

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

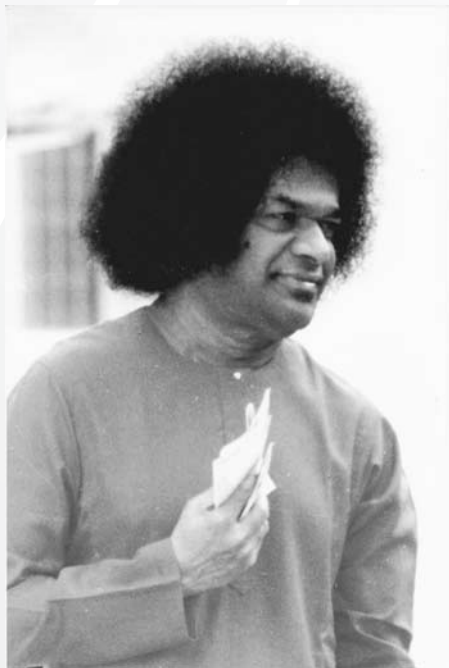


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SAI'S MESSAGE

I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU; YOU CAN NEVER LEAVE ME



NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO, always do your duty as you see it, and know that I will be there inside you guiding you every step of the way. In the years to come, you will experience me in many different manifestations of my form.

You are my own, dearer than dear to me. I will protect you as the eyelids protect the eyes. I will never leave you, and you can never leave me. From this point on, do not hanker after anything. Do your duty with unwavering love, seeing all as God. Be patient. In time, everything will be given to you. Be happy.

There is no need to worry about anything. Whatever is experienced, whatever happens, know that this Avatar willed it so. There is no force on earth that can delay for an instant the mission for which this Avatar has come. You are all sacred souls, and you will have your parts to play in the unfolding drama of the new Golden Age that is coming.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sanathana Sarathi, back cover, Oct 1996

Supreme Peace of the Omnipresence

Unveiling of the Sacred Maha-Samadhi of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



ON JULY 15, 2011, Guru Purnima day, the official Maha-Samadhi (monument marking the burial place) of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was unveiled in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam, the perennial Abode of Highest Peace.

According to the midday Darshan Update issued by sssbpt.org on that date, the morning program began at 7.30 with Vedic recitations, with the great hall filled to capacity and overflow seating in the Poornachandra auditorium, where attendees could view the unveiling ceremonies as they took place, on large screens via live feed.

At exactly 8.00 am, the red curtains hiding the center stage area of the *mandir* (temple) verandah were parted, bringing into view a magnificent structure, erected during the preceding two months, over the interment spot of the physical casing of the Avatar of the Age.

The main portion of the Maha-Samadhi is a serene, rectangular, pure white, marble-clad structure, 9 feet long by 6 feet wide by 2 feet, 2 inches high, oriented north-to-south and located exactly over the final resting place of the physical form.

This in turn is centered atop a 6-inch-high, white marble platform, 21 feet long, north to south, and 12 feet wide. The two large pillars on either side of the center that support the porch roof have also been clad with white marble and decorated tastefully with gold trim. The remaining floor area of the porch has likewise been replaced with expanses of white marble, and the two flanks of the porch rebuilt and covered in deep green marble with a white marble border.

Students of Sri Sathya Sai University, inspired by the sight, started singing hymns in praise of the Divine Guru. Interspersed with sharing of their experiences, the students went on to offer a variety of songs in various genres in praise of the One. Thereafter, Sri Anil Kumar Kamaraju, as master of ceremonies, introduced two speakers, Mr Leonardo Gutter of Argentina, a psychologist and member of the Prasanthi Council, and Sri Nimish Pandya, district Sai organization president from Mumbai.

Mr Gutter recounted four great blessings of the devotees of the Avatar, Sri Sathya Sai Baba—(1) to be born as a human being, (2) to be a contemporary of the Avatar, (3) to be aware of his divinity, and (4) to be his chosen instrument. Mr Gutter also told of devotees who had come to Sai Baba to criticize, only to come away overwhelmed with love of the Lord.



The goal of life is the final merging in the sea, God. . . . Listen to all such things that will draw you toward the principle of Godhead; then think over in silence what you have heard, making it a part of your consciousness. This process of manana (reflection, remembrance) makes you a human being. This is the test of life for every human being.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 3:21, Sept 6, 1963)

Then Sri Pandya spoke, expressing his gratitude for all of Bhagavan's many blessings and summarizing the activities of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, whose work represents only a small sampling of how the Sri Sathya Sai Organization worldwide has influenced lives. He declared emphatically that no one has ever inspired millions of people across the globe to serve their fellow human beings in the way that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has, which, along with Bhagavan's various projects, is the legacy He has left for us.

Sri Anil Kumar then thanked both speakers and congratulated the students for their thematic presentation. *Bhajans* (devotional singing) continued as *prasadam* (consecrated food) was distributed to the gathering, and *Arati* (proffering of the sacred flame, symbolizing spiritual dedication as well as divine light) was offered at 10.30, bringing the sacred ceremony to a close.

Afterward, devotees were allowed to approach the Maha Samadhi area, ushered in orderly lines for closer viewing, as music by students and other artists continued, enhancing the ambience in the hall.

—Adapted from http://sssbpt.org/Pages/Prasanthi_Nilayam/darshanupdateJuly2011.html

He Is With Us Always, Part 1

The Source of All Wisdom, All Knowledge, All Love

This transcript is Part 1 of a talk given by Dr Narendranath Reddy on May 8, 2011, to Sai devotees of USA Region 8 (Pacific South), at Sanathana Dharma Temple, Norwalk, California.

WITH LOVE AND REVERENCE I offer my prayerful salutations at the Divine Lotus Feet of our dearest and loving Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Dear sisters and brothers:

Greetings of loving Sai Ram to all of you. I wish all of you a happy Mother's Day. Today we are all assembled here to pay homage to our Divine Mother Sai, who has the love of a thousand mothers, nay, an infinite number of mothers. Swami has said, "*You can't even understand one mother's love. How can you understand thousands of mothers' love?*" So we are really fortunate to have experienced the Divine Mother's love.

As Berniece (Mead) just sang, "Once we have seen You and heard You and touched You, how can we live in this world without You?" We all echo these feelings. We all feel something is lost. But we need to remember Swami's message. Dr Chandradas (Region 8 President) read a beautiful message: *He is with us always. He was with us; he is with us, and he will continue to be with us!* Bhagavan assured us of this many, many times, and we need to remember this. Thank you, Dr Chandradas, for your nice introduction. I thank Bhagavan, the organizers, and all of you for giving me

this opportunity to share Bhagavan's message and love with you today.

We are blessed and fortunate to be contemporaries of this Avatar who is the embodiment of pure love, love walking on two legs. In fact, Swami himself has declared that he is the embodiment of all divinities. According to the scriptures, in each age (*yuga*) various Avatars are born—Rama and Krishna, for example. They come with every grand age cycle (*mahayuga*). However, this is a unique time of the triune Avatar of Shirdi Sai, Parthi Sai, and Prema Sai. We are extremely fortunate to be contemporaries of Parthi Sai, the Sathya Sai Avatar, the embodiment of both Shiva and Shakti and of all divine forms and entities. I want to share a few examples of our great fortune to be witnesses of this great phenomenon.

The Source of All Divinities

The Raja of Venkatagiri was an ardent devotee of Swami. Swami, in the early days, used to go to the raja's house in the summer every year. This raja was likewise a great devotee of Sri Rama. The first time he saw Swami, he didn't see Swami's form but the great Ajanubahu, the majestic form of Sri

Rama with the bow and arrow. The raja, awestruck, immediately fell flat at Swami's feet. Swami himself once told us this story.

Many of you also know the story of Dr Hislop when he was riding in the front seat of Swami's car. He looked back, and Swami gave to him an exquisite, beautiful vision of Sri Krishna. Swami also has given visions of Buddha, and of Christ, to others. Recently when we were in Puttaparthi, a devotee shared how Swami even showed Mecca in His hands to devotees from Iran, when they wanted to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Our loving Sai is the source of all divinities.

I can relate a beautiful story about how Swami even appeared as Ganesha. Swami Amrithananda was an 85-year-old saint who came to Puttaparthi. When he arrived, Swami called him "*Amritham*." This man was amazed. Only his guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi, had ever called him by that name and with the same endearing voice. Swami called him in for an interview and asked, "*What did you do at the age of seven?*" "Swami, I did a Ganesha *homa* (ritual offering involving a sacred fire). I worshiped Ganesha for 41 days, chanting a mantra." Swami asked, "*What was supposed to happen after the 41 days?*" He said, "I was supposed to have the *darshan* (vision) of a golden Ganesha." Then Swami asked him, "*Did you have that darshan?*" He replied, "No, Swami. Possibly because I was only seven years old, or perhaps I did not do it right. That must be why it did not happen." Then Swami said—78 years later, when Amrithananda was 85—"See, your *sadhana* (*spiritual discipline*) never goes

to waste. Whatever sadhana you do, it will come to fruition. Look at me."

Swami Amrithananda saw in place of Swami the golden Ganesha! Swami became the golden Ganesha. This man went into ecstasy and for the next four days was in bliss—no sleep, no food, no drink. He was in ecstasy. This story demonstrates not only that Swami is the embodiment of all divinities but also that every little *sadhana* we do is recorded in the cosmic record.

All of our spiritual efforts are useful. Therefore we should always do our *sadhana* with the utmost sincerity and intensity. During the 2007 Youth Conference, Swami said, "*If you think of me intensely for just eleven seconds, I will give you my darshan.*" Eleven seconds! This demonstrates that we are unable to concentrate for even eleven seconds.

The Cosmic Form and Beyond Form

Not only is Swami the embodiment of all these divinities, he is also Viswarupa, the Cosmic Form. Dr Saraf, former Vice Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai University, told me a story illustrating this point. We were attending Sports Day at the Hillview Stadium. At that time there was no roof, and it was very hot. Swami was providing drinks and food for people, but Swami himself was not taking any drinks or food. Dr Saraf felt bad and thought, Swami please have something. Swami continued to refuse, saying, "No."

Suddenly Swami gave Dr Saraf a cosmic vision. He saw Swami drinking, in the form of all the people assembled there. After that, he

never had any doubt that Swami is the Cosmic Universe Itself. He permeates everything.

Swami is not only the embodiment of all divinities; he is beyond all divine forms. Swami Abhedananda was another of Sri Ramana Maharshi's disciples and a sincere spiritual seeker. But after his master passed away, Swami Abhedananda did not feel that he had attained fulfillment. He read *Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram*, the biography of Swami. He said to himself, "This Sathya Sai Baba must be an Avatar. I should go and see him." So he went to Prasanthi Nilayam, and Swami called him in for an interview. Swami Abhedananda was very happy, and when he came out from the interview room, Professor Kasturi asked him what had happened. Abhedananda said, "I had a very blissful time, but I must tell you one thing. I have an objection to your statement that Swami is an Avatar." Kasturi was taken aback. Abhedananda said, "In the interview, I experienced Swami as the Supreme Parabrahman, the source of all Avatars." He had that kind of experience. Thus, Swami is not only the embodiment of all divinities; he is beyond all the divinities. He is the supreme source of everything. He is One in All and All in One, All in All and Beyond All.

Ruminate on Your Experiences with Him

How blessed we are to have seen him, touched him, and received his blessings and love. We should remember this always. Though he has left his physical form, he has not left us.

About fifteen years ago I was with Swami in Brindavan for about two weeks. We had very close darshan and a wonderful time. He played with us, sang with us, and dined with us. After two weeks, we had to return to work and all were feeling sad. Swami then gave us beautiful advice, relevant to everyone.

He said, "*Whatever experiences you have, try to ruminate on them and relive them.*" Swami cited the cow as an example. When the cow eats grass, it goes to a corner, quietly sits and chews the food, then brings it back and chews the cud. Similarly, whatever experiences as devotees we have, we should ruminate on them, and this becomes the greatest meditation. We should reflect, Oh, there we were with Swami; we were sitting at his feet; Swami told us such and such To relive those experiences, Swami says, is itself a great *sadhana*.

His Unparalleled Beauty and Charm

Swami's form is one of unparalleled beauty. We sing of the unparalleled beauty (*anupama sundara*). Swami is unparalleled beauty. That is why no picture, painting, or sculpture can capture his beauty. Each picture we see of him—at least for me—looks so different, because Swami is *sanathana* (eternal) as well as *nithyanuthana* (ever new). The scriptures say it beautifully. He is the ancient and at the same time the ever new. The more we see him, the more we want to see him. That is the beauty of the Divine.

Swami's beautiful curly hair is his unparalleled crown, like Lord Rama wearing a crown. Rama used to have the bow and

arrow. Krishna used to have the discus. Swami has his beautiful smile. With it he steals our hearts. Just remember his beautiful smile. And the eye-to-eye contact! Even if the corner of his eye would catch you, you would say, “Oh, he looked at me. My day is fulfilled.” People feel so blissful with the merest eye contact, because he can burn away all our karmas and sins with that eye contact, and also with his *abhayahasta* (gesture of a raised hand, palm outward, signifying, *Have no fear*).

Abhayahasta and Varadhahasta

This Avatar gives both gestures, the *abhayahasta* and the *varadhahasta* (hand gesture of granting boons), and with the *varadhahasta* hand he goes on giving, giving, giving. In the Taittiriya Upanishad, it is said, “Give with sincerity (*shraddam deyam*); do not give without sincerity (*ashraddhaya adeyam*); give good gifts (*shriya deyam*); give with humility (*hriya deyam*); and give in plenty (*samvidhaya deyam*).”

Swami is the example of giving, giving, giving. We should learn from him. His hand is always giving, never receiving. We should be the same way. That is why Swami shows the *varadhahasta* gesture with one hand and the *abhayahasta* with the other, indicating, “Be fearless. Why fear when I am here!”

In addition, this unique Avatar blesses us with the double *abhayahasta*. Each Avatar is depicted with one hand as *varadahasta* and one hand as *abhayahasta*. But our Swami is also seen with *both* hands in *abhayahasta*, saying, “Be fearless. Why fear when I am here, there, and everywhere!”

His beautiful, tender, loving feet: we touch them, and all our sins are washed away. That is why the first song Swami taught was “*Manasa bhajare Guru charanam*”—“Hold on to the feet of the Divine Guru, and he will take you across the ocean of *samsara* (worldly life).”

His beautiful gait: most of you have seen Swami walking. In fact, he was not walking; he was floating. It is written in the scriptures that only divine beings do that. It looks as if they are floating above the earth, not touching the ground.

Swami's Divine Instruction

His words are beautiful—nectarean, sweet. Most of us who have heard him speak want to hear more. Even one word has the power to give solace to the afflicted. Each sentence of Swami's is a Gita; each discourse or conversation, a Veda. So we should contemplate on every word he speaks. Sometimes we may not understand the meaning right away, but the more we think about it, the more the meaning becomes apparent. It may take six months, ten years, or even a lifetime. Therefore, his every word is meaningful.

Professor Kasturi used to tell a story about a monk who wandered in search of truth. This monk went on searching, searching. He went to many holy places, saw many saints, and was not happy. Finally he came to Prasanthi Nilayam. He was there for a few weeks. Every day he went to darshan, but Swami did not look at him or talk to him. He was very disappointed, and people began to ridicule

him, saying, “Oh, you are such a holy man; Swami has not even looked at you!”

Suddenly one day, he was about to get up and ask Swami something when Swami said, “*Kucho*. (Sit down).” Later that day this man packed up his belongings and prepared to depart. People thought he was leaving because he was angry, but this monk said, “No. I got *upadesha* (an initiation, personal instruction) from Swami.” For other people, Swami’s word had no significance. He had said only, “*Sit down*.” But that was this man’s mantra initiation. “That is a mantra for me, because I have been wandering here and there, wandering everywhere, and Swami told me just to sit in one place: go inward and know the truth.” So, Swami’s every word is full of meaning.

His Teaching through Humor

Sometimes Swami even says something in humor, but it still carries great meaning. Once Professor Kasturi shared an experience from his pilgrimage to Benares with Swami. Benares is a holy place related to Shiva, and Kasturi wanted a mantra initiation from Swami. When you want to receive a mantra, you are supposed to fast the whole day and then take a dip in the Ganges. So he had a bath in the Ganges and was fasting.

Swami suddenly told him, “*Come with me. Sit and eat*.” But Kasturi wanted to have a mantra from Swami. Swami said, “*Come and eat*.” Swami insisted, “*Eat!*” so Kasturi had to yield to Swami’s command. Then Swami inquired, “Why do you have a long face? Why are you sad?”

Kasturi replied, “Swami, I wanted to have a *mantra-upadesha* from you, but you told me to eat. That is why I am sad.” Swami asked, “*Why do you want to have mantra-upadesha?*” Kasturi replied, “Because I want to be close to God.” Swami asked, “*How much closer do you want to be to God? You are already right next to me!*”

This incident demonstrates that we should not get caught up in rituals. Just think of Him and love Him with a pure heart. That is the most important austerity, the most important *sadhana*.

Sometimes Swami’s humorous words convey instructions. For example, people who are overweight, Swami calls “*pakoda*” (a deep-fried, filled savory food). If the weight is excessive, he calls the person “*bonda*” (a super-large pakoda). Most people would be offended if you called them that. But when Swami speaks that way, people enjoy it, because he does it with such love. Everything he does, even teasing, he does with love.

One time an obese person was in an interview with Swami. Swami asked, “*What do you want?*” The person said, “Swami, I want to merge with you.” Swami said, “*You’re so big; I’m so small. How can you merge with me?*” It was just a little humorous comment, but that person was then motivated to lose weight and thereafter lost a great deal of weight.

Swami says that for spiritual seekers, two obstacles exist: ego (*ahamkara*) and attachment (*mamakara*). Swami would visit devotees’ homes sometimes. A devotee from Delhi invited Swami to his home. He said, “Swami, please come to my house.” Swami

asked, “*Your house?*” This man quickly realized his mistake: “No. No, Swami—*our* house.” Swami replied, “*Oh. Our house. Fifty-fifty percent partnership?*” The man corrected himself again, “No, no, no, Swami—*your* house.” Swami said, “*Then why are you inviting me to my house?*”

This humorous incident has a great message. It demonstrates that we should always think that everything belongs only to God and that nothing belongs to us. Always have the trust that everything belongs to God only.

The All-Knowing Doer

Many years ago one of our senior devotees took a play from the USA to Prasanthi Nilayam. It was enacted in the Poornachandra auditorium, and Swami was very happy with the program. The next day Swami came to the verandah and asked this man, “*The drama was very well done. Who was the director?*” The devotee replied with the correct answer, “Swami, you are the director.” Swami asked, “*Then what about you?*” The man answered, “I’m just an assistant, Swami.” Swami said, “*But I don’t need any assistant!*”

This demonstrates that he is everything. He is the doer. He is the instrument. We should have that conviction; it should not be just lip service. We must remember that every word of his is a treasure, even the word cloaked with humor.

He is the source of all knowledge. Swami is the source of everything. We should have that conviction. One time we were with

Swami in the interview room, and a devotee was struggling to introduce a boy who was also there, “Swami, this boy is the son of so-and-so.” After a while, Swami said, “*I know. I know. The difference between the Divine and the human is that the human knows nothing and acts as if he knows everything, while God knows everything and acts as if he knows nothing. That is the main difference.*”

Then Swami lifted a handkerchief. “*See this? You see only the piece of cloth. That is your knowledge, whereas I have total knowledge, total awareness. I see everything, everywhere, at all times.*”

I remember once, a cardiac surgeon who was about to perform surgery on a VIP devotee-patient, said to Swami, “Swami, I am going to do this surgery today.” Swami advised him, “*You’ll have problems with management of his blood sugar and blood pressure.*” But then Swami also assured him, “*Think of Me. Everything will be all right.*” The surgery proceeded exactly as Swami had predicted. He knows beforehand what is going to happen.

Something similar happened to me. There was a devotee who had a problem with calcium management and needed surgery. I told Swami, “He needs surgery.” Swami replied, “*No, you can give medicine.*” But there was no medicine for that condition! I thought Swami might have been confusing this man’s condition with another condition of the thyroid, but I myself was ignorant in thinking this way, for within a year, a medicine came out for that very condition. This story demonstrates how Swami knows

the past, present, and future. He knows everything about medicine.

Not only medicine, he knows about architecture, too. The builder of Sai Kulwant Hall and the university building was Larson & Toubro—a senior professional from the firm was describing the engineers’ problem in deciding how many pillars to erect in Sai Kulwant Hall and where to put them. They could not figure out a solution. When they presented the problem to Swami, however, Bhagavan easily solved the problem that had vexed so many engineers and experienced people. He can do everything.

He even knows about singing. A devotee by the name of Kamala Sarathi, the wife of a former defense secretary, had a nice experience. I shared this story in front of Swami in Kodaikanal in 1994, and Swami liked it, so I will share it here. This lady was a connoisseur of Thyagaraja *kirtanas* (songs), a style of music. Thyagaraja was a famous south-Indian musician, a great devotee of Sri Rama. This lady brought her music teacher, an expert in Karnatic music, with her to Prasanthi Nilayam.

Her teacher was of the opinion that *bhajans* (call-and-response devotional songs) were light music and substandard. He was thinking this when Swami called them for an interview. Swami called him in and started humming some rare Thyagaraja *kritis* (masterpieces). This man was amazed that Swami knew these *kritis*. “Who taught you, Swami? How did you learn?” he asked. Swami replied, “*Who do you think taught Thyagaraja? I am the Rama who taught Thyagaraja.*” This

shows that Swami is the source of all music. He knows everything. He is the source of everything, including music.

A similar incident occurred with a Vedic *pandit*. Vedic *pandits* are experts in Vedic mantras. But Swami is able to correct even the Vedic mantras that these pandits chant.

Actually, Swami can reveal the highest truths to the greatest Vedantists. A great scholar came once when I was there. He gave a talk and said, “Swami, I am bound; please release me.” We are all bound by worldly duty. Swami replied, “*When were you bound to be released? That is your illusion.*” This man was shocked, because that is the highest truth, called *ajathawada*, meaning, you are never born. It is also known as *Gaudapada siddhanta*—representing that you never die.

This man was the greatest philosopher, and only he could understand this teaching. Nobody else could understand, because according to the highest Vedantic principles, everything is a dream: we are never born; we never die. Everything is our imagination; this is all in the mind. This is the pinnacle of Vedantic philosophy.

I am relating these examples to show how Swami is the source of everything—all knowledge, all wisdom, and all love. But Swami’s most profound and touching aspect for all of us is his love.

(to be continued)

—Dr Narendranath Reddy

Chair, Sri Sathya Sai

International Medical Committee;

Director, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

What Do We Do Now?

*Love is my form, truth is my breath, bliss is my food;
My life is my message; expansion is my life;
No reason for love, no season for love, no birth, no death."*

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

A YOUNG GIRL FROM FLORIDA called me on April 26, 2011, and asked, "Grandpa (she chose to address me that way), do you know Swami passed away?"

"I know," I said.

Then she asked, **"What do we do now?"** She comes from a family devoted to Swami. I remember meeting her sometime in 1999 when I gave a talk at a Sai center in Florida. She must have been about ten years old then. After the talk, I invited people to ask questions. The first hand up was that of this girl. She asked me some pointed questions about Swami. So, I wasn't surprised when she called and asked the above question.

In reply to her question, I asked her what she and her family had done after her maternal grandmother passed away.

"We continued to live our lives, while remembering her," she said.

I said, "That means you remember and celebrate her life, though you miss her physical presence, is it not?"

She got the message. I gave a similar answer to others who called and asked the same question.

Besides, some callers asked, "Why did Swami choose to exit now, having told us that he would be here in his physical form for at least another ten years? What is the meaning of his exit?"

My answer to such questions is simply, **"Delve deep into yourself and figure it out, but remember the fact that the Upanishads have declared that death is certain to that which is born."**

In fact, that is exactly what Swami has been preaching and asking us to do for over eight decades. And, in order to force us, coax us, cajole us, or whichever way one wants to look at it, he tried every method available in his repertoire (short of using the sledge hammer that other Avatars had used) to straighten our errant behavior. Finally, he even changed his exhortation from "my life is my message" to "*your* life is my message"! But did even this get any of us to change to any significant extent?

Therefore, everyone must search his/her heart and ask the question, “**Did I change in any perceptible way?**” To answer the question sincerely, at least from now on, I believe one should get back to the basics of Swami’s advent and his foundational message(s).

For this purpose, I believe one should leave behind the illusory superstructure that has been growing for the past six decades, by way of increasing urbanization of Puttaparthi, encroachment of the world into the Abode of Peace, institutionalization of spirituality, and so on. In other words, one needs to travel back in time mentally and recollect what He has said, what He expected from us, and how we followed or failed to follow sincerely his advice.



*Arunachala Shiva, Arunachala Shiva;
Om karam Bhava, Om karam Bhava, Om-
karam Bhava, Om Namo Baba.*

My interpretation of the song is: “Sing the glory of the Guru (dispeller of darkness, God) and worship his feet from the depths of

your spiritual heart, in order to cross safely the difficult-to-cross, sorrow-filled ocean of life (*bhava-sagara* or *samsara*). And offer salutations to Lord Shiva (representing the Formless, Divine, Pristine, Cosmic Consciousness Energy in the form of the *lingam*), and to the *Sadguru* (wisest of wise), Lord Sai, the embodiment of OM (the primordial sound energy).”

Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam

At age 14, when He declared his identity as Sai Baba, the first message he gave us was through the above-named song:

*Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam;
Dustara Bhava Sagara Taranam;
Guru Maharaj, Guru Jai Jai;
Sai Natha, Sadguru Jai Jai;
Om Namah Shivaya . . .*

Identity of Swami as Shiva

How do we know that Swami is Lord Shiva? He himself has said that he is the embodiment of Shiva-Shakti (i.e., the male and female aspects of the creation principle). Of course, many documented stories validate that fact. But, I’ll answer the above question by drawing from my own experience, as follows.

I had the privilege of staying in his physical presence and serving him during 1979–1985. In 1982 (if my memory serves

me right), one Sunday morning a person came to my house in Bangalore and gave me a photograph of Baba adorned like Shiva. (See picture on page 13.) He said **it was not doctored but a real one**, taken with a camera by his friend while visiting Brindavan. I had no compelling reason to doubt the claim of the gentleman. In fact he took me to his home one day and showed me *vibhuti* (holy ash)-laden pictures and idols in his house. I asked the gentleman why he was giving me the photograph. He replied, “I want you to have it because you are close to Baba.”

That day, in the evening, I went to Brindavan carrying the photograph in a manila envelope. I was hiding it until I got an opportunity to be alone with Baba, so that I could explain how I got it and then give it to him, but my plan was spoiled as soon as I entered the room, because Baba saw the envelope I was trying to hide and asked, ***“What is that envelope in your hand?”***

I had to part with it and tell him the whole story. He pulled the photograph from the envelope, looked at it, put it back into the envelope, pushed the envelope under the sofa seat, and said, ***“Why do you need a photograph, when the real one is in front of you?”***

I was simply thrilled and stunned, hearing those words. **That was one of the many instances when he opened the divine camera shutter for a fraction of a second and gave me a glimpse of his divinity.**

I have seen the same picture in the homes of many devotees of Baba. In fact, the picture accompanying this article is a copy of

the picture that adorns the altar in the home of a Sai devotee family in Detroit, Michigan. They graciously sent me a copy.

Why Did Swami Ask Us to Lodge the Lord’s Feet in Our Hearts?

There are many stories about the Lord’s feet, and here are a few examples. **It is useful to remember that Swami’s exit from the physical form took place on Easter Sunday (April 24, 2011).**

One can find in the Bible many instances where the sacredness of the Lord’s feet is mentioned. For example, Jesus decided to have a Passover meal for the last time (known as The Last Supper) with his disciples, because he knew that his sojourn on earth was coming to an end soon. Suddenly, he got up from the meal, tied a towel around his waist, poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel. (John 13:5)

At another place in the Bible one finds the following story: Jesus appears to the disciples (after resurrection), and to those who were doubtful, he said, *“Look at my hands and feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”* (Luke 24:39) I believe this particular statement is pregnant with meaning about the difference between the “Holy Ghost” and an ordinary ghost!

In the epic Bhagavatam, a sacred book for Hindus containing stories of the Lord’s various incarnations as Avatars, the divine power of the Lord’s feet is demonstrated by Vamana, reputedly the first fully human

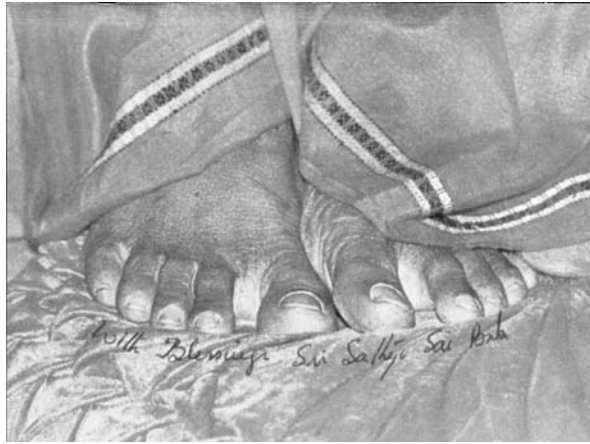
Avatar, who descended from the Godhead in the Treta Yuga with the specific mission of dealing with the remnants of a demonic race.

In his physical form he was a dwarf. Vamana sought to deal with Emperor Bali, who was well-known for his altruism and generosity. Bali was the grandson of Prahlada, a staunch devotee of Lord Narayana. Unfortunately, Prahlada's father, Hiranyakasipu (a king in his own right in the lineage of the demonic race), had hated Lord Narayana.

The Godhead had come at that time in the form of Narasimha, as half-lion and half-human, and killed Hiranyakasipu. Thereafter, simply because Emperor Bali had been born in the lineage of Hiranyakasipu, Lord Narayana ostensibly came down to root out the "last vestiges" of the demonic race. Yet ages later he would come again in the form of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna and deal with more demon kings, such as Ravana and Balasura.

Anyway, Emperor Bali was so generous of character that he typically gave away anything anybody asked for. Vamana approached him in the guise of a Brahmin and asked Bali for three paces of land. Bali knew who the Brahmin was. He considered Vamana's

request so trivial that he agreed to give away the three feet of land without any hesitation. Occupying the entire universe with two steps, Vamana asked Bali as to where he should place his third step. Bali offered his head and asked Vamana to place his third step on it. Vamana placed the third step on Bali's head and sent him to the netherworld.



In the South Indian state of Kerala, this event is celebrated annually as the festival of Onam, and Swami observed the Onam festival at Prasanthi Nilayam every year. Being short like Vamana, Swami used to

remind people not to underestimate him on account of his small physical size.

Another story about the power of the Lord's feet is from the epic Ramayana (the story of Lord Sri Rama, Avatar of the Treta Yuga). When Sri Rama's wife Sita became lost in the forest due to a demoness's tricks, Lord Rama questioned his own brother, Lakshmana (because Lakshmana was supposed to have stood guard, protecting Sita in the hermitage):

"Why did you leave your station at the whim of the moment, allowing the kidnapper (the demon king, Ravana) to abduct

Sita? How did her face look when she scolded you and asked you to rush to the spot where I was allegedly lying dead, because of the tricks played by the demoness, Maricha?”

It seems as if Lakshmana replied,

“Brother, you are asking the most difficult questions. You know very well I have never seen the face of my sister-in-law. I have always looked at her feet and kept them in my spiritual heart and worshiped them, because she is your wife, my Lord.”

The above stories indicate the power of the Lord’s feet. That is why Swami asked us to keep the Lord’s feet in our spiritual hearts and worship them.

Swami’s Definition of Devotion

At age 21, in a letter to his eldest brother, Seshama-raju, Swami wrote thus:

*I have a **task**: to foster all mankind and ensure for all of them lives full of ananda (bliss); I have a **vow**: to lead all who stray away from the straight path, again into goodness and save them; I am attached to a **work** that I love: namely, to remove the sufferings of the poor and grant them what they lack. I have a reason to be **proud**, for I rescue all who worship and adore me, aright. I have my definition of the **devotion** I expect, and that is that those devoted to me must treat joy and grief, gain and loss, with equal fortitude. And finally, I will never give up those who attach themselves to me.*

We must remember, at least from now on, Swami’s definition of the devotion he

expects, and grieve not the loss of his physical presence but grieve for failing to deliver the goods that he expects from us.

In this regard, I have always cringed when I read in his discourses that he considered us as part-time devotees and not true devotees—all the way till the end of his physical sojourn on earth!

I always ask myself: “Did I treat joy and grief, and gain and loss, with equal fortitude?” During my life so far (this body is 78 years old), I lost a two-and-a-half-year-old son in a drowning accident, two wives, both parents, one brother, two sisters, and two brothers-in-law. No doubt I had many joyful moments when they were alive and felt sad when they left. But, I can say with confidence and humility that I have treated joy and grief thus far with equal fortitude and moved on with my life, remembering and celebrating my years with them. **Now I am ready to do the same with the loss of the physical body of Swami.**

Of course, I am fully aware of the commonality and difference between my body-related family members and Swami. The commonality is that both embodied the immortal soul (*Atman*). The difference is that my family members were born (like everybody else in the world) as a result of biological intervention and karma, but Swami was born (like Jesus, Sri Rama, and Sri Krishna) as a result of divine intervention. Being immortal Brahman, his birth was entirely by his own choice. And, as he has repeated exhaustively for the past eight decades, man’s *Atman* is seamlessly

connected to Brahman; therefore, man must not fritter away the precious gift of divine Atman by drowning himself in the ocean of *samsara*.

At various stages, Swami made profound pronouncements, and I believe we should ruminate on those in order to get over the loss of his physical body and celebrate his life with us. In what follows, I give a sample set of his pronouncements.

Announcement of His Mission

At age 42, while announcing his mission in a discourse, Swami made several pronouncements. The most important to remember are:

Avatars like Rama and Krishna had to kill one or more individuals who could be identified as enemies of the righteous way of life, and thus restore the practice of virtues. But now there is no one fully good, and so who deserves the protection of God? All are tainted by wickedness, so who will survive if the Avatar decides to uproot them? Therefore, I have come to correct their intelligence by various means. . . . These “yogic” powers you observe in me are just in the nature of an Avatar; the creation of things with the intent of protecting and giving joy is spontaneous and lasting. Creation, preservation, and dissolution can be accomplished only by the Almighty, no one else.

—Reproduced at <http://www.saidarshan.org/baba/docs/d681123.html>

Creator of the Universe

At age 44, Baba wrote for a devotee the following lines on a scrap of paper, declaring that He is the “Creator” of the manifest worlds:

I only separated Myself from Myself so that I can love Myself. When I love Myself, I love you. When you love yourselves, you love Me. We are One. There is no one to know who I am till I created this world at My pleasure, with one WORD. Immediately mountains rose up. Immediately rivers started running. Earth below and sky over its head, oceans, seas, lands and watersheds, sun, moon, and the desert sands sprang up from nowhere to prove My existence. Came all forms of beings, mankind, beasts and birds flying, speaking, hearing, and all powers are bestowed upon them under My orders. The first place was granted to mankind, and My knowledge was placed in (his) mind. Come one, come all; let us not be ungrateful called. Let us faithfully serve (SAI) Him and love Him, love Him, love Him.

The Truth Teacher

At age 44, during a discourse on Mahashivaratri day (a Hindu festival in honor of Lord Shiva) 1970, he described himself as follows:

I am neither man, nor God, nor angel; I am neither priest nor warrior, nor trader, nor laborer; I am neither bachelor, nor householder, nor renunciant; I am verily the Teacher of Truth—Truth, Auspiciousness, Beauty!

Further, immediately after Swami revealed his true identity on October 20, 1940, and declared that his mission is to reestablish *Sanathana Dharma*, the path of righteous living; he made clear that he did not come to found a new religion, sect, or doctrine. Describing himself as “Teacher of Truth,” he said:

I have not come to change your chosen path or create another religion. If you are a Christian, be a good Christian; if you are a Muslim, be a good Muslim, and so on, so forth. Stick to the faith or religion you have chosen, and you will reach the same God.

Thus, he reiterated the oneness of GOD, despite the man-made religious divisions, and one of his signature slogans is:

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

Swami's Divine Resumé

In one of his discourses, Swami made public his divine resumé, as given below.

If there is no birth and death, how can I spend my time? . . . I am the charioteer guiding every being to the goal . . . I am Shiva-Shakti . . . I am Sanathana Sarathi (the Eternal Charioteer) . . . I shall sing a Bhagavad Gita designed for each one of you . . . I am the embodiment of all forms that men have imposed on the Godhead in order to cherish them in their hearts. . . I have no name; all names are mine . . . I shall respond to whatever name you know me by . . . I have no place that you can identify as mine;

all places are mine. . . . I am the propeller in every heart. . . . My word must prevail. . . . Everything is my leela (divine sport). . . . Every leela of mine has significance. . . . I am the witness of time and space. When you love yourself, you are loving me . . . you cannot run away from me, denying me or decrying me . . . I have to churn the mind of man and cleanse it . . . I am God; you too are God.

Each one of us must ask, “**Did I allow Swami to churn my mind and cleanse it during his sojourn on earth?**” If the answer is “no,” it is best to start now, so as to reach him in his universal state as Pristine Cosmic Consciousness Energy.

Reality of Swami Appearing in Dreams

Dreams relating to God are real, says Baba. I have had many dreams of Swami validating this statement. There is a profound difference between our desire to have Baba in our dreams and his will or resolve (*sankalpa*) to appear in our dreams. Here is an example from my experience. One day I was sitting on the verandah. Swami came out of his residence and stood before the gentleman seated next to me. The conversation between them went on like this:

Gentleman: Baba, people say you come in their dreams. I have been trying hard to have you come in my dreams, without success. Why?

Baba: *What is the use of you making efforts to have me in your dreams? I should decide to come.*

This exchange indicates that when the Divine decides to appear in a person's dream, the person could enter into a different state of consciousness than in a normal dream!

Here are the details of a dream I had in the early hours of Monday, March 28, 2011. It was a two-hour dream (12 midnight – 2 am), with no words but with a silent exchange of information, as I used to experience while sitting with Swami during the 1980s. In the dream, Swami appeared alternating between two physical states—one a physically disabled state and the other an effulgent and pervasive state. In the physically disabled state, he was in a dark and dingy place resembling the *sanctum sanctorum* of a temple. In the effulgent state, he was enveloping the entire cosmos. I know for sure that the latter state is his true Cosmic Self.

In light of the dream, the information conveyed by my daughter in the evening that the doctors had placed a “pacemaker” in his body didn't surprise me at all. I took it as a confirmation that the dream was real and that he was alerting me to what was coming. A similar dream had alerted me a few years earlier, before he had the hip fracture. I have said in a few Sai gatherings that the fractured HIP of Swami means to me “fractured Humanity In Peril.”

The scene where Swami appeared to be, in a dark and dingy place resembling the *sanctum sanctorum* of a temple, reminded me of Adi Shankara's description of how we treat God out of ignorance:

My God, I have called you, the Nameless, by various names! I have offered you flowers, which are but your creation! To

facilitate circumambulation around you, I have built a temple to imprison you, the Omnipresent One! Above all, hymns are being uttered in praise of you, by me who am a manifestation of you!

I wrote a four-page letter to Swami on March 31, 2011, after hearing about his hospitalization, because I felt intuitively that he had decided to exit. I do not know whether that letter reached him physically, but I know he knew its contents, because he prompted me to write it.

Avatar's Choice of Mode of Exit

In principle, an enlightened soul can choose the mode of exit from the body it occupies. Some exit like the air in a balloon, and others exit after allowing the body to undergo some kind of illness. The exit of Paramahansa Yogananda, founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, based in Los Angeles, California, can be cited as an example of the first category. In the 1993 twelfth edition of his popular book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, his exit is described thus:

Paramahansa Yogananda entered *mahasamadhi* (a yogi's final, conscious exit from the body) in Los Angeles, California, on March 7, 1952, after concluding his speech at a banquet held in honor of H.E. Binay R. Sen, Ambassador of India.

Examples under the second category include: the injury caused by an arrow to Sri Krishna's foot; the crucifixion of Jesus; the cancerous wound on Ramana Maharishi's thigh; the respiratory problem of Shirdi

Sai Baba; and Sathya Sai Baba's cardio-respiratory ordeal in the intensive care unit of the super-specialty hospital at Prasanthi Nilayam.

There is no doubt that to the respective devotees, their spiritual mentor's exit is a grievous and painful loss. But, the exit of Sathya Sai Baba in "prime time" (i.e., the glorious age of science and technology) raises some interesting questions. There is documented evidence that he cured his body's illnesses previously (such as a bout of paralysis in the 1960s) without any medical intervention. But, in the case of his hip fracture a few years ago and now for his heart problem, he allowed intensive medical intervention.

Why did he do so? That is a billion dollar question. I believe the doctors, through their intervention, have demonstrated the validity of the quantum world's dictum that "the observer disturbs the observed."

I am sure Swami, in his compassion for the concerns of the doctors (and his devotees), allowed them to interfere. In the process, I believe he added fuel to the fires of suspicion

that he is not what he claimed to be. Thus, as he did while in the form, he left leaving the hardcore believers believing, the believers who sit on the fence now wondering, and the hardcore skeptics doubting as usual! What a mystery! Or what a cosmic drama!

Finally, I mention an incident to bring home the point (of my conviction) that we should celebrate Swami's life with us. I carried out research on "holography" in the area of optics for a number of years. Dennis Gabor invented holography, and for it he was awarded a Nobel Prize in the 1970s. A conference was held in his honor when he passed away. In his introductory remarks, the chairman of the conference said: "We have gathered here not to mourn his passing but to celebrate his life."

I feel the same way about Swami's passing, and I hope people who love him will feel the same way!

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

—Sastry V Pappu
Wichita, Kansas



For establishing oneself in the contemplation of the Omnipresent Lord, there are no limitations of time or space. There is no such thing as a special time or a holy place. Wherever the mind revels in the contemplation of the Divine, that becomes the holy place. Whenever the mind meditates on the Lord, that becomes the most auspicious moment. The world can achieve prosperity through disciplined souls whose hearts are pure and who represent the salt of the earth. Everyone, from this very moment, should pray for the advent of such holy souls, try to deserve the blessings of the great, endeavor to forget one's sufferings, and promote the welfare of the world.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Prema Vahini, "The Qualities a Sadhaka Should Cultivate")

Moving Forward

Our Life Is His Message

IT'S BEEN SEVERAL MONTHS since our beloved Swami left his mortal coil. We are all transitioning from the “form”-Swami era to the formless-SAI (Sai And I) era. Some of us are forced to undertake the pilgrimage instantaneously from the small *i* to the universal *I*.

Most of us have had the experience of losing a close relative or friend, and we eventually moved on. Nonetheless, our beloved Swami has been the mother, father, friend, and guru (spiritual teacher), and now, having lost all this simultaneously, how can we move on beyond this unexpected and unprepared-for event. But there is a significant exception in this case: Sai is God, and for the past seven decades, in almost every discourse, our beloved Swami has described God's attributes. Many thanks to the International Sai Organization for encouraging and making available to us, from early 2010, to read and discuss, certain salient discourses on “God Is.” Both Sai and common sense emphasize that deeper understanding of the situation is better than mere adjustment to it, because the latter is temporary and shaky. So, let's further examine, from both worldly and spiritual

perspectives, any possible resistance in accepting his physical exit.

His physical loss may be interpreted as making him inaccessible to us, but if we split the word *in-accessible* as *in* and *accessible*, perhaps we can view our current circumstance as having even more access to him than we believed previously—solely depending on how we choose to view it. The inward vision is everlasting, whereas for physical darshan, assuming he were in form, we have to go to Parthi, get various permissions, starting with the security gate and continuing on with accommodations, seating, and so on. In an inspiring article entitled “Less Is More” (*Sathya Sai Newsletter USA*, Jan/Feb 2004), Jack Scher aptly shared the freedom he had enjoyed by *not* queuing up for entering the *mandir* (temple).

There is now more than enough evidence that our beloved Swami has willed his bodily exit from the physical world. Even so, let's briefly recall some of his consistent and constant assurances, declarations, and proclamations:

The acts of Sai are all selfless, sacred, and beneficial. (SSS 13:21, “Expand the Heart,” Aug 1, 1976)

Whatever Sai does, he does out of compassion and for our good only. He does everything the way he deems most appropriate.

I and you are not distinct entities; you are I, and I am you. I am the current that flows into every bulb and illumines it. Those who see me as separate are seeing falsehood. I am in your hearts; you are in mine. Don't be misled into doubt and distress. Dogs may bark and jackals howl, but truth moves majestically forward. (SSS 11:43, "Teach by Example," July 20, 1972)

Whatever Sai does, whatever Sai thinks, whatever Sai says, whatever Sai observes—it is all for your sake, not for Sai's sake. My only desire is your joy, ananda. Your ananda is my ananda. I have no ananda apart from yours. (SSS 15:55, "Birthday Gift," November 23, 1982)

Also, in 2003, Swami, referring to his hip fracture, said that he fell so that we may rise. At the age of 14, in a communication now known as his "Avataric mission statement," he said:

I have my own definition of devotion: those who are devoted to me should take pain and pleasure, gain and loss, in equal measure.

Following this, he advised and cajoled devotees, in private interviews and in discourses, with the two-word mantra, **Be happy**.

From Sri Sathya Sai Baba's seven-volume biography (*Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram* series) and numerous other books, we know that, during his life, countless people both

in India and abroad experienced visions, dreams, miraculous materializations, and instantaneous appearances of Baba, in multiple places—independent of his physical existence in India or even on Earth, as such occurrences continue even now.

Furthermore, this experiential evidence is augmented by Shirdi Sai's assurance to his devotee, Damu Anna: "Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, I am always with you. My bones from my *samadhi* will protect you."

Likewise, in Dwapara Yuga (a previous age), Lord Krishna assured his devotee, Uddhava, "I cannot separate myself from those who love me."

In the word *formless*, the last four letters are *less*. In the spirit of the above-referenced article, "Less Is More," the inevitable event of leaving the physical body may be considered as a blessing in disguise and is really "more," for the following reasons. In spiritual parlance, both birth and death are a blessing. But the latter becomes a burden due to one's worldly attachments and old-age ailments.

Since our beloved Swami left his physical body on Holy Easter Sunday, some people feel that we are the ones being resurrected. Our world is going through various disasters, and some people feel that Sai has taken away the bad karma, leaving only His grace and blessing to prevail. Some of us will now pursue meditative disciplines (*sadhanas*) with more intensity and enthusiasm.

Our beloved Swami himself instructed us how to bridge the gap between the form and the formless God: concentration (on the divine form), contemplation (bring the form to your heart), and meditation (keep it there all the time). So, from our current stage of introduction to and interaction with the Sathya Sai movement, it is time to move on to introspection and immersion.

Let me share some practical reflections posted by a sincere follower last April:

A few days ago, as I lay in bed contemplating on Swami's health, I had the thought that if Swami was going to leave his body, he would do it on Easter. I would not say that this was a divine message or premonition, but merely borne of the belief that our dear Lord would not leave us physically without giving us one last powerful message—and a way to cope.

It is Easter, the day when Christians celebrate Jesus's resurrection and message for all that the SPIRIT is God—not the body.

I heard the news rather late. This was befitting, because I had come to Swami rather late. I wrote a letter:

"Swami, I wish that I had been a better devotee. I was trying and had plans to try harder, but I waited; I wanted to bring my degree to you. You saved my life, but I waited. I should have kept my altar better; I should have written more letters. Maybe I should have meditated more and taken better care of my body, but I waited.

I thought, Swami, what can I do now? The answer echoed loudly in my ears: *NOT WAIT!*

Swami . . . I heard this message as recently as last year, and yet I thought that I had more time.

Jesus was on earth for a much shorter span, yet his message spread around the world because his disciples, with love in their hearts and fire in their bellies, quickly spread his message through their thoughts, words, and deeds, as far as they possibly could. But I am not writing to you to speak of Jesus. As I sat in Mass weeping through the hymns and trying to understand the events in my own way, I had another thought: if Swami has left his body, where will he go? The message again seemed simple and clear: he will install himself in every heart that is open to him—more prominently than he already has. God has only left the bodily plane when we do not offer him ours. The physical existence of God on earth is now our yoke to bear.

I know that many of you have had many more years and experiences with Swami's physical form and that this makes it harder for you to accept that his body is no longer with us. I have learned much from your single-pointed, ardent devotion and have yearned to be as strong in my faith. My love and my thoughts are with you.

This is my humble offering. It is all I have.

—Herb Hickey, Weymouth MA

Continued on page 26 . . .

May I Join?

*My granddaughter was with me for a long stay;
She had come for some fun and summer play.*

*Soon it was time for her to go to bed.
She took my large hand in her fingers and said . . .*

*“I know your Baba has gone away;
I think you really wanted him to stay.*

*His physical form is hard not to desire.
His time on earth had to expire.*

*He gave all, no matter the cost.
He left a map of life, so we would never be lost.*

*By example, he showed what roads to travel;
He taught us the secrets of life and how they unravel.*

*Name and form cause ‘belonging to me.’
They keep us attached to what we see.*

*The senses are pals with the mad monkey mind.
Their job is to keep us uneasy all the time.*

*Swami left a copy of himself in us each.
To activate Him, we just have to reach*

*And find the best we have to give;
To see Him in all as we live.*





*Kindness, good thoughts, sweet deeds done each day.
In truth 'tis Him showing the correct way.*

*Now is the time to grasp and keep the knowing.
Swami lives in all things, and He will continue growing.*

*So, dear Grannie, do not wish Him here.
He is never gone. He is always so near.*

*Space, time, moon and sand;
All things are held in His hand!"*

*I opened my eyes, her hand still held my fingers tight.
I remembered Baba with me all through the night.*

*I said to myself as I lay very still.
Nothing is out of order; all is His will.*

*In a tree, goat, fish, or bee,
The form is different, but each is He.*

*So, I thought, as again I closed my eyes,
He sent the child to undo the ties.*

*I bound Swami to a body that was small.
Smiling, I know He never left us at all!*

*As I peered into Grand Daughter's knowing face,
I wondered, could I join "Bal Vikas"* at this late date?*

—J F Ziegler
Sedona, Arizona

** Bal Vikas: literally, "blossoming of the child"*



Our Mission

If we don't move on but succumb only to grief or maintain the same pace of doing, "at our convenience," without feeling an urgency of duty, I do believe we give injustice to Sai's message and mission and demonstrate a lack of faith, trust, and confidence. We should hence move forward in this new era—our **Sai-And-I** mission era—with more rigor and vigor than usual. It is required now, because we all know how a brief lapse, if any, tends to multiply itself, with resulting repercussions in kind. Both Shirdi Sai and Sathya Sai noted that there should be some urgency in spiritual matters.

Sai affirmed, "**Your life is my message.**" We brand ourselves as Sai devotees. We may not assert and manifest the inherent divinity that our beloved Swami often proclaims that we are, but **let us at least live out the remainder of our lives by exemplifying true characteristics of a Sai devotee: devotion, integrity, punctuality, and selfless service in silence.**

I have been telling you one truth always: your master is your heart, where God resides. God is in you, with you, above you, around you, behind you. All of you are divine in reality; differences in name and form are but temporary and external. Carry out your highest duty to yourselves. (SSS 13:21, "Expand the Heart," Aug 1, 1976)

From time to time, our beloved Swami addressed the negative reactions of some people:

Some bay at stars, but the stars are unmoved. You should not be perturbed by this empty noise; carry on your mission of service as now, with your usual enthusiasm. (SSS 13:21, "Expand the Heart," Aug 1, 1976)

Live in the light of the truth. Unite—in the One. That is your mission, your destiny. (SSS 15:35, "Awake! Arise!" Nov 23, 1981)

Come forward, all of you, determined to practice in daily living the ideals laid before you. Vow among yourselves to follow the ideals and the duties that have been laid down and devote yourselves to the (Sai) organization and its programs. Having come to this place and availed yourselves of this opportunity, treasure in your hearts the things you have seen and heard, and resolve to plunge into practicing them. Your resolution and your practice must happen simultaneously. (SSS 15:55, "Birthday Gift," Nov 23, 1982)

Treat everyone as the embodiment of divinity. Love is your mission of life. (Discourse titled "Buddha and His Gospel of Love," May 21, 2000)

—Murthy S Cheruvu
Hopewell Junction, New York



You Are My Treasure; I Walk With You

THE NAMELESS AND FORMLESS often has to assume name and form and come before humanity with limitations imposed by Its own will, so that It may be loved, respected, worshiped, listened to, and followed, in order that the purpose of humanity be fulfilled. Do not seek to measure or evaluate me. I am beyond your understanding.

- Wherever you are, you can make that place a Prasanthi Nilayam. Become shares in my history. Do not get far from me. You have acquired nearness through the accumulated good fortune of many births. . . . Be free from silly delusions and doubts; be free from tawdry desires, and I shall take you into me.

- You can hear my footsteps, for I walk with you, behind you, beside you. When you cry out in agony, don't you hear my heart's plaint? Have you become so stony-hearted? My ear will be there to listen. Ask that I should protect you like the apple of the eye. My eye will be there to watch over you and guard you. I answer to whatever name you use; I respond to whatever request you make with a pure heart and a sanctified motive. I take delight in being with you, beside you, around you.

- Treat me not as one afar but as very close to you. Insist, demand, claim grace from me. Do not praise, extol, or cringe. Bring your heart to me and win my heart. Not one of you is a stranger to me. . . . Bring your promise to me, and I shall give you my promise. But first see that your promise is genuine, sincere; see that your heart is pure. That is enough.

- You are my treasure, even if you deny me. I am your treasure, even if you say "no." I shall be affectionate to you and attach myself to you. I shall take all trouble to keep my property safe in my custody, that is to say, in the custody of the Lord, by whichever name you may be calling on him. All the powers I have are for you. I am just the storekeeper, keeping them ready to be given to you whenever you ask for them. My divine love shall be given, even if you do not ask, for it is your right to share in it. Remember, I am not influenced by anybody. There is not one who can change my course to the slightest extent. I am Master over all.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Excerpts from *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol 3, from
Selected Passages from the Teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, compiled by Frances Reeves,
(Tustin, California: Sathya Sai Baba Society, 1993), "On His Mission"

Institute of Sathya Sai Education–USA (ISSE-USA)

His Truth, His Work Is Marching On!

*You are pupils too; you will learn the lessons of equality,
equanimity, and selfless love while acting as teachers.*

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 14:03, June 6, 1978)

IN LATE JUNE AND EARLY JULY, 2011, twenty-eight devotees from eight USA regions recently completed Course One of a three-segment Standard Diploma Course offered by the Institute of Sathya Sai Education-USA (ISSE-USA). Held over eight days at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and taught by a highly qualified and diverse group of faculty facilitators, those attending this historic, first-ever event generally described their experience as instructive and transformative.

While the Institute diploma course will eventually be open to all, those attending this first course included only Institute Associates and other Sathya Sai Baba devotees who are educational professionals, certificated public school teachers, and/or currently working in SSEHV community projects. This kept the numbers within practical limits for this initial “flight test” and for small group work and other activities.

The topics addressed included The Philosophy and Pedagogy of Sathya Sai Educare, The Core Tenets of Sathya Sai Education, The Teacher as Exemplar of the Human Values, The Integral Relationship of the Human Personality and Human Values,

The Five Human Values from the Perspective of the Major Religions, The Five Teaching Techniques, Direct and Indirect Curricular Models, How to Establish an Environment and Culture of Love, and others.

Established in late 2009 as an outgrowth of the Sathya Sai EHV Foundation (USA), the ISSE-USA is part of a worldwide network of Sai Institutes charged with the promulgation and oversight of Sathya Sai Schools and all Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) programs and projects in their respective national and/or regional areas.

All Institutes of Sathya Sai Education operate under the auspices of the Education Committee of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation (SSSWF), which is chaired by Prasanthi Council member Mr. Kalyan Ray.

The ISSE-USA Board of Directors is composed of Drs Michael Goldstein, Narendra Reddy, William Harvey, Hymon Johnson, and attorney Michael Dave. ISSE-USA Advisors include Bea Flaig, Berniece Mead, and Bettina Biggart.

The Standing Committees and their respective chairs are: Diploma Course Planning and Oversight, Ronne Marantz; Educational Resources, Megan Bennett and Wendy Ward-Hoffer; Sathya Sai EHV Community Programs,

Doris Hampton; Sathya Sai EHV Partnership Schools, Kalika Grana; and Sathya Sai School Development, Tom Scovill. A website for ISSE-USA is being designed and will be managed by Alejandro Grana, current Region 10 president. A Research and Publications Committee will soon be activated.

We are governed by a set of Policies and Guidelines similar to those approved for all Sai Institutes. The SSSWF Guidelines, upon which our guidelines were designed, can be accessed on the home page of *sathyasai.org* under the section titled “Special Activities.”

Consistent with all Sai-inspired efforts and activities, our first and most resolute goal as educators must be self-transformation. Self-transformation reflects the “First BE, then do...” attitude of life; it broadens our vision, re-positions and empowers us, and refines us in ways that make our service to self and society more incisive, effective, and enduring.

Other priorities at this still-early stage of our development include:

- Building a national cadre of certified educational professionals, to assist in promulgating Bhagavan Baba’s teachings on Sathya Sai Educare and Education among the general public, and who can qualify to teach and assist in Sathya Sai Schools and develop SSEHV community programs;
- Developing resource materials, media, and a range of publications that support our mission and those who complete Institute courses;

- Increasing the number of Young Adult professionals, both within our official ISSE-USA ranks and as partners in Sathya Sai EHV activities in schools and communities;
- Encouraging all—through our own programmatic and personal example—to live a WATCHful life characterized by the universal human values of Truth, Right Action, Peace, Love, and Nonviolence, and;
- Establishing a fully independent Sathya Sai School.

Sathya Sai Educare and Sathya Sai Education in Human Values are among the great and durable legacies the Poorna Avatar has provided to mankind. Given their integrated spiritual/secular nature and their unique and unifying characteristics—such as teacher as exemplar, unity of faiths, love is divinity, ceiling on desires, the end of education is character, and more—it is not so simple as merely providing training or in-service instruction in the traditional sense.

The process of spiritualizing and humanizing education—especially in the United States—requires compassionate understanding, deep dedication, unflagging courage, and applied creativity. It also takes time to digest the blend of spiritual and secular instruction that is provided across the entire Diploma Course and infuse it into one’s own personal and professional life.

Bhagavan Baba instructs that effective communication and deep understanding must precede any task of viable and lasting adjustment. Thus it follows that the mission of the ISSE-USA is strategic and long-term, with the overriding goal of providing a successful counterbalance of Truth to the largely superficial efforts we see in most areas of educational reform today. This explains the ambitious depth—and length—of this Diploma Course, compared with any of the educational endeavors we have pursued in the past.

Readers with interest in the course are encouraged to view the Institute Guidelines

and Syllabus, which are linked to the home page of the International Sai Organization website at sathyasai.org, under Special Activities. These documents describe the Institute's objectives and the general content of the topics to be undertaken in all three segments of the Standard Diploma Course. A matrix on page 3 of the Syllabus describes the requirements associated with each segment and the qualifications that ensue with the completion of each segment of the Course.

Some have recently contacted us about starting Sathya Sai EHV programs in their local areas, and we are considering their proposals in the spirit of the Sai



*ISSE-USA Diploma Course One Participants, University of California, Santa Barbara, June 24–July 2, 2011.**

Practice should always match precept. Whatever you teach should be reflected in your practice. You should personally experience, understand, and have conviction in what you teach. Before you begin to teach a lesson, you yourself must have digested it. Your teaching should come out of the crucible of your experience.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (*Spiritual Sadhana* 1978, p 87)

Organization. Because the ISSE-USA is the official vehicle designated to extend Sai's educational mission to the nation, we kindly encourage all who wish to initiate programs and projects to contact us. Until our soon-to-be-launched ISSE-USA website is up and running, inquiries may be sent to: ISSE-USA@cox.net.

We will provide information regarding upcoming course offerings and Institute activities through our website and other U.S. Sai Organization channels.

Our Beloved Lord Sai has indicated that the beginning stages of this blessed service will proceed slowly and deliberately. Yet, as time goes by, He himself will open doors and quicken the dissemination of his educational message. With His grace and the sincere and disciplined cooperation of devotees nationwide, the ISSE-USA will certainly achieve the task for which it was established!

—**Hymon T. Johnson, MBA, Ed.D**
Director, ISSE-USA



Q*uality and not quantity should be the goal.*

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba** (SSS 10:05, Mar 2, 1970)

*Photo on p 36: *Standing from left to right:* **Kanwal Bahri**, Region 2, working in a SSEHV Community Program; **Sumi Chakraverty**, Region 4, ISSE-USA Associate, SSEHV Community Progs Committee (Cte) member; **Creta Schiermann**, Region 5, certificated teacher, Associate, Diploma Course Planning & Oversight Cte member; **Elizabeth Wu**, Region 8, working in a SSEHV Community Program; **Gopika Womack-Freeman**, Region 8, certificated teacher, Associate, SSEHV Community Programs Cte member; **Anandamayi Whitaker**, Region 8, teacher, working in a SSEHV Community Program; **Patricia Wing**, Region 8, retired nurse, Educational Resources Cte; **Ramavidya Jones**, Region 8, working in a SSEHV Community Program; **Bettina Biggart**, Region 3, ISSE-USA Advisor; **Ronne Marantz**, Region 2, Associate, Diploma Course Planning & Oversight Cte chair; **Yamini Bala**, Region 5, YA, certificated teacher, working with our SSEHV Community Progs Cte; **Tom Scovill**, Region 7, retired district administration, Associate, Sathya Sai School Development Cte chair; **Wayner Crowder**, Region 3, Associate, Website Committee member; **Mary Keane**, Region 8, Associate, Educational Resources Cte member; **Doris Hampton**, Region 4, Associate, SSEHV Community Progs Cte chair; **Cheruvu Murthy**, Region 1, Associate, SSEHV Community Programs Cte member, & coordinates a SSEHV Community Program.

Kneeling from left to right: **Beth Clark**, Region 2, working on a SSEHV Community Program; **April Skrobiza**, Region 8, certificated teacher, Educational Resources Cte member; **Hymon Johnson**, Region 8, ISSE-USA director, professor emeritus still teaching; **Wendy Ward-Hoffer**, Region 9, certificated teacher, Associate, Educational Resources Cte co-chair; **Bea Flaig**, Region 9, ISSE-USA Advisor; **Kathleen Salzano**, Region 8, certificated teacher, owner of a nonprofit educational consulting/training firm; **Kalika Grana**, Region 10, certificated teacher, Associate, SSEHV Partnership Schools Cte chair; **Rosa Lina Muñoz Medina**, Region 2, initiating SSEHV Community Program for Spanish speakers; **Kay Scovill**, Region 7, Associate, Diploma Course Planning & Oversight Cte member; **Megan Bennett**, Region 8, certificated teacher, ISSE-USA Associate, Educational Resources Cte co-chair. *Seated:* **John Johnson**, Region 9, university professor of special education, Associate, Diploma Course Planning & Oversight Cte member. *Not pictured:* **Berniece Mead**, Region 8, ISSE-USA Advisor, National SSE Coordinator.

Divine Dream

The Wish-Fulfilling Sai

Monday morning, May 17, 2011.

I HAD JUST AWAKENED. I was working out of town and, expecting that there might be challenges during the week, had prayed for wisdom and strength. Upon arrival in my small hotel room/office the day before, I had first set up His altar (hoping no one would mind His little pictures, candle, incense, and fresh flowers), knowing, of course, that the true altar is in my heart, and is always there.

I woke up softly, smiling, warm, and so very happy. Then I realized why! I had just had the most beautiful experience in all the universe—a Sai dream, in which I had spent time with my Beloved Lord, experienced Him as a part of me, touching me, smelling His jasmine, *vibhuti*-soft hair, his powerful yet so preciously sweet and soft vibrations merging into my soul.

I tried to stay in that realm, to remember all that had just happened—beyond the tears of joy—to re-live it and keep it in my memory always. But I had a busy day planned . . . so I tried to capture it as quickly as possible. This was the experience:

I was cleaning, mopping (. . . always seem to be mopping in my dreams!), and there was a long banquet hall table that went for miles. Our Beloved Lord was at the end of the table, and I watched Him, sharing the delight of the thousands of people dining at the table.

They were eating the foods they loved, so happy with each other; at the same time, sweet, little child angels kept manifesting from above the table, floating in the clouds and sky. As the little angels sweetly poured down from the sky above, they floated above each person and lovingly gave each one gifts. The people were handed jewelry, rings (green and diamond), necklaces, healthy smiling relatives, little houses, new cars, bundles of gold and money, newborn children, spouses not sick anymore, grandchildren—all that they wanted!

They were all just so delighted, like little children getting gifts on a Christmas morning. It was so beautiful to watch them and share their joy! Swami beckoned me to come, but I did not feel worthy to join them—and besides, I had so much mopping to do!

. . . I let Him
dissolve with me into
ONE, holding Him tightly,
in pure heaven, as I had
always wanted to ! . . .

All of a sudden, the entire banquet table moved over to me, and I was at the head of the table with Him, but He merged into my left side. I could feel His incredible compassion, mercy, and magnificent LOVE, His compassion and sweetness, pouring into everyone, as if WE were now a team, doing it together.

Oh, it was so powerful and magical. I had no pain in my body, no worries; I was strong, with all the wisdom in the universe as I poured out love to all. More and more love was multiplying in me to give. It kept flowing, and my joy was so strong, I couldn't keep it from expanding! Oh, and the softness of His fine hair, the fragrant beautiful jasmine, the softness of his skin. He became clearer and more transparent as I let Him dissolve with me into ONE, holding Him tightly, in pure heaven, as I had always wanted to!

Soon people started whining to Him, "Why will you not join us and let us spend time with you, and be with us like you are giving all this to her?"

And He said, "I am giving you each just what you want. She wants only to merge with me, to have me always be a part of her, to do my work as if we were ONE. She wants it so badly that I must give it to her. It makes her so happy. It is now OUR work."

Now that our Beloved no longer has an earthly form, He has ours to use for his work, to share His love through us, around us, to those we work with, serve, and interact with—all whom He brings to us for these gifts. As the Bible says, "For we are His workmanship, created . . . for good works, which God hath before ordained . . ." (Ephesians 2:10) And our Beloved Swami tells us to *Go about as my examples. . . Your work is my work.*

My heart is so full! How are we just so lucky?

—A Devotee from Southern California

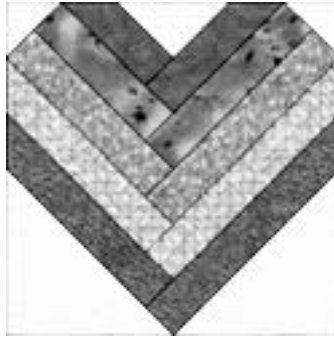
Quilting Marathon Yields Yards of Comfort

THE LADIES OF THE SATHYA SAI BABA CENTER of East Brunswick (Mid-Atlantic Region) have been sewing quilts for distribution since 2005. At first there were only two ladies, but after they started meeting at the Sai Center on Saturday mornings, slowly more ladies have joined in. Since they were only meeting for a couple of hours each week, they wanted to try a longer session.

In February 2011, 30 ladies from the East Brunswick Sai Center decided to organize a quilting marathon. In preparation, they bought about 100 yards of printed cotton material and a similar amount of matching printed fleece, which in itself was a fun project.

After reserving a room at the local library for a Sunday afternoon, the volunteers brought sewing machines, material, measuring tapes, scissors, needles, and other supplies—all the paraphernalia needed for the project, and set themselves up.

First, tables were lined up along the walls near electric outlets, where the ladies who were to sew could plug in their machines. In the center of the room, a few tables were set up for the use of two teams: one team to sort, measure,



and cut material and match up the various components of the quilts, and another team to hand-baste the pieces together. These quilts were then sewn on the machines.

The “production line” included children, who passed the quilts to the machinists, kept count of the quilts, picked up scraps from the floor, and passed out snacks. For a while we played taped *bhajans* (devotional songs) in the background, but later, many women broke out into spontaneous singing.

In little over three hours, 40 quilts were completed, and many more had been basted together. Some ladies took these quilts home to finish. Others took the extra material home and sewed the remaining quilts. Many others took home the finished quilts to wash and pack in bags for distribution.

By the end of the week, 85 quilts had been made, washed, packed, and distributed. As a mini-project on the side, one volunteer made 34 wool hats, which were donated along with the quilts to Project Linus—a New Jersey-based volunteer organization that distributes quilts and caps to shelters and hospitals.

Here are some expressions of gratitude from the recipients:

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your volunteers for the WONDERFUL baby blankets and hats. We have used them at our "baby showers," and the moms-to-be have responded with extreme gratitude. The care and love with which these blankets are knit is evident. Again, thank you for taking the time to provide our women with gifts of love."

—**Perinatal Risk Reduction Coordinator**

"Thank you once again for your generous and beautiful donation of blankets. Our patients will be most appreciative when we begin to distribute on/at Easter/Passover time. Thanks so much."

—**Atlantic County Rescue Mission**

"Thank you so much for the large blanket donation. It was very much appreciated at Saint Peter's University Hospital. The patients love them all, and the volunteers enjoy handing them out."

—**Volunteer Services**

"Thank you very much for the generous donation of knitted blankets for our children in the Division of Pediatric Hematology-Oncology at The Children's Hospital. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. They will surely help our children feel a little better."

—**Administration of St. Peter's University Hospital**

"On behalf of the staff, children and families of the Children's Hospital at St. Peter's

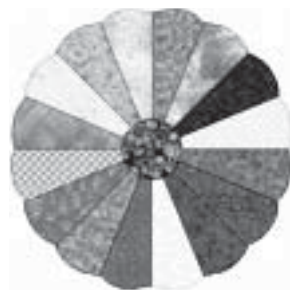
University Hospital, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your kind donation of handmade blankets, quilts, and hats for our pediatric patients. Your thoughtfulness has helped to brighten the day for many of our patients and their families during their hospital stay. Again, thank you for all your time, thoughtfulness, and generosity. We all at Saint Peter's appreciate you thinking of our children and families."

—**Child Life Coordinator**

"Thank you for your kind donation of blankets, sweaters, booties, and hats to Hudson Cradle Infant Home. The donation will be used toward making sure our foster babies with special health and developmental needs get the best care possible. Thank you for supporting our babies."

—**President, Hudson Cradle Infant Home**

—**SSBC of East Brunswick, New Jersey**



USA Youth Pilgrimage, 2011: “Living in Sai”

First USA National Sai Youth Pilgrimage, November 19–26, 2011

With love and deep gratitude to our beloved Swami, we are pleased to announce the dates of the first USA Sai Youth pilgrimage, November 19–26, 2011.

We had shared with you previously that our dear Swami surprised us all in March, by personally inviting us, “Tell them to come for My Birthday.” With his words as our motivation and inspiration, we began our preparation for the spiritual and physical journey, with “**Living in Sai**” as the overarching theme as well as the goal of self-transformation. In further preparation, every month we delve deeper into his teachings and engage in practical discussions that help us understand and, most important, put his teachings into practice in our daily lives. The spiritual discipline program consists of the following nine points of practice. A study circle guide for each practice point is available on www.saiyausa.net.

- Daily *Namasmarana* (chanting of the Lord’s name)
- Read Sai literature daily (recommended for group study: *Sandeha Nivarini*)
- Engage in selfless service as a group
- Practice sense control and dietary discipline
- Learn to speak softly and lovingly
- Attend and participate regularly in Sai Center activities
- Improve communications and interact respectfully with family
- Practice Ceiling on Desires
- Practice daily meditation and prayer

Registration: All USA Sai Youth (18–35 years old) are encouraged to register at www.saiyausa.net, even if not able to travel for the current pilgrimage to Parthi. We aim to accomplish two important goals with this registration process—(1) conduct a skill-set survey to create a national repository of youth skill-sets, and (2) collect registrations for the November pilgrimage. The pilgrimage registration deadline is October 15, 2011.

As the USA Sai Youth begin preparations for this pilgrimage to Parthi, we prayerfully seek Swami’s grace and guidance for the pilgrimage of life. By constantly remembering to root our thoughts, words, and actions in the soil of Sai ideals, we are sure to realize the fruit of bliss.

Lovingly in the service of Sai,

—Aparna Murali (National Young Adult Representative)

—Dr. Joe Phaneuf (National Young Adult Advisor)

World Youth Conference, July 13–14, 2011

“Sai Ideal Leadership” and the Way Forward



CONJUNCT
W I T H
G U R U
PURNIMA celebrations
in Prasanthi Nilayam,
a Sri Sathya Sai World
Youth Conference took

place July 13–14, 2011. Over 440 youth leaders from 70 countries convened at the Supreme Abode of Peace, Prasanthi Nilayam, for a two-day conference on the theme, “Sai Ideal Leadership.”

The conference got underway at 8.30 am on July 13, in the Poornachandra Auditorium, with opening prayers offered at His Lotus Feet, after which the proceedings kicked off to an inspiring start with a welcoming address by Sri Shitu Chudasama, International Youth Coordinator. Sri Chudasama subtly outlined the objectives of the conference, which aimed at cultivating ideal leadership qualities in youth through diligent application of Sai principles. The speaker also gave an overview of the current tasks facing the youth force, which has increased in numbers since the last World Youth Conference at Prasanthi Nilayam in 2007. He also touched

upon the development of youth wings throughout the globe and the successful formation and development of the International Youth Council.

Dr Michael Goldstein, Chair of both the Prasanthi Council and the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, who followed next with his keynote address, introduced the fundamentals of this year’s conference, namely, the spiritual principles that should prevail in the lives of every Sai youth and the Sai Organization as a whole.

Then some of the youth leaders, all members of the International Youth Council, shared their experiences in implementing various programs that effectively helped transform their hearts and promote human consciousness. These speakers included Ivan Bavcevic from Southern Europe, Parani Kumar and Anjali Daswani from Far East Asia, and Daniel Strauss and Perla Yannelli Fernandez Silva from Latin America.

At the end of these succinct talks, the group broke into study circles on Sai Ideal Leadership and the way forward.

The second day of the World Youth Conference began again with opening prayers in the Poornachandra Auditorium. The first speaker for the day was a young adult, Ms Aparna Murali, member of the International Youth Council from Zone 1, comprising the countries of Canada, Israel, USA, and West Indies. The second young adult speaker was Mr Mathias Seital, also a member of the International Youth Council, from Zone 7, comprising countries from Northern Europe. The third and fourth young adult speakers were also members of the International Youth Council—Mr Anatoli Dikunov from Zone 8, comprised of Russian-speaking countries, and Mr Alvin Leo from Zone 3, comprising the countries of Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji.

The delegates then dispersed into study circle groups to consider the topic, “Sai Young Adults: Sai Ideal Leaders of the Future.” After a lunch recess, study circle facilitators reported on the deliberations of their respective study circles. The day’s proceedings ended with concluding remarks by Sri Chudasama and closing prayers.

Thereafter, the evening program in Sai Kulwant Hall commenced with Veda chanting at 4.30 pm, followed by speeches by two youth of the International Sathya Sai Organization. The first speaker, Sri Shitu Chudasama, again offered his humble salutations to Bhagavan and opined that though Bhagavan was no longer with us physically, He continues to guide and inspire us, and that we should not forget that the

work He started through us should continue. It is therefore important, Sri Chudasama noted, that we utilize our capabilities to the utmost. Continuing his speech, the learned speaker recalled that Bhagavan always put the onus on youth by saying that the future of any nation depends on its youth.

The speaker mentioned that those who were present during the youth conference in 2007 were witness to Bhagavan distributing robes to the delegates, and that one should not underestimate the power of the robe. He referred to an incident in the Bible, whereby a mere touch of the hem of the robe of Jesus could cure a person. Bhagavan even told the delegates to keep the robe under their pillow while sleeping; such is the value of the robe.

Sri Chudasama said that Bhagavan had granted permission last November to Dr Michael Goldstein for the current youth conference, and that this conference is “of the youth, for the youth and by the youth.” There were 440 youth leaders present, many of them active participants in international Sai Youth programs. Sri Chudasama pledged that the youth would continue to serve Sai till their last breath.

Since the previous youth conference in 2007, the organization has been trying to build a solid foundation of Sai youth worldwide. “Our Sai Organization bears the name of Divinity; we should safeguard it,” said Sri Chudasama. In many countries, youth have been given increasingly greater responsibilities, especially the senior youth. Sai youth also have played a major part in

allaying the suffering of people in natural calamities—the tsunami in Sri Lanka, the earthquake in Haiti, and so on. They have also undertaken a drinking water project in Nepal.

Zonal youth conferences have been held across all the nine international zones. In Zone 2, Latin America, 21 countries held a conference on the topic, “The Moment Is Now.” The depth of understanding of the Sai Youth of Latin America is phenomenal, declared Sri Chudasama. He noted that Russian youth, despite financial challenges, travel long distances via rail to attend conferences, and that the service activities done by Russian youth are noteworthy. Similar zonal conferences were held in the Far East and other parts of the world. Sri Chudasama emphasized, “We must remember that Bhagavan is always with us to guide us. God has no beginning or end. He is eternal. We have promised to offer ourselves to Bhagavan so that our life becomes His message.”

The next speaker, Mr Daniel Strauss, a member of the International Youth Council, offered his humble salutations at the Divine Lotus Feet and paid his respects to the Sri Sathya Sai Trust members. Mr. Strauss reported that the conference had brought together in unison 440 youth from 17 countries, and that all aspects of the conference had been carried out by the youth. Speaking on the deliberations of the conference, Mr Strauss reported that delegates were examining ways to improve the organization. In addition to preparing

new guidelines, delegates were asked to restructure the old ones. An emphasis was given to preparing Sai leaders for the future, as young leaders are important for the Sai Organization. Delegates were asked to undertake spiritual inquiry to find answers to probing questions and to understand that the mission of the Sai Organization is to awaken the inner divinity; the Sai Organization is founded on spirituality. These principles and practices will help young adults to mature spiritually.

“Spiritual leadership is the focus of our young adults,” said Mr Strauss. “The key factor is that we have to become masters of ourselves. With Swami’s grace, we want to practice the maxim, ‘Heads in the forest, hands in society.’” The speaker ended his speech by saying, “Swami is the refuge and comforter to millions. The gospel of love will perpetuate forever.”

After Mr Strauss’s speech, youth from 16 countries, comprising Zones 1, 6, 7, and 8, presented a choir in unison. The group was christened LASA (Love All Serve All). The voices of the youth, both gents and ladies, gelled well with the musical instruments as the international choir enthralled the audience for about an hour. At the end of the program, the leader of the group expressed gratitude to Swami for the opportunity.

—Source: sssbpt.org/Pages/Prasanthi_Nilayam/darshanupdateJuly2011.html

Highlights of International Zone 1 Youth Activities

Reported at World Youth Conference 2011

The following is a transcript of a talk by Ms Aparna Murali, Zone 1 Representative to the International Youth Council, presented at the World Youth Conference, Prasanthi Nilayam, July 14, 2011.

TWAMEVA MATA CHA
PITA TWAMEVA; Twameva
Bandhu Cha Sakha Twameva;
Twameva Vidya Dravinam Twameva;
Twameva Sarvam Mamadeva Deva.

(You are my Mother, you are my Father; you are my closest Kin, you are my dearest Friend; you are my Wisdom, you are my Treasure; you are my Everything; you are my Lord, my loving Lord.)

My most humble and loving salutations at the Divine Lotus Feet of Swami, who is my Mother, Father, Guru, and Friend, and loving salutations to the Sai who is in each and every one of you!

Dear respected elders, noble brothers and sisters, *Sai Ram!* It was a beautiful warm summer afternoon in Brindavan. A smattering of cotton-candy-like white clouds could hardly eclipse the expansive blue sky. Bhagavan was in the portico, speaking to a few devotees, when a gentle breeze wafted through, as if to airbrush this picture-perfect, heavenly setting. A student sitting by the pathway observed that a leaf had nestled itself in Bhagavan's crown of soft curly hair. The student thought to himself, "Oh, what a lucky leaf."

A few moments later, Bhagavan stopped in front of the student, smiled at the student, and said, *My dear, not the leaf, YOU are the lucky one!*

Bhagavan may just as well be saying the same to each one of us in this august gathering. Yes, dear brothers and sisters, we are so very fortunate to know a loving God and serve in His holy name.

Zone 1 Report

Zone 1 comprises Canada, Israel, the United States of America, and the West Indies. A shared love for Swami and his teachings brings us together, despite the distances posed by geography.

Within the Sai Organization, the youth are becoming increasingly involved in suggesting new programs as well as planning and implementing existing projects. In some programs, the youth are being mentored by the adults, whereas in other programs they work as equal partners, and in still others, the youth lead the project. Such collaboration helps provide a steady guiding hand to develop sound leaders.



Zone 1 delegates to the Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference 2011

I'd like to share with you what the Sai Youth of Zone 1 were able to achieve with Swami's grace and the loving guidance of our elders.

The national conferences held since 2009 have served to inspire, catalyze, and channel youthful dynamism toward better understanding the universal teachings of Bhagavan and experiencing the joy of applying his teachings in their daily lives. Further, the national conferences served the important purpose of bringing together the youth, their ideas, and resources across the different regions into unified harmonious service in Bhagavan's mission.

Canada It is said that the inhabitants of Canada discovered the food properties of the maple tree, and subsequently sweet maple syrup was created. The maple leaf has since become the symbol of the Canadian

people and their discovery of life-sustaining sweetness in their midst. The Sai Youth of Canada have similarly discovered the unsullied sweetness of Bhagavan's love in their midst, through various service activities. These include conducting study skills development workshops, a national choir, blood donation drives, and imparting computer skills to seniors, among others.

International Cooperation Medical camps following the January 12, 2010, earthquake in Haiti brought together youth from Canada and the United States into one of the largest mobilizations of medical and non-medical Sai volunteers in North America, under the auspices of the International Sai Organization. For six months, teams of both medical and nonmedical volunteers were assigned for weekly service.

Over 100 youth from Canada and the United States participated in this service, and each week saw a team of 8–10 youth volunteers traveling to Port-Au-Prince to serve in the ongoing medical camps. Every aspect of the coordination—volunteer registration, scheduling, and shipping of supplies from geographically distant areas—was facilitated by youth, under the guidance of their elders. Setting up a medical care facility in an unknown country with little to no infrastructure support was a challenge that was overcome only through the grace of our Bhagavan.

Israel Even though the Sai Youth group in Israel is a small one, their activities are an integral part of the Sai Centers.

USA For long, America has embodied a relentless spirit of innovation that has helped create life-enhancing products and services. Sai Youth of the USA bring the same spirit of innovation to programs for societal well being. The “Way Forward Initiatives” is an innovative national program that harnesses the ideas and resources of the youth across the country, focusing on “local needs and interests.”

The Health and Wellness Initiative is one such program, aimed at creating education modules centered on health, nutrition, and physical fitness. Another of the initiatives is “Sai and the Arts,” where the youth create a forum to explore Swami’s teachings through artistic expressions such as creative writing, music, sketching, and drama. There are several other active groups under the “Way Forward” program.

West Indies Mention the West Indies, and our minds immediately conjure up images of sun-drenched, white, sandy beaches and people whose outlook and attitude is as sunny, warm, and friendly as their environment. Sai Youth of the West Indies have recognized the intimate relationship between man, society, and nature, and have created a program called “Green 4 Sai,” based on Swami’s message of respecting Mother Earth and the environment. The Sai Youth are involved in educating local Sai communities through awareness programs on the importance of reducing, recycling, and reusing resources. Sai-inspired “green practices” have been introduced in the Sai Centers and also at the youths’ respective homes, schools, and work sites.

Silent, Steady Transformation

Projects are the best classrooms for the youth to learn how to base their actions on the spiritual foundations given by Bhagavan. While I have shared with you some of the projects undertaken by the Sai Youth, what is really difficult to capture in words is the positive impact of these initiatives—a silent, subtle, yet steady transformation that is occurring within the hearts of the youth. There is a heightened spiritual awareness, a greater sense of social obligation, and increased sensitivity toward the suffering of fellow human beings. Allow me to share a reflection.

A Sai youth who had volunteered in the Haiti relief efforts returned transformed by that encounter. This was his first experience

providing relief in a disaster area. The youth was extremely moved by the simplicity of the Haitians and their ability to sustain faith in God, even in times of such adversity. The youth reflected that the process of performing *seva* seemed mutual: while the youth provided physical help, the Haitians in turn facilitated a better insight of Bhagavan's message of "Love all, serve all." This youth shared that the more he served, the more he loved, and the more he loved, the more he wanted to serve. I'm sure each one of you have been touched and transformed by similar experiences in your own lives.

It is said that one should look back and thank God, look forward and trust God, look around, and serve God, and—if I may add—look within and find God!

Dear brothers and sisters, I stand before you today, humbled and inspired. These last few days have witnessed an unprecedented coordination and cooperation between more than 400 delegates from 70 countries, for this conference to come to fruition. It may not be correct to say that over 400 delegates worked together; it is fair to say that over 400 delegates worked as ONE person, with ONE goal—to experience Bhagavan's love. We may have passports from 70 countries, but it is citizenship in the Kingdom of Sai that has brought us to this sacred precinct.

From registration, to accommodations, to coordinating study circles, to packing of

prasadam (consecrated food for distribution during *darshan*)—more than 10,000 packets in less than 40 minutes—to arranging chairs and serving ice cream—all was done by youth. It is a conference for the youth and by the youth, and love for Bhagavan is the common thread that binds us all together. We should take this energy, this experience of oneness, back to our own countries and share it with all. When all of us can become ONE, it is only a matter of time when the entire world will become ONE. Our planet will soon become a Prasanthi Nilayam.

Earlier, I shared how the gentle winds lifted a tiny leaf to Bhagavan's crown, and how Bhagavan pointed out that *we* are the lucky ones. Bhagavan's sojourn among us has a similar goal—to uplift humanity to the lofty heights of a Golden Age. We as Sai Youth must be aware that Bhagavan has assigned us coveted roles as change agents—winds of change, if you will—first, to transform ourselves, and then to transform those around us, ushering humankind to an era of peace, plenty, and prosperity. May Bhagavan bless us so, and may we always be worthy of the tasks He has given us—today and forever. May this be our collective prayer at His Lotus Feet.

—Aparna Murali

USA National Young Adult Representative
and Zone 1 Youth Representative,
International Youth Council

“The Gift of Love”: Invitation to Participate in the Proposed 2011 International Children’s Christmas Program

*to Be Offered at Prasanthi Nilayam to Our Loving Lord,
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*



It is now up to each one of us as Embodiments of Divine Love to continue to live our lives according to His teachings and to carry on with His divine mission.

A proposed children’s musical program of loving remembrance of the works and teachings of our Beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and of Jesus Christ is being planned as part of the 2011 Christmas celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam, India.

This year’s program will be organized under the theme, *The Gift of Love*, and will consist of songs by the International Children’s Choir interspersed with child speakers from different countries, under the direction of Ms. Alma Badings and Ms. Victoria Hargreaves. Selected children will share their experiences and their love of Swami and Jesus, in their own words, from their hearts.

Choir songs will consist of both traditional Christmas music and devotional songs. Selected children’s original artwork will be printed and displayed in the Western Canteen and possibly enlarged into a wall collage to be hung in Sai Kulwant Hall.

The first meeting for the program and children’s choir will take place on December 12, 2011, in Prasanthi Nilayam.



To take part in the selection process for speakers from different countries, we invite SSE children to submit a short essay, one to two paragraphs in length, based on answers to one or more of the following questions:

1. *How did Sai Baba come into your life?*
2. *Describe your personal experiences with Swami.*
3. *What are the similarities between the teachings of Sai Baba and Jesus?*
4. *What does Christmas mean to you?*
5. *What was your best Christmas experience ever?*
6. *How has Swami's teachings changed your relationships with friends and family?*
7. *Describe how Swami's teachings have inspired you to serve others.*

We also invite children to submit original color drawings on Christmas and the divine love of Sai Baba and Jesus Christ.

All children between the ages of 6 and 17 are welcome to apply. Please submit all essays and original artwork by September 30, 2011 to: giftoflove108@gmail.com. The authors of the essays and drawings will be notified by e-mail if their contributions are selected.

We hope that our program of personal sharing and inspirational music will honor our Dear Lord and touch the hearts of all present at this Holy Christmas.

—John Behner
International Christmas Committee Chairman

Announcements

Abode of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Press Release, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, August 30, 2011

RECENTLY SEVERAL INQUIRIES HAVE BEEN RECEIVED from devotees, particularly from overseas, desiring to know which location of Bhagavan in India is most appropriate for their pilgrimage.

Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi is in Prasanthi Nilayam. The term *mahasamadhi* here refers to the place of departure of an Avatar from his mortal coil. Such a place has profound significance in various faiths. In some Muslim traditions, the holy tombs of saints are believed to be repositories of spiritual power where prayers would be particularly effective. Many scholars have noted that Buddhist communities were involved in relic and *stupa* (structure containing Buddhist relics or remains of the Buddha) worship after the death of the Buddha. In the Javanese belief system, cosmic forces are believed to be constantly present at the holy tombs. Even in the Christian religious tradition, some believe that the saint in heaven is present in his tomb on earth. In Hinduism, the tomb or *mahasamadhi* of a realized saint is regarded by many as having an incorporeal presence. In fact, the Upanishads state: "*Natasya prana utkramanti*," meaning that the *pranas* (life forces) of saints do not leave their body to take up another, since the individual self has merged with Totality.

Shirdi Sai Baba reportedly said, "Believe me, though I pass away, my bones in my tomb will be speaking, moving, and communicating with those who would surrender themselves whole-heartedly to me. Do not be anxious that I will be absent from you. You will hear my bones speaking and discussing your welfare." Thus, the remains of holy persons are revered and given great importance by faiths all around the world.

Indeed, Bhagavan Baba's abode is the entire Universe. However, he took physical form at Puttaparthi and spent 85 years of his earthly sojourn at Prasanthi Nilayam as his primary home. Other places in India and other countries will continue to be the centers for their particular activities as guided by Bhagavan, who is present wherever his work is done, wherever his glory is sung, and wherever his name is uttered. However, Prasanthi Nilayam is the location of his holy shrine or *mahasamadhi* and will continue to be the center of Bhagavan's Mission.

This clarification is being issued to remove all doubts in the matter and to state the official position of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, the Sri Sathya Sai Seva organizations, and the Sri Sathya Sai International organizations.

—Media Coordinator

Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam

Daily Vedam and Bhajans Now Aired Live from Sai Kulwant Hall

AS OF GURU PURNIMA DAY, JULY 15, 2011, Radio Sai began a new service broadcasting the daily morning and evening Vedam and Bhajan sessions, live from Sai Kulwant Hall, 8–9.30 am and 4.30–6 pm (IST). According to the official announcement, “This new offering from Radio Sai has a divine history to it. In February 2011, Prof. G. Venkataraman personally prayed to Swami seeking His permission and guidance to start this new service. Bhagavan then lovingly blessed the new endeavor. For us at Radio Sai it is truly a special moment, as it is the fulfillment of a promise given to our beloved Bhagavan. So, wherever you are, you can now log on to *radiosai.org*, select AsiaStream, and join the elevating prayer sessions emanating from Prasanthi Nilayam!”

Instructions on the Radio Sai website (*radiosai.org*) direct listeners to select AsiaStream or TeluguStream during the live times, ie, 8.00–9.30 am and 4.30–6.00 pm IST on non-festival days. Or, listeners can download the daily prayer sessions at any time from the links at: http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Archives/live_audio_archive.htm.

For listeners in the USA, the air times of the live broadcasts translate to the following local times: Eastern time zone – 7.00 am and 4.30 pm; Central time zone – 6.00 am and 5.30 pm; Mountain time zone – 5.00 am and 6.30 pm; and Pacific time zone – 4.00 am and 7.30 pm.



USA Retreat & Event Dates – 2011

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

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

Regions 8 and 2: “Love the Love” – Dana Gillespie in Concert at the Irvine Barkley Theatre, 4242 Campus Drive, Irvine, CA 92612 (Sun Oct 2, 3.30 pm); and at Rutgers University’s Nicholas Music Center, 85 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 (Sun Oct 9, 3.00 pm). These free public concerts are a tribute to Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s life and works. For additional information, visit: <http://lovethelove.org/>.

Region 10 (South Central): Oct 7–9 (Fri 8 pm–Sun 1 pm), at Camp Young Judaea (*cyjretreats.org*), Wimberley, Texas (outside Austin). Theme: *Sai: The Way Forward*. Featured speakers: Dr Narendra Reddy, Mrs Geetha Ram. For registration and additional information, see: www.sairegion10.org/, or e-mail: retreat2011@sairegion10.org.

USA Youth Pilgrimage to Puttaparthi, India: Nov 19–26 (Sat–Sat) at Prasanthi Nilayam. Theme: *Living in Sai*. Please register by Oct 15, 2011, at www.saiyausa.net. For additional information, see page 36 of this issue or www.saiyausa.net.

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NEW RELEASE

Compendium: Sri Sathya Sai Organizations Worldwide (1965–2010)

Compendium: Sri Sathya Sai Organizations Worldwide (1965–2010), compiled by Sri Indulal Shah, was released on September 1, 2011. The *Compendium*, consisting of a book and twelve DVDs, represents a virtual encyclopedia of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's mission to date, focusing on the international Sri Sathya Sai Organization's (SSSO) groundbreaking work in educare, medicare, and sociocare around the globe. The *Compendium* project received Bhagavan Baba's blessings on March 1, 2011, and records the collective work undertaken by the SSSO over the past 45 years, in India and 135 other countries, through text, images, presentations, and audiovisuals. Numerous inspiring articles, poems, and books are collected here, along with Bhagavan's divine messages and a full account of Bhagavan's 85th birthday celebration. As such, this work symbolizes Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's divine legacy and also his directive of divine love and service to society.

The *Compendium* has been collected and compiled by Sri Indulal Shah, Trustee of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and Advisor to the Sathya Sai Service Organizations outside of India. He has remained a dedicated instrument of Bhagavan for nearly five decades and held a ringside seat throughout the development of the Sai institutions.

The staff of the *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* as well as many other volunteers and officers of the USA Sai Organization helped collect information for this work during 2010.

This magnificent compendium will be available through the Sathya Sai Book Center of America as soon as it arrives from India (it's on its way as of this issue's press date). Copies may also be procured from the Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Trust in India, which may be e-mailed at: ih99999@gmail.com.

