jesus is speaking): “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

DISCUSSION: (1) *What does the rock in the story represent?* (Truth—the truth of omnipresent divinity) *What does the sand represent?* (the beliefs or “ways of the world”; the impermanence of everything in “this world”; believing in differences and not unity) *What does the deep foundation in the story represent?* (inquiring into truth and basing one’s life—words, thoughts, and actions—on the fundamental truth and the human values. *What does the house represent?* (our life and beliefs) (2) *Do you think that following Jesus’ (or Baba’s) teachings and building your house on a strong foundation is easy or hard? Why?* (3) *Why do you think Jesus used the parable about a house as a way to show people they needed to do more than just hear his teachings? Who did the two builders represent?* (4) *Why is it important for us to follow Jesus’s—or Sai Baba’s—teachings?* (5) *How do Baba’s teachings about truth help us understand Jesus’s parable of the two builders?* (6) *Why is truth considered the bedrock of all the other values? How does knowing about our inner divinity affect how we think about and practice all the other values—right action, peace, love, and nonviolence?*

ACTIVITY: The story is about a rock and some sand. One is permanent like truth, and the other is unstable, not permanent, like our desires. Have students work in pairs to list and compare the values that remind them of a rock and other values that are like sand. “Rock” values are those that if we practice, protect us from the winds of desires or other “storms” of life. Some examples might be forbearance, tolerance, loving all, serving all, etc. How do we *feel* when we always think and do the right action? Are we sturdy like a rock? Does it make us joyful? Then compare desires with sand. Have students make a “wish list” of things they’d like to acquire (car, money, new game, new computer, etc.) and discuss how it would make them feel to have these desires fulfilled, and how long they think this feeling might last. Could any of the desires be shared with others, or are they all just for themselves? Discuss the story and what Jesus was trying to teach to the disciples by using this example of the rock and the sand.

LIFE APPLICATION: This week, are we going to be like a rock with Self-confidence, listening to our conscience in all of our actions? Or are we going to be like grains of sand, letting the winds of desires and passing events bring us down to a level of worry and anxiety? Take the values that were discussed in the activity and become like the rock this week. Let us know your successes next week, and good luck.

We invite SSE or SSEHV teachers to submit lesson plans for all SSE age groups, focused on a value, subvalue, or spiritual principle as set forth in the *Sai Spiritual Education Teachers Manual* or publications on *Sathya Sai Education in Human Values*. Please submit to ssnusa@sathyasaibooksusa.org.

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Recent Arrivals

BOOKS

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 42, contains 18 invaluable discourses given by Bhagavan during 2009. They emphasize the importance of festivals, upholding morality at the individual and social levels, the origin of the mind and its power, the misuse of cell phones, and many other topics. BA-042.....\$6.00

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, he transmitted a series of letters to his family. Jay revealed 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 Sathya Sai Baba encouraged her to share them, she decided to do so in this book. BW-400.....\$9.00

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

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

CDs

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-178 ..\$9.00