

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



“Unity of Religions”

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Announcements

Sathya Sai Newsletter USA – Free and Paperless in 2013

After 36 years of print publication, the *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* is making the transition to a free, paperless format. In 2013, quarterly PDFs of the *Newsletter* will be posted online. The *Newsletter* will be freely available to all, with no cost to download. Subscribers will be notified of new editions by email.

Please visit us at sathyasaibooksusa.org and sign up to receive email announcements about the online *Newsletter* – click on the button that says, “Join Our FREE Email Mailing List”:



It is important to sign up online to receive announcements of new issues, so please take a moment to do so today.

Subscribers who have prepaid beyond the end of 2012 will receive subscription refunds accordingly from the Book Center.

Further details will be announced in the November/December 2012 issue. Meanwhile, we invite you to browse our updated Archive of Past Issues (1976–2012) located at us.sathyasai.org. Past issues are also free to download.

We look forward to having the *Newsletter* be more easily accessible to all and hope you will continue to enjoy it, contribute to it, and share it. ☺

—*Sathya Sai Newsletter USA Publication Team*

SaiLoveinAction.org: New USA Stories Are Dotting the Map

SaiLoveinAction.org is a recently started (2012) website highlighting personal stories of transformation from Sai Organization service projects worldwide. Each US Region has a Regional Service Article Coordinator who works with service project participants to develop articles from that region. Each of the 10 US regions is now represented on the website, with more articles being added all the time. Visitors click on orange “dots” on a map to access the articles, and the map is gaining more and more dots all the time. Go online to *SaiLoveinAction.org* and literally “follow the dots” to read stories of those striving to put Sai’s teachings into practice through selfless service – “love in action.” ☺

New Center and Group Guidelines and Operations Manual (August 2012) Issued by the International Sathya Sai Organization

In mid-September 2012, Dr Narendranath Reddy, Chairman of the Prasanthi Council, released two new documents of importance to the International Sai Organization — *Guidelines for Center and Groups* and an *Operations Manual for Centers and Groups*. These international guidelines were distributed throughout the organization in PDF format.

Dr Reddy congratulated and thanked the chairman of the Guidelines Committee, Dr William Harvey, and the committee members for their “hard work and wisdom in developing these final documents after incorporating all the valuable input from the senior officers of the organization.”

“All of us have experienced the pure and selfless Divine love of our Lord Sai,” wrote Dr Reddy. “Let us love and serve each other and everyone the way He loved and served us. Let us move forward by following His instructions with faith and steadfastness and reach the goal of Self-Realization by His grace and blessings.”

The 13-page *Guidelines* document describes the programs and practices of the Sathya Sai Centers and Groups of the International Sathya Sai Organization, in general terms.

The more extensive *Operations Manual for Centers and Groups*, 36 pages in length, describes in detail the duties and responsibilities of officers as well as the rules and regulations that apply to the various programs conducted by Sathya Sai Centers.

Copies of the documents are available through the regional presidents.

The new documents, liberally supported with the direct instructions and teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, are designed both to inspire and inform. All members of the International Sai Organization are encouraged to become familiar with the guidelines and implement them in their Centers and Groups. ☸

Western Digital Music Archive on Radio Sai

Did you know that close to 1,000 minutes of Western music is available on *RadioSai.org* for free download and listening? Go to: <http://radiosai.org/program/SearchProgramme.php>. Type *Western Music* in the *Description* field, to bring up a list of over 16 hours of entrancing classical music – guitar, piano, violin, organ, flute, and more. Or you can type the name of an artist, or the title of a song, or type *Devotional Songs in English by devotees from the USA* – and get over 6 hours of songs/music. ☸

—Radio Sai Global Harmony, radiosai.org

SAI'S MESSAGE

THE REDEEMING AND UNIFYING FORCE OF LOVE



IT IS SAID THAT atom bombs will reduce the world to ashes. But those who are promoting religious bigotry and hatred are doing worse damage than what the atom bombs can do. They are destroying the love and compassion in human hearts. They are breaking up mankind into fragments. There is no greater sin than this.

What the world needs today is the redeeming and unifying force of love – love that continually expands

and embraces more and more people. By giving up narrow ideas regarding one's religion, nation, or caste, by developing a broad outlook and cultivating the company of the good, you can elevate your life and make it meaningful and satisfying.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks 18:30, Dec 25, 1985



Symposium on Unity of Faiths

Representatives of four religions share their views at Prasanthi Nilayam, July 2, 2012



As part of the 2012 Guru Purnima* celebrations, a symposium on Unity of Faiths was held on July 2 in Prasanthi Nilayam. Representing four major religions, persons of eminent spiritual status were invited to speak at this one-day symposium.

Morning Session

To inaugurate the symposium, Sri Srirangarajan, Controller of Examinations, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL), introduced the speakers for the morning, Professor Akhtarul Wasey and His Holiness Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

Sri Srirangarajan interspersed his introductory remarks with audio clips from

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's discourses. A poem of Bhagawan on the subject of unity of faiths, from a discourse of December 25, 1990, was broadcast on the public address (PA) system prior to Prof Wasey's talk:

He who is worshiped as Allah by Muslims, as Jehovah by aspiring Christians, as the Lotus-eyed Lord by the worshipers of Vishnu, as Shambhu by those who revere Shiva – in whatever way He is worshiped, He gladly responds, grants the grace of fame and fortune, and showers happiness and joy. He is the One, the Supreme Self. Know Him as Paramatma. (TELUGU POEM)

* Guru Purnima: a spiritual festival honoring one's spiritual preceptor, coinciding with the full moon in July.

“If you know who you are, you will understand what religion is,” said Bhagawan. “True spirituality means that the spirit in you is present in everyone. Realization is religion. Due to distorted interpretation, people of many religions are misguided. The outcome is violence and bloodshed. If you know who you are, you will understand what religion is. . . . To know yourself is spirituality.”

Bhagawan went on to say that where there are differences, conflicts are possible. In order to ensure there are no conflicts, all should remain united. All of humanity is one. Religions are many, but the path is one.

Sri Srirangarajan, referring to Bhagawan’s explanation of the Holy Cross, explained, “The vertical line in the cross signifies the ego (‘I’), and the horizontal line refers to vanquishing [‘crossing out’] our ego. Bhagawan always emphasized love – that love should be the undercurrent of all activities.

Prof Akhtarul Wasey, Head of Dept of Islamic Studies, Jami Millia Islamia University, New Delhi

In introducing Professor Wasey, Sri Srirangarajan noted that the erudite speaker is the Head of the Department of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, and is currently engaged both in teaching and guiding a number of students in research work. He is also the editor of a number of journals.

Professor Wasey, in his speech, noted that it was his privilege and pleasure to be at Prasanthi Nilayam as a pilgrim. A true

Muslim will respect all religions. Many people think Mohammad initiated Islam. In fact, Mohammad was the last messenger. To profess, to confess that Allah is One and Mohammad is His messenger, that I have faith in Allah, Ishwara, and His angels, means that it is obligatory for all Muslims to respect all religions, all prophets, and all mankind. Echoing a lofty statement, the learned speaker declared, “Whoever is born is born for doing service.”

Explaining the true meaning of *jihad*, the speaker said, “*Jihad* does not mean ‘holy war’ but the supreme struggle against evil desires and other evil tendencies. We have built walls around us. We should unite through religion. There is no compulsion in religion. Prof Wasey expressed his happiness that this divine abode was hosting such a conference for the second time.

Airing his views on the status of women in Islam, Prof Wasey said that they are differentiated on the basis of dress and that the prevalent ill treatment of women is due to male chauvinism. “All creatures belong to the family of God,” he said. Prof Wasey concluded his speech by urging everyone to make this earth a heavenly place.

Thereafter, Sri Srirangarajan requested that another audio clip of Bhagawan be played, this one from July 23, 1989. In it, Bhagawan expressed that all religions advocate peace and no religion propagates violence, and that *Islam* in the Persian language means surrender and peace; *salat* means to worship God with all faith and



devotion, and *zakat* means to help one's fellow human beings with what they need.

Recapping Bhagawan's discourse, Sri Srirangarajan summarized the meaning of the term *Hindu*: "Being distant from *himsa* (violence) is Hindu. Be it a Vaishnavite (follower of Vishnu) or a Shaivite (follower of Shiva), Shia or Sunni (Islamic sects), Catholic or Protestant (Christian sects), there should be no differences. If one causes pain or injury to another, it will come back to the same person."

His Holiness Dayananda Saraswati

Introducing H H Dayananda Saraswati as a traditional teacher of Vedanta, Sri Srirangarajan noted that H H Dayananda Saraswati had been teaching Vedanta, both to the public and to resident students, in both short- and long-term courses in India for more than four decades, and around the world since

1976. Swami Dayananda also designed and taught ten resident, in-depth Vedanta courses, each spanning 30 to 36 months.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati expressed his happiness at being present at the abode of one who has inspired not only the people of this country but people of all cultures and religions. The speaker expressed that whatever comes under the name of *Hinduism* is one *sanathana dharma* (universal path of righteousness), never founded by any one person but a *dharma* that has produced great people in every generation. When a philosopher was asked about Hinduism, he replied that it is one's view and way of life.

There is no one greater than you. You are the *Purna* (Divine Fullness). You have a judgment about yourself, [but] you are the whole and you do experience wholeness. Swami Dayananda Saraswati said further that you cannot declare that you have never

had a moment of happiness, [even if such] moments were few and far between. You accept your color, weight, star (horoscope), Shukra and Shani (influences of Venus and Saturn in your astrological chart), your knowledge, and your limitations, but You [as *Purna*] are not at all mindful of limitations.

Narrating a beautiful anecdote about a sculptor and his friend, the Swami explained how their perceptions differed. The sculptor was observing a monolithic rock. The other person was surprised, watching the sculptor gazing at the rock. When asked, the sculptor said he would explain later. A month later, the person visited the sculptor again and was overcome at seeing a beautiful idol, depicting Lord Krishna in a standing pose.

“Now,” the sculptor said, “the other day you asked me as to why I was looking at the rock. I was looking at Krishna; I only unfolded Krishna, I did not shape Krishna.” His Holiness went on that one should manifest wholeness in every situation: *dharma* is the manifestation of God.

A cow will remain vegetarian whether it is in India or America, because every animal lives by sheer programming. What one does should not hurt another person, and vice versa. This is from the matrix of values – a universal value, *samanya dharma*.

When you ask someone, “Where is your daughter?” the person may reply, “She is in Texas.” “Where is your son?” “He is in California.” “Where is God?” “He is up there (pointing upward).” We don’t give an address for God; the entire universe is permeated by God (*Isavasyam idam sarvam*). We don’t say

there is one God or many gods; we say there is only God! Every manifestation is God.

You hold a pot; there is *Purna* (Totality) – space both inside and outside it, too. You take the pot to the ocean and immerse it; there will be water both inside and outside it. Again, it is *Purna*. You are *Purna*. God must be understood [in this manner].

H H Dayananda Saraswati concluded his discourse by reiterating that Baba validated all forms of prayer and worship. God understands all languages, any form of prayer.

Expressing a vote of thanks on behalf of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust (SSSCT), Sri Srirangarajan expressed gratitude to both the eminent speakers, bringing the morning session to a close after a couple of *bhajans* (group devotional songs in call-and-response format), followed by Mangala Arati (traditional closing hymn of praise, sung in unison, invoking the eternal flame).

Afternoon Session

In the afternoon session, the first speaker was Father Dominic Emmanuel, spokesman and director of the Delhi Catholic Archdiocese, and the second speaker was Dhammachari Dr B V Rajaram of the Mahabodhi [Buddhist] Society in Bangalore. Sri Srirangarajan again introduced the speakers and aired an excerpt on the PA system from Bhagawan’s discourse of February 14, 1999, on the subject of Unity of Faiths.

Bhagawan’s voice proclaimed, “*He is a true Christian who cultivates the crop of love*

Prof Akhtarul Wasey:
“Whoever is born, is born for doing service.”

H H Dayananda Saraswati:

“God understands all languages, any form of prayer.”

in the field of the heart. A true Sikh is not one who wears a turban or sword but one who is full of love.” Giving an acronym for the term *HINDU*, Bhagawan explained that *H* stands for humanity, *I* for individuality, *N* for nationality, *D* for divinity, and *U* for unity, and that one with these five qualities is a true Hindu. A Muslim calls out *Allah*, which means God. *Allah Ho Akbar* means God is greatest. *Islam* means one who leads a life of peace. When the heart is full of love, one will be peaceful.

Sri Srirangarajan said that unless love manifests in us we cannot be called religious. He cited the Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva (Bhagawan’s village service project model) as an example of love reaching out to others. This activity is conducted not only by students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) but also by others.

Referring to an incident that happened in the *mandir* (Prasanthi Nilayam temple) in the Divine Presence, Sri Srirangarajan said a devotee once told Swami that His hospital was doing wonderful service to humanity and was a fit subject for a case study. Bhagawan replied, “*It is not meant for a case study in the worldly sense; it is a case study of love.*”

Reverend Father Dominic Emmanuel of the Delhi Catholic Archdiocese

Then Rev Fr Dominic Emmanuel, an erudite scholar from the Delhi Catholic Diocese, was introduced. He holds a bachelor’s degree in philosophy and theology and in 1991 completed his PhD. He then worked in various capacities in India and abroad, including as a freelance commentator for the BBC. From 1998 on, he has been a spokesperson for the Delhi Catholic Diocese and has written nearly 200 articles that have appeared in Indian daily newspapers. Paying his obeisance to the respected spirit of Bhagawan and thanking the Trustees for the opportunity, the learned speaker expressed that it was indeed a great honor to be invited to the Unity of Faiths symposium.

Father Dominic observed that such symposiums were being celebrated even in England. As Amartya Sen said in his book, *The Argumentative Indian*, India has given birth to some of the greatest religions in the world. Winston Churchill had predicted that an independent India would not survive, because of its various religions, cultures, and races. But Amartya Sen, using the term *heterodoxy*, concluded that Churchill had

Rev Fr Dominic Emmanuel:

“Did Bhagawan mean unity of faiths, or unity of the faithful? In other words, he wanted unity of hearts.”

been proven wrong, and that whoever tries to break the unity of India will not succeed, now or in the future. India should always stand for unity in diversity in the eyes of the rest of the world.

The learned speaker was enamored with the visible reminders of the unity of religions in Prasanthi Nilayam. From the insignia on Bhagawan's chair, to the Chaitanya Jyoti (“light of consciousness”) museum, to Bhagawan's Samadhi (burial spot at the focal point of Sai Kulwant Hall), every place in Prasanthi Nilayam is filled with the idea of the unity of religions.

Did Bhagawan mean unity of faiths or unity of the faithful? In other words, he wanted unity of hearts. The learned speaker quoted many sayings from Bhagawan's discourses.

Bhagawan's name itself is Truth (*Sathya*), said the speaker. Jesus spoke about truth. Mahatma Gandhi experimented with truth. God is truth and truth is God. Quoting from Saint Paul's letter to the Corinthians, Fr Dominic said, *“Love is patient, it is kind; it does not dishonor others. Serve others; love ever. It does not keep records of wrongs. Love never fails.”* God's love is manifested in Jesus Christ.

Speaking on the parable of the prodigal son, Fr Emmanuel recounted that the youngest son had asked for a share of property and then spent all his money in evil ways. When he was left with nothing, he was reduced to working on a farm. Then the thought came to him that even his father's servants had more than him. Realizing his mistakes, he humbly returned to his father, though unrecognizable in his condition. The father did not even listen to his pleadings for forgiveness. He welcomed his son with open arms and called for a festival to be celebrated.

When the speaker visited the Chaitanya Jyoti museum, the staff in charge had explained that Sai Baba accepted everybody in his embrace, like Jesus Christ. Jesus never looked at the sins of others. Jesus said, “Forgive seventy times seven.” Expounding on the sayings of Bhagawan, the speaker quoted, *“Love lives by giving and forgiving; self lives by getting and forgetting.”* He said, “When I read Sathya Sai Baba, I feel like I am reading a commentary on the Bible.”

Ramakrishna founded his mission on December 24, the speaker noted – one day prior to the day on which Christians celebrate Jesus's birthday – and had a vision of Jesus.



Yogada Paramahansa also wrote two volumes on the revelations of Jesus Christ.

The speaker was appreciative of the selfless service rendered in the Super Speciality Hospital and by the foundations of the Sri Sathya Sai Organization in India and abroad. He concluded his speech saying, “Let the words of great men and women be imprinted in our hearts so that we translate them into service.”

Dharmachari Dr B V Rajaram of the Mahabodhi [Buddhist] Society, Bangalore

Before the speech of Dharmachari Dr B V Rajaram, another extract from a discourse by Bhagawan was aired, this one from December 25, 1991, in which Bhagawan said that Christianity speaks of the brotherhood of humanity. In every step in Indian culture, in every human being, there is only one *Atma* (inner divinity). Bhagawan explained that

the inner significance of *Namaskar* (gesture honoring the divine in all) is to bring about unity in diversity.

Sri Srirangarajan then introduced Dr Rajaram as an eminent theatre personality, actor, and director, all rolled into one. He is a well-known speaker in Buddhist circles and a guest faculty member in the Department of Performing Arts. He also has translated the essence of the Dhammapada (main Buddhist text) into the Kannada language. Paying homage to Bhagawan and thanking the Trustees for the opportunity, Dr Rajaram said that he had been privileged to have had Bhagawan’s *darshan* (opportunity to see a holy person) in Puttaparthi many times.

The speaker opined that Buddha came into the world as a human being to serve. Describing the predicament of a lady whose child was lying dead, Dr Rajaram said that she was advised by an old man to go to Buddha. When she met Buddha, he asked

Dhammachari Dr B V Rajaram:

**“We should give our goodness to every human being.
That is *maitri* (loving kindness).”**

her to go and get a handful of seeds from a house where death had not entered. She visited house after house, but all the residents replied that they had suffered the deaths of near and dear ones at some time or other. This is the world. When we are born, we are bound to die.

The speaker mentioned that even in the Sarva Dharma (all faiths) emblem of Bhagawan, the wheel symbol of Buddhism was included. Buddha set in motion the wheel of truth. He was in this world 2,500 years ago. He obtained enlightenment under a tree. Speaking on the significance of Guru Purnima, the speaker said, “Whoever gives the truth – there are thousands of saints and sages – we pray to them. That is Guru Purnima.”

Buddha was a prince in Kapilavastu (in Nepal). He observed a sick man, a dead body, and a monk. All these made him think of the purpose of life and gave him detachment. He left the palace. On his 35th year, he gained enlightenment. Till his 80th year, he wandered.

Speaking on what is Buddhism, the speaker offered that Buddhism teaches one to avoid all evil and cultivate the good to cleanse one’s mind. He said that Buddhism is a religion of the mind. If you act with an impure mind, then impure deeds will follow.

If we do good, then goodness will follow us like a never-departing shadow.

Buddhism advocates the Middle Path and delivers very simple truths: greed, hatred, and delusion (*lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*) are undesirable traits, and there are five precepts (*panchashila*) to practice: do not kill, steal, lie, drink, or engage in sexual misconduct. People tend to go to many places for excitement; we should seek only spiritual company (*satsang*), which gives positive vibrations. Dr Rajaram concluded by saying that we should give our goodness to every human being. That is *maitri* (loving kindness, universal friendship).

To conclude the one-day symposium, a clip of Bhagawan’s discourse of July 23, 1989, was aired prior to the closing *bhajan* session and Mangala Arati. The essence of Bhagawan’s message was to respect all religions. If each one respects and follows one’s religion, that is good. Islam preaches to treat everyone as brothers. Christianity teaches forbearance. If a person slaps one cheek, offer the other cheek. If you want respect for your religion, then do not criticize other religions. ☸

—The Prasanthi Reporter (Reports, <http://theprasanthireporter.org/2012/07/symposium-on-unity-of-faiths-a-report/>, July 3, 2012)



Cultivate Faith, Not Faction

There is only one religion, the religion of love.

WHOM the Muslims adore as Allah, the Christians as Jehovah, the Vaishnavites as Phulabjaksha, and the Shaivites as Shambhu, who grants, in answer to their several prayers, health, prosperity, and happiness to all, wherever they may be, He, the One God, is the God of all mankind.

India has been teaching since ages the message of the spirit and the means to gain and ensure equanimity and joy. She has stood forth as the preceptor of the world for centuries. The prayer that she has taught her people is: *Loka samasta sukhino bhavantu* (“May everyone in the world be happy”).*

This has been the consummation of **Vedic** thought since time immemorial. Such wholesome ideals were propagated and fostered by the rulers of this land, the seers and yogis (God-centered persons) who guided the populace, and the chaste mothers who reared generations in the atmosphere of spiritual effort.

But due to vicissitudes in the country’s history, when the people were subjected to pressures and counter-pressures, these ideals suffered a setback. The abstractions of faith

received concrete form and got crystallized into specific identifiable names and forms. Each new attitude or aptitude, each new concretization, became a special sect and every theory enveloped itself in its own shell.

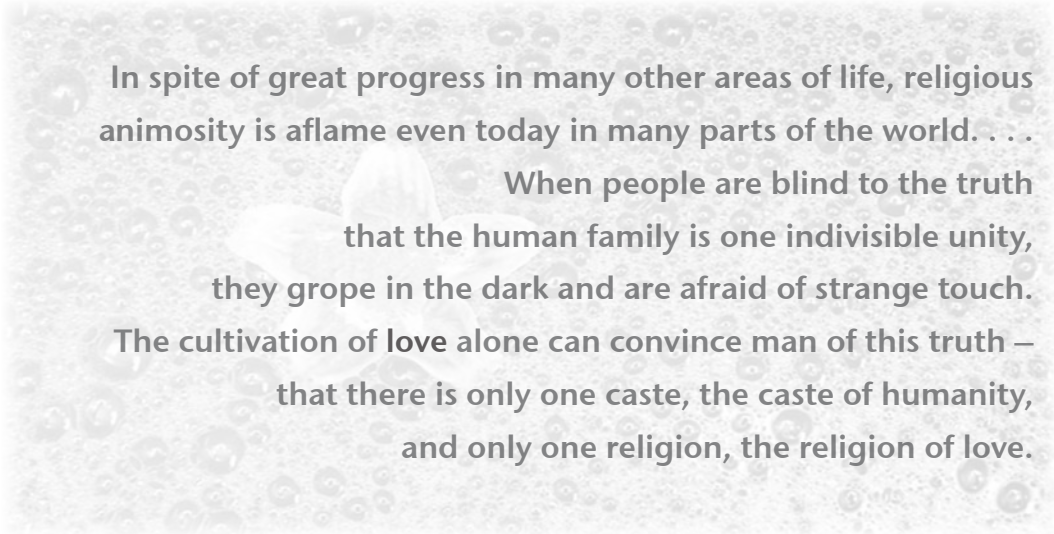
Growth of Sects and Sets of Belief in India

Thus the one Vedic religion became the parent of a number of sects and sets of belief, such as Ganapatya (centering around the concept of Ganapati), Shakteya (centering around the concept of cosmic energy as the expression of the Divine), Saura (centering around the Sun as the source, sustenance, and goal of spiritual achievement), Charvaka (centering around the concept of pleasure and material prosperity), and Virashaiva (centering around Shiva as the inner motivator of all beings).

Every one of these sects, and many more besides, elaborated their own rituals and modes of worship, their own priorities in spiritual attainment, and their own body of doctrines about the individual, the objective world, and God.

The purpose of these codes and modes was, in all cases, to purify the mind and insist on the practice of high moral virtues. But soon this was ignored and importance came to be attached to superficial conformity and an outer appearance of purity. The craving

* This traditional prayer was recast in 2008 by Sri Sathya Sai Baba as *Samasta Loka Sukhino Bhavantu* (with a broader connotation: “May all the worlds be happy.”). See pages 23–24.



In spite of great progress in many other areas of life, religious animosity is aflame even today in many parts of the world. . . .

When people are blind to the truth
that the human family is one indivisible unity,
they grope in the dark and are afraid of strange touch.

The cultivation of love alone can convince man of this truth –
that there is only one caste, the caste of humanity,
and only one religion, the religion of love.

for personal aggrandizement and power made every sect, faith, and religion rigid and dry.

There is a great need today to discover the inner spring of all faiths, the spring that fertilizes the outer rites and ceremonies. A little quiet study will reveal that there is an undercurrent of moral enthusiasm and spiritual adventure.

There Is Only One Religion, the Religion of Love

The word generally used [in India] for religion is *matha*; the word to indicate the mind is *mathi*. Putting the two together it can be said that *matha* is primarily engaged or ought to be engaged in straightening and strengthening the *mathi*.

The goal, the purpose, the key, the essence of all creeds, faiths, and religions

is just this – the sublimation of the mind of man to guarantee liberation for the individual concerned and happiness for the society of which he is a unit. Principles and practices have grouped around this prime need, and various creeds are the result.

Religions attempt to implant holy ideals in the heart of man, but man does not allow them to sprout and grow. His egoistic craving for power and competitive success has, in most cases, persuaded him to use religion as an instrument of torture and persecution. Instead of uniting mankind in a common endeavor, religion has become a system of walled enclosures guarded by hate and fanaticism.

So, each religion is an armed camp, sunk in self-aggrandizement, trying to wean others unto itself and prevent defections from itself. Religion, therefore, is being condemned as the root of chaos and conflict.

The holy duty of man is to be ever aware of the *Atman* (Divine Spirit) that is installed in every living being. This will make him conscious of the kinship he has with all.

In spite of great progress in many other areas of life, religious animosity is aflame even today in many parts of the world.

It has to be emphasized that religion is not the root cause of this state of affairs. The factional fights and fanatic hatred are due to the unruly ego that is given free play. Religion strives to destroy just this vicious tendency, so it has to be supported, not condemned. What must be condemned is the narrow, perverted attitude of hating those who do not agree with you or who hold differing opinions about the mysterious Force that animates the universe.

Religious wars and conflicts breed in the slime of ignorance and avarice. When people are blind to the truth that the human family is one indivisible unity, they grope in the dark and are afraid of strange touch. The cultivation of love alone can convince man of this truth – that there is only one caste, the caste of humanity, and only one religion, the religion of love. Since no religion upholds violence or despises love, it is wrong to ascribe the chaos to religion.

The Diversity We Experience Is Not a True Picture

It is also not advisable to engage in campaigns of vilification or exaggerated propagation of any religion, with a view to draw votaries. If only each one lives up to the ideals propounded by the founders of one's religion, unaffected by greed or hate, the world will be a happier and more peaceful habitation for man.

The religion of the Hindus stressed the unity of all creation and declared that the diversity we experience is not a true picture. But since faith in the One comes into awareness only to a mind clarified to the utmost, the religion had soon to posit duality and even multiplicity, with deities for every facet of the whole. The most widespread of these positions are the Shaivite and Vaishnavite faiths, centered on the Shiva and Vishnu aspects of the One.

This process of splitting into diverse viewpoints has taken place in all the major religions. Islam has the Shia and Sunni sects; Christianity has Catholics and Protestants. But however deep the cleavage, no sect denies God, and no sect extols violence or falsehood. The Names used may be different,

the facets emphasized may be different, but the Almighty Providence is denoted as Absolute and Eternal. The terminology may be different, but the concept is not different.

God may be referred to as *Allah*; prayer may be called *namaz*; priests may be known as *khajis*; scholars may be hailed as *mullahs*; the bible may be in the form of the Holy Quran.

But the undercurrent of energizing power in all cases is love, love of all beings toward all beings. The founders always had in view the unity of all life and the progressive march of man from mere humanness to the heights of divinity.

Shankaracharya's *Adwaita* Philosophy

The first among the interpreters of the Vedas (the world's most ancient scriptural revelations) to found a school of philosophy and lay down a path of spiritual discipline to benefit from that school was the sage, Shankaracharya, born in the state of Kerala. During his very short life, he established, on secure foundations of logic and intuition, the truth that there is only One God and that all else is an appearance of the One Reality.

This is the "not-two" or *adwaita* (non-dual) philosophy or faith, which explains the individual nature and God in perfect harmony. The Vedic axioms, *Ekoham bahushyam* (I am One; let Me become many); *Ishwara sarva bhutanam* (God is immanent in all); and *Isha vasyam idam sarvam* (All this is enveloped and penetrated by God) – are thus illumined by the intellect of Shankaracharya into patent truths.

Merging in the Source is the Ultimate Destiny

Monism, as propounded by Shankaracharya on the basis of Vedic texts, seemed to a majority of individuals to be too simple a solution to satisfy their inner urges. They had in them the yearning to worship, to dedicate themselves to a higher power. They could not grasp the truth of their Inner Reality being the one and only. Their emotions and activities had to be sublimated by disciplines of devotion.

Thereupon, Ramanujacharya was the sage who commented upon the Vedic texts and religious scriptures from a new point of view that gave *adwaita* (nondualism) a qualified or specialized aspect. This was called *visishta-adwaita* (qualified nondualism), a path of devotion laid down to enable man to merge with God.

The goal is mergence, as the rivers know and strive for. The waters of the sea are raised by the Sun as clouds into the sky, and the clouds pour them back as rain onto the earth, to flow back into the sea through many a valley, as streams or tributary-fed rivers.

Merging in the Source from which one took form is one's ultimate destiny. The river has a passionate, overwhelming love that leads it down the slopes until it reaches the loved one, where the lover, loved, and love, all three, merge in one illuminating ecstasy.

Prema (divine love) is attachment to God that does not allow anything to interfere or diminish its quality or depth. God is loved by the *bhakta* (devotee) for His sake and not

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for any incidental benefit or blessing. Such love is spontaneous, sustaining, and sublime, like a child before the mirror enjoying the reflections of its own pranks and gestures.

But complete surrender to the extent of annihilating one's own individuality is also beyond most aspirants. Sugar cannot be tasted and enjoyed by sugar; one must be an ant so one can revel in the sweetness of the stuff.

This craving of man was sought to be satisfied by the teachings of Madhvacharya, who declared that the *jiva* (individual soul) remains ever separate from the Universal, and thus there can be no merging.

So, in *advaita*, a flash of intellectual illumination reveals that the Atman (Divinity) alone exists, and that all else is but deluding appearance; *visishta-advaita* (qualified nondualism) posits that the river is an integral part of the sea; and *dwaita* (dualism) points out that the joy derived from adoration and worship is enough to draw the fulfilling grace of God.

All Paths Set Forth by All Seers Lead to the Same Goal

There were other seers, too, who laid down paths toward the same goal. They announced that the universe belongs to God and that man should not desire to accumulate or appropriate any portion of the Divine Treasure. They advised that the sapling of devotion must be protected from the pests of sloth, doubt, and fanaticism, through the cultivation of valor and vigilance.

Of the major religions, I may also mention **Buddhism**. Buddha was so agonized by the suffering that haunts the life of man that he investigated the behavior of the mind and intellect of man and discovered remedial disciplines; he analyzed the vagaries of the mind that lead man into the whirlpools of desires. He analyzed the ways of reason, too, and spotted the areas where prejudice takes root. Above all, he preached surrender to *dharma* (righteousness), to compassion, and to Buddha (the Enlightened One).

Then, **Jainism**, the religion that was rendered an all-India movement by Mahavira, extols *jina* (the heroic conqueror of the senses, the emotions, and the stratagems of the intellect). Mahavira called upon all to carry out the duties commensurate with their status and professions, with steady faith and enthusiasm. He declared that all things and beings are holy in their own right and are but pilgrims on the road to realization. Any injury inflicted on any of them is an intervention in that sacred journey, so it has to be scrupulously avoided.

The “Sai Religion” Is the Essence of All Faiths

Zoroastrianism, the Parsi religion, was founded by Zoroaster, who wanted man to keep the fire of wisdom ever blazing in his consciousness, so that evil thoughts and tendencies might be reduced to ashes. This fire must infuse all thoughts, words, and deeds with the illumination of virtue and vigor; it must destroy all worldly desire and render man pure for entry into the heaven of freedom. Adoration, meditation, and acts of selfless service are essential for the dawn of enlightenment.

The “Sai religion,” then, if the name of *religion* in its literal sense of binding man to God is accepted, is the essence of all faiths and religions, including those such as Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

The motive behind the formation and propagation of all these different faiths is the same. The founders and propagators were all persons filled with love and wisdom. Their goal and purpose were the same. None had

the design to divide, disturb, or destroy. They attempted to do good, see good, and be good. They sought to train the passions and the emotions, to educate the impulses and instincts, and direct the faculty of reason to paths beneficial to the individual and society. They knew that the mind, the breeding ground of desire and attachment, ambition and aspiration, has to be cleansed and properly oriented.

Let the Family Become a Center of Harmonious Living

Sai considers that practice of these disciplines is much more essential than blind faith in a bundle of philosophical theories. No one has the right to advise others unless he is already practicing what he preaches. First, establish the reign of love between the various members in your own home. Let the family become a center of harmonious living, sympathetic understanding, and mutual faith.

The holy duty of man is to be ever aware of the Atman (Divine Spirit) that is installed in every living being. This will make him conscious of the kinship he has with all. This is the basis of the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. Cast away the vice of egoism, the evil of greed, and the poison of envy.

When you seek joy from something outside you, remember that a far greater joy lies in wait within your own inner consciousness.

Continued on page 22 . . .



Expressions of Spiritual Oneness in Various Faiths

Indian Spiritual Culture The basic truth of the spiritual oneness of all creation is emphasized at every stage in Bharatiya (Indian, or literally, “God-devoted”) culture. *Ekam Sath-vipra bahudha vadanti* (Reality is one; the wise call it by different names). The ultimate Reality is one, only. Your mental reactions give rise to multiplicity. What you must offer the Lord is the sense of spiritual oneness (*ekatma-bhava*). Bharatiyas are wont to fold the two palms together and offer salutations to the inner divinity (*namaskar*). What is the inner significance of this form of greeting? It is an expression of the unity of the many in the One.

Islam In Islam, the expression *salaam* is used as a form of greeting. *Sa* in this term signifies the combined expression of *Salokyam*, *Sarupyam*, *Samipyam*, and *Sayujyam* (seeing the Divine, having the vision of the form of the Divine, drawing near to the Divine, and merging in the Divine). When these four expressions are combined and merged into one – *la*, signifying merger – you have *salaam* (the merging of the many in the One).

Christianity In Christianity, the term *Esu* (Jesus) is used to describe Christ. This term also signifies the oneness of Divinity. The inner significance of the term *Esu* is the recognition of the one Divine in all beings.

Jainism In Jainism, the same truth was taught by Mahavira also: ... When all ... [the] sensory processes are brought under unified control (by the conquest of the senses), ... man becomes a conqueror, a *jina*, as termed by the Jains. Because he had conquered his senses, the title of *jina* or victor was conferred on Mahavira.

Buddhism Even as ornaments are varied but the gold they are made of is one, religions are varied but their basic spiritual truth is the same. Buddhism also enunciates the same oneness. It declares that in every human being what should emanate is love. For every being, love is the life-breath. When such love animates a person, he will not resort to violence; he will practice *ahimsa* (nonviolence). Buddha urged that if human life is to be redeemed, men should cultivate love.

Thus, if we try to understand the basic truth of every religion, it will be seen to teach only unity. Religious differences poison the mind. No one should give room for religious differences. All are spiritually one.

In this context, it should be realized that from time to time, prophets, messiahs, and avatars manifest themselves on earth to proclaim the glow of the human estate and make humanness blossom among mankind. ☸

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

(SSS 24:29, Dec 25, 1991, “Develop Spiritual Oneness”). Woodcut by Supriya Kharod.



All Religions Promote Righteous Conduct and Selfless Love

Religion and Morals

The truth proclaimed by all religions is one and the same. The ultimate goal of all religions is the same. The primary object of religion is to cure man of his follies and make him a real human being. Equally, religion aims at promoting righteous conduct by transforming the mental attitude of man. Religion is concerned with developing in man faith in the Spirit, besides his preoccupation with the needs of the body. For all religions the foundation is morality.

If morality declines, humanness will decline together with the eclipse of religion. Morality is the basis of right conduct. Whether it is the state, the society, or the individual, the basis for them all is morality. When morality goes, all the three will be undermined. All prosperity and happiness are based on moral strength. It is to make man realize the value of the ethical life that religions came into being.

Religion aims at promoting the harmony of body, intellect, and mind, through righteous conduct. Right conduct in its totality represents morality, otherwise known as *dharma* (righteousness). *Dharma* also refers to that which is *priyam* (pleasing) and what is of real value in life. When one leads a life governed by moral values, he achieves the most precious things, including name, fame,

and prosperity. Material objects have their value, but *dharma* is invaluable. No price can be set on it.

Dharma and Human Values

Dharma is otherwise known as *neethi* (morality). Morality is equated with selfless love. Religions were instituted to foster the well-being of society through the promotion of love. The ancient sages laid down certain rules and precepts in accordance with the times, the place, and the circumstances of the country.

These were intended to foster human values and were based on the scriptures and the Vedas. No one can determine the precise date, place, or authorship of these regulations. The sages believed that these disciplines were conducive to the promotion of the highest human qualities and were divinely ordained to help mankind.

With the efflux of time and because of the predilections of different sages, these rules got divided into branches and sub-branches, with the names of the respective sages attached to them. The names of sages like Vasishta, Gauthama, Parasara, and Viswamitra are associated with these branches. They were all designed to promote social well-being. No one can fix the date or the name of the founder of the religion of the Bharatiyas (people of Bharat or India; literal

translation, “lovers of God”). The fountain source of all the sects is the Veda.

The Origin of Post-Vedic Religions

Apart from the Vedic religion, other religions came into existence some 2000–2500 years ago. The founders of these religions took note of the prevailing social conditions and sought to promote unity among the various sections through their teachings. There was basically no conflict between these different faiths.

Unfortunately, the differences among the individual followers of these faiths resulted in the growth of narrow loyalties and credal conflicts. In each religion there were some viral elements that promoted hatred of other faiths.

In truth, there is no conflict between one religion and another. The religion of the Bharatiyas is the most ancient in origin. With regard to its Vedic basis, it has been described as Hinduism. The essence of this faith is its universality, as expressed in the saying: “*Loka samastha sukhino bhavantu*” (May everyone in the world be happy).^{*} The Bharatiya faith laid stress on the happiness of everyone.

The objective of Islam, the religion of the Muslims, is also the same. In Persian, *Islam* means “surrender” or “peace.” The inner meaning of this term is that man should surrender to God and live in peace with his fellow men. The holy book of Islam, the Quran, contains many sacred precepts. *Salat* is one such precept. It enjoins one to worship God with steady faith. Another precept is

zakat, which enjoins the believer to practice charity for relieving fellow-beings in need or in distress.

In the scriptures of the Bharatiyas, a similar duty has been laid down in the saying, “It is meritorious to help others and sinful to cause harm to others (*Paropakara punyaya papaya parapidanam*).” It is by practicing such precepts that people professing different faiths lived in harmony. Truth, peace, love, forbearance, and compassion were regarded by Bharatiyas as the five life-breaths of their religion.

Religious Differences should Never Arise

Even the Quran declared that in discussing matters of religion and the teachings of different religions, acrimony should not be imported into the debate, and the differences should be considered without bitterness. This is affirmed by every religion. But the followers of each faith, forgetting this fundamental truth, raised barriers based on credal differences that were really verbal and not fundamental.

Today various kinds of differences are arising among religions. This is not a good thing. Everyone should base his life on the divinely ordained morals and verities and endeavor to foster them. Morality should serve as the beacon light for everyone. Without that light, human life will be plunged in darkness.

The ancient sages made known to the world that by their earnest quest for God, they were able to experience the Divine. “We have seen that sacred effulgent Purusha (Lord) in our hearts.” “We have seen Him

^{*} See pages 23–24.

beyond the *tamas* (darkness) of ignorance,” they declared.

But the purpose of human life is not merely to secure a vision of the Divine or to experience the bliss of that vision. Those who love sugar must seek to become sugar itself. “The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman Itself (*Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavathi*).” Religion aims at bringing about such a transformation. Making him a man to begin with, it seeks to transform him to *Madhava* (Divinity itself). Religion, which has such a sublime purpose, is being degraded to serve petty ends.

Hindu Means Distant from Violence

The Veda is dualistic. We have in India the followers of Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhvacharya, representing three schools of philosophy. These sects are the products of individuals, but the Hindu religion itself is not the creation of any individual. The basic Hindu faith is not for Indians alone but is for all mankind. The word *Hindu* is composed of two syllables – *him*, meaning *himsa* (violence) and *du*, meaning distant. Hinduism is the faith that makes violence distant.

For this reason Hinduism stands out as a religion that strives for the well-being of all peoples, in all countries, at all times. Hence, the appellation, “*Sanathana*,” meaning ancient or timeless. No one knows when it was revealed or who was its founder. Other religions have their chronology. The Hindu religion knows no growth or decline. It belongs to all countries. It is acceptable to all people.

Though people may call themselves Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and the like,

there should be no differences between them. Students should be completely free from sectarian differences. They should respect all religions, because what you cherish in your religion is found in other religions also. If you adhere to your own religion, you need not worry yourself about other religions.

In all religions, people have faith in certain beliefs. But they do not make any efforts, by enquiry or otherwise, to experience what they believe.

Students! Do not entertain religious differences. The God that is worshipped in all religions is one and the same. With this conviction, respect all religions. Realize that the essence of all religions is one. Don’t enter into futile controversies or criticize other religions. To do so is fraught with danger. When you attack another religion, you are really guilty of assailing your own religion. Therefore, show your reverence to everyone. “Whatever deity you adore, the worship reaches the One Supreme Lord.” ☸

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
(SSS 22:24, July 23, 1989)

Continued from page 18 . . .

When you are afraid of someone or something outside you, remind yourself that the fear is born, fed, and fertilized in your own mind, and that you can overcome it by denying it. How can fear counter the path of a spiritual aspirant (*sadhaka*)? It can hide in no shadow; it can pester no *sadhaka* who has God in his heart.

Faith in God Almighty is the *sadhaka's* impregnable armor, and peoples of all lands are *sadhakas*, whether they know it or not. Be steady; do not waver; keep straight on; hold fast to the ideal without despair. Pray until God relents; do not turn away sadly if God does not shower grace when you expect it.

When a religion wants to extend its influence, it has to resort to vilification of other religions and exaggeration of its own excellence. Pomp and publicity become more important than practice and faith.

Sai wants the votaries of each religion to cultivate faith in its own excellence and realize its validity by their own intense practice. That is the Sai religion – the religion that feeds and fosters all religions and emphasizes their common greatness. Take up this religion, boldly and joyfully. ☸

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

SSS 13:23, Oct 10, 1976, “The Sai Religion”
(sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume13/sss13-23.pdf)

Evolution of a *Maha Mantra*: *Samastha Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu*

On August 31, 2008, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba revised the “mantra for universal peace,” *Lokah Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu*, as ***Samastha Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu***, bringing into practice a universal *maha mantra* for cosmic peace and harmony.

Uttering the *maha mantra* to students and Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust staff assembled in the bhajan hall at Prasanthi Nilayam, Bhagawan remarked:

“After the bhajans, you sing, ‘Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu.’ It means, ‘Let everything in this world be happy.’ Don’t say that. Say, ‘SAMASTHA LOKAHA SUKHINO BHAVANTU.’ It means, ‘Let all the worlds be happy.’ It is very broad based and expansive. Let all the worlds be happy.”

While repeating the mantra, Bhagawan gestured as if embracing all of creation and asked the boys to repeat it, explaining, ***“It is not one world, and there is no individual feeling; we should encompass all the worlds.”*** . . .

As the revision reverberated in the holy precincts of Prasanthi Nilayam, Bhagawan advised the boys to begin chanting the new form of the *maha mantra* after Arati by the following Thursday (September 4, 2008), ***“Start it from now or from Thursday.”*** ☸

—SOURCES: www.indiadvine.org/audarya/hinduism-forum/846715-samastha-lokaha-sukhino-bhavanthu.html, Sept 4, 2008;
theprasanthireporter.org/2012/08/samastha-lokah-sukhino-bhavanthu/, Aug 31, 2012.

“Samastha Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu” Is Universal Seva

If we have to live a life that pleases
You, Sweet Mother Sai,
We earnestly need to chant:
**“Samastha Lokah Sukhino
Bhavantu,”**

**Peace for all beings,
For all are dear to You,
Peace for all beings,
For all belong to You.**

*This prayer pleases You immensely,
So let us chant it incessantly,
For life should be lived to please
only You . . .*

**“Samastha Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu,”
Takes one from I to We to finally You,
Samastha Lokah gives to all their due,
Bequeathed upon us by You,
our Cherished God and Guru,**

*Thus,
Samastha Lokah is US,
Universal Seva,
For each and every Jeeva,
That shimmering ray of Divine Grace,
A Cosmic Embrace,
A comprehensive prayer encompassing
every being,*

**Beaming and then berthing,
Gurgling and gushing,**

*Refreshingly birthing,
Instilling,
A spirit of camaraderie,
Invoking a solidarity,
A vivacious vitality,
Re-infusing a long-sought harmony,
Embracing the five elements,
And the five human values, too,
Beyond religion, caste, color, creed,
Country, planet, space and time,
Selfless and true,*

**“Samastha Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu,”
Care for life,
Concern for nature,
Reverence for all beings the Cosmos
through, . . .
And wholesome love that does every
atom imbue,**

**“Samastha Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu,”
Peace for all beings in the Universe,
For all are dear to You,
Peace for all beings in the Universe,
Beloved Mother Sai . . .
For along with me . . .
all belong to You . . .**

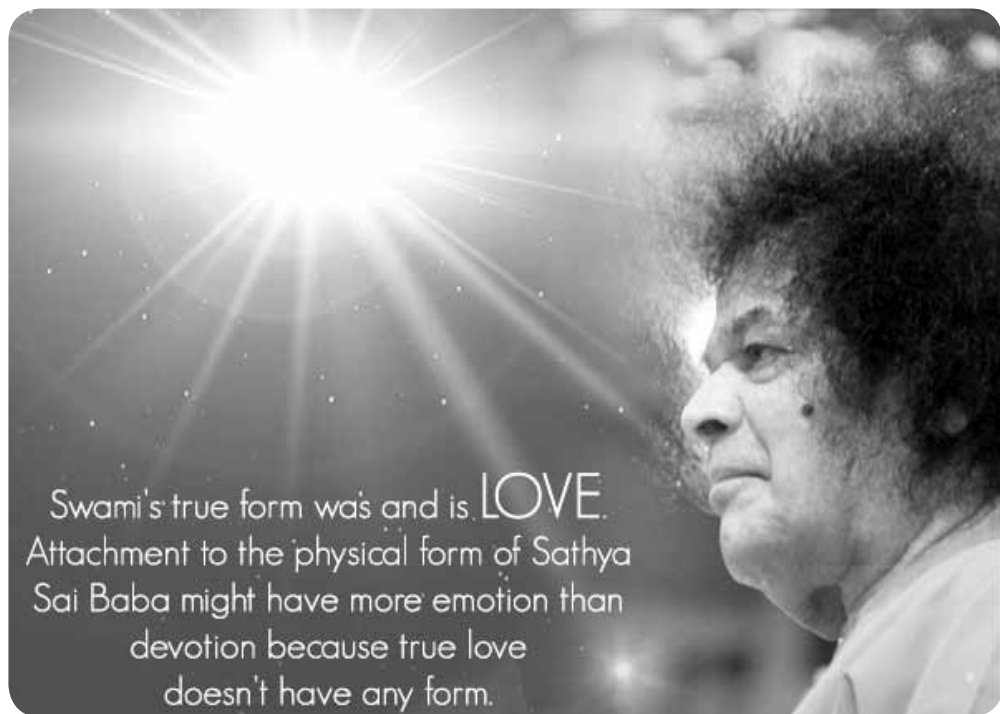
|| Samastha Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu ||

—Ms Jullie Chaudury

<https://forbelovedmothersai.wordpress.com/2012/09/04/samastha-lokaah-sukhino-bhavantu-is-universal-seva/>

From the Form to the Formless

Living in Harmony with the Divine Plan



Ms Nooshin Mehrabani was born in Iran and worked as a reporter for Iranian National Radio and Television. She continued her career with an Iranian TV station after moving to Los Angeles, USA. Since 1991, when she first heard about Sai Baba, she has made many trips to India and has been blessed with several chances of interaction with Bhagawan. She now lives in Puttaparthi and calls it “home.” In 2008, she authored the book, *Love and Suffering*, telling the story of her journey to Swami. IMAGE CREDIT: radiosai.org.

It has been over a year since our beloved Lord Sri Sathya Sai Baba left his precious body. Every one of us has dealt with the shock and pain in a different way. I live in Puttaparthi, which for Sai devotees is like living at the center of the world. This past year, devotees from all

over the globe have come to pay their homage and respect to their loving guru and God, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Some people have not been able to accept the fact that Swami departed from his body. Many rumors among devotees have been passed on through the Internet and by word

of mouth about the return of our Swamiji with the same beautiful body but healthy and strong. There are those who believe this with absolute conviction.

I asked some of these people, when they think Baba would come back and why. I heard a few reasons; “Baba himself has declared that he would live up to 96 years” is a favorite. Others feel he has not finished his mission, and so on.

I cannot find a meaningful answer in these explanations. Swami’s true form was and is LOVE. Attachment to the physical form of Sathya Sai Baba might have more emotion than devotion because true love doesn’t have any form.

All this has made me ask: what do we really know about Swami’s mission and the divine plan? That is God’s business. For those of us who are still here in a body, it seems it is we who have not finished our mission.

It is only by accepting, trusting, and surrendering to His Will that these searching questions will stop popping up in our minds. Detachment is the first step in spirituality. We must ask ourselves if we practice this enough. How can we master detachment in the material world if we cannot learn to accept the passing of the form of the Avatar? How can we ever surrender to His Will?

Swamiji took the body for 85 years and departed from his form only to save us and teach us, just like Jesus who went on the cross to save humanity. How many people realized that truth then? How many realize it now?

Swami himself has said that no disease can ever get close to the body of the Avatar

unless it is a sickness taken from one of the devotees. Baba, out of love and compassion, will do anything to protect his devotees and our planet. He also has a right to change his plan because of circumstances. It is his plan, and God, who resided and functioned in Sai’s body, knows what is best.

In 21 years as Sai Baba’s devotee, one teaching went to my heart immediately: *“Ask yourself ‘Who am I?’ and then, through practice, you will find your true identity, which is not separate from God.”* If we could realize our true identity, then it would be easy to know who Swami is. Living in the world of duality, sometimes we forget.

The first day when I saw Swami’s body inside the glass casket, I asked him, “Where are those shining eyes? Where is that beautiful smile, and where are those raising hands to bless us?”

It wasn’t more than a few seconds before a strong awareness filled my whole being. All of these – the shine, not the eyes; the beauty, not just the smile; the blessing, not the hand – belong to the *Atma* (formless inner divinity). They are not of the body.

The Swami inside me added, “I left my body here for two-and-a-half days for everybody to come and see that when the spirit departs from the body, what remains is only a corpse. This body was an instrument to play the role of divinity.”

I don’t blame my Sai brothers or sisters for the sadness they feel over Swami’s passing. God, through Sathya Sai Baba’s body, gave us love, hope, and happiness. The omnipresent God is also in the five elements

Keeping our relationship with our divine
guru and God alive is up to us.

of this world, and our own body comes from these elements.

Live or die, God is all-pervasive and exists in everything. Trusting in that wisdom and in the all-knowing God, who knows what is best for his children and creation, is what takes us from the form to the formless.

Sathya Sai came to teach us our true identity, not only to restore *dharma*, truth, love, peace, and nonviolence. If we want Swami to return in his same body, are we not like grownup children who know how to walk but still want a parent to carry us around?

Swamiji left us the treasure of his teachings, and whether he comes back in the same body or not, the teaching is eternally alive. By reading the Ramayana and Bhagavad Gita, we experience love for Rama and Krishna, and we haven't even seen them in this lifetime. Still, we tune into their teachings; we feel their love and greatness. Any love for the physical world is bound to perish; the only permanent love is love of *Atma*. That is why it is wise not to attach to the temporary.

One of the last discourses Swami gave was about the true identity of God. He said, "*God doesn't have any name, form, or attribute. Nobody has seen God.*" The

connection with a form of God is temporary, but the memory of the form is in us. The connection with the energy that functions in the body stays with us to eternity. That is why God takes a form, to rebuild our connection to that formless.

We as devotees cannot limit God to one form. Christians say "Jesus is the Lord," but they cannot say, "The Lord is Jesus," because then they limit God to one form. All names and forms belong to the one and only formless God, the *Atma* or spirit that plays a role in every body.

The names of Rama, Krishna, and Sai Baba are assigned to forms that hold the Divine. The body goes, but the divine energy lives on even now. Swami taught us that God never comes or goes; only the body is bound to birth and death.

I don't like to feel that my Swami, who was God, is gone from my life. He still visits me in my dreams. He is busy manifesting many miracles for those who still need to see his omnipresence in the physical level.

But keeping our relationship with our divine guru and God alive is up to us. If we think Swami is dead, then he doesn't play a part in our life anymore, because we feel he is gone for good. If we believe he is the

Eternal Truth and will always guide, protect, and save us, then we shouldn't be concerned whether he is in a body or not. God is invisible and everywhere. God is capable of moving mountains and doesn't need to be in a body to do it.

God could come back to the same body, but what does that prove? Do we need that? Sai Baba was the personification of divinity. If we need him to come back, perhaps we doubt his holiness and our own experience with him.

It is up to us to interpret our relationship with Swami, through self-inquiry. Strong faith and devotion can do unbelievable things. We must at least have that much confidence in ourselves. For some of us, it may be easier to pray for him to come back than to pray for elevation to a higher state of universal awareness.

For me, all this concern over his physical return is just another *leela* that Swami has created to test our faith, to see if we are ready for next step of seeing God everywhere, or if we want proof of divinity over and over again.

All the messengers or avatars of God come for a certain period of time. They leave the truth of their teaching for us. We believe in them, even if we have never seen them. After two thousand years, people still go to Jesus's birthplace because they believe in him.

In this era, with Sai's grace, we have access to his audio, video, and discourses that captured his beautiful and soft voice. We don't have to wait two thousand years. We have inherited all these treasures here

and now, so we can be grateful for it and not waste any time. We can always connect with Swami through this if we wish.

Swami teaches us that the secret to happiness is to live in the present, not the past or future. By passing along all these rumors about Baba's coming back, we are doing the opposite of his teachings. We are not focusing on the present, trusting and leaving everything to him.

A few years back I met an American devotee who shared with me a valuable story. One day he had an opportunity to ask Swami about the year 2050 and a theory he had heard that the Sun would hit our planet and destroy everything. Swami very swiftly answered him, "*Why are you worried? You won't even be here.*"

What a wonderful lesson! We are always worried about something, even if it is not related to us.

Swami doesn't want us to think of the past or worry about the future. He never gave direct answers to satisfy our curiosity. He revealed things as he willed.

Some devotees' minds just cannot stay in the present. They go the extra mile to get information about Prema Sai's birthplace or life. This is funny, because God is always smarter than us. Swami may have mentioned Prema Sai's birthplace, but do we know when exactly the next Avatar will reveal his avatarhood? He may be born in that village but may move to another place later.

From within, he will call his devotees to his presence. We have to open our heart and empty our mind instead of filling it

with unnecessary information and staying trapped in the duality of worldly life. If we live in the present, we can keep the mind under control and not worry if God doesn't want to reveal his secret.

Swamiji said he doesn't want us to walk behind or in front of him. It is enough if give our hand to him and walk with him. He will make sure we receive all we need to know in the perfect time.

Swamiji! We all love you dearly! But for myself, I don't pray for you to come back in the prison of the physical body. Instead, I pray for you to take me where I can merge with you, my beloved. ☸

—**Nooshin Mehrabani**

Puttaparthi, India

Reprinted courtesy of Heart2Heart e-journal,
June 2012 (http://media.radiosai.org/journals/vol_10/01JUN12/03_Nooshin.htm)



When he was asked in what form the next advent would take place, Shirdi Baba told Abdul Baba alone, "I will give darshan in the name of Sathya for upholding Truth." That is the present advent.

The two bodies are different, but the divinity is one. The first advent was for revealing divinity. The second advent is to awaken the divinity (in human beings). The next advent is for propagating divinity. The three Sais are Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai, and Prema Sai. The reason for relating all this is that today happens to be the birthday of Shirdi Baba [September 28, 1835].

Baba [Shirdi] attained samadhi in 1918. Bodies are transient. These vestures are assumed only for the sake of devotees. Unless the Divine comes with a form, no one can develop faith in the Formless. The Divine in human form is the preparation for comprehending the Formless Absolute. . . .

It is not easy, therefore, for anyone to understand the ways of the Lord. . . . Seek, therefore, to understand the ways of God and, through devotion and worship, strive to experience the Divine.

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**, Sept 28, 1990

Temple of Healing

Volunteering at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield



Human life is God's gift. Make proper use of it by rendering service to society.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 33:07, April 5, 2000)

Over the past three years I have made nine month-long trips to India to work at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences in Bangalore. It has been the most rewarding experience of my career. I trained and worked as a pediatrician and for the past 30 years have worked in administration and as a management consultant for hospitals and large medical groups in the US. Getting to India has been quite a journey.

Attracted to Sai Service Projects

In 1998, my wife-to-be Susan told me about a holy man living in India – Sri Sathya Sai Baba. His basic message was that we are all divine and

we must recognize the divinity within ourselves and in all other living things. He taught that we can progress on this path by providing selfless service without expectation of reward. His watchwords were “Love All, Serve All.”

This sounded good, but I wasn't sure how people put this into practice. Sai Baba has millions of followers all over the world and a huge following in India. What I found out was that his followers (or devotees) worldwide were engaged in an amazing array of service projects.

According to Sai Baba, all humans are entitled to free education, free healthcare, and access to water. He set up programs in these areas as models for others to follow. Since I have always been involved in helping the poor, I was quickly attracted.

Since 1999 I have worked with the Sai organization feeding the homeless in Washington DC, setting up free medical screening programs in inner-city churches in Baltimore, and doing environmental clean-up. I also have traveled almost annually to India to spend time at Sai Baba's ashram.

As many know, Sai Baba's system of universally free health care includes free general hospitals in Bangalore and Puttaparthi and also super-specialty hospitals (the Sri Sathya Sai Institutes for Higher Medical Sciences or SSSIHMS) in both locations. The two super-specialty hospitals are beautiful "Temples of Healing" that provide state-of-the-art advanced services, completely free to all who come. The focus is on combining cutting-edge science with love and compassion for the patients. The SSSIHMS in Whitefield (SSSIHMS-WHF), Bangalore, where I now volunteer, has 330 beds, state-of-the-art equipment and staff, and offers cardiology, cardiothoracic and vascular surgery, neurology, and neurosurgery. All care is completely free of charge.

An Opportunity to Volunteer

I had been interested in volunteering in the Sai hospitals but unable to work as a doctor because I no longer held an active medical license. Then, in 2008, I visited the super-specialty hospital in Whitefield and spoke with the Assistant to the Director. When he found out about the management consulting I was doing in the US, he asked me if I could help them with Quality Assurance. I eagerly agreed.

Imagine walking into the main entrance of a fantastic hospital facility (see picture on next page), and in the lobby there is no information desk, no

billing office, no gift shop, and no coffee shop. There is a vast, pin-drop-quiet, empty lobby, with a 90-foot-high dome, marble floors, and balconies from each wing. A volunteer is stationed at the main door, reminding patients and visitors to remove their shoes and offering directions.

Patients without appointments come to the screening clinic at 6:00 in the morning and line up. The first 70 are seen every day.

Patients are scheduled for surgery based on the urgency of their case; some wait long periods of time to be called. Because the need is so great and resources limited, the hospital is very specific as to which cases it can handle. For example, children with severe congenital heart diseases are scheduled at the rate of one every two weeks because of the great demand on resources.

In January 2009, after much preparation, I made my first volunteer visit. I wasn't sure what exactly I was going to do. After a few days of meeting people and seeing the programs, we decided to focus on re-writing hospital policies and procedures and on Infection Control. There is a comprehensive electronic medical record system that we are also able to use to capture data.

At my first meeting with the medical staff, I received a very important lesson. I suggested we could decrease the length of stay for cardiac surgery patients from ten days to four or five, as in the US. The chairman of the department gently interrupted me and said that we certainly could discharge patients earlier, but many had to travel for up to three days on trains, with little food and unsanitary conditions.



Reverence-inspiring sanctity is palpable in the silence of the lobby and rotunda area of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (super-specialty hospital), Bangalore

It is much better to keep them in the hospital, he explained, making sure they are well nourished and clean, making sure they are healed before they go home. Our goal is to take care of the **patient first** and be a model for how care should be delivered.

A Model of Ideal Healthcare

This is a free hospital but obviously cannot serve all in need. It has been set up as a model of Ideal Healthcare. The staff provides care that addresses the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of patients. The hospital has a group of 20 volunteers who have been trained as counselors. Here is an example of how they work. Patients who come for outpatient cardiology evaluations arrive early in the morning and receive diagnostic testing throughout the morning.

Then, in the afternoon, the patients are seen by cardiology residents, fellows, and consultants. Finally, the Chairman of Cardiology sees every patient who might need surgery or catheterization. After he reviews the case and gives the patient instructions, the patient spends about a half hour with a counselor, who makes sure the patient understands all the instructions, the disease, and the follow-up steps. Patients are also encouraged to pray and put faith in whatever spiritual power they believe in.

I have found that working with the hospital's senior managers is so different from working in the US. The managers put patient care first and see their job as making sure the best care is delivered. There is no competition for advancement or personal reward.

The emphasis is on serving the patient, not the financial bottom line. Each manager has received training as a technician – in radiology, laboratory, or perfusion (for open heart surgery) – and worked at that task for four years before becoming managers of the various departments. So, those in administrative positions have had ample real life experience in the clinical setting.

People ask how a highly advanced hospital can give free care. One of the principles of the Sai organization is never to solicit donations. Sai followers and benefactors donate generously on their own to a charitable Central Trust that carefully utilizes the donations. Much of the annual budget comes from interest from the initial trust donations. Also, doctors and medical equipment suppliers from around the world donate equipment.

In 2010, while I was at the hospital for four weeks, a team of cardiologists from the University of Utah Medical School came to volunteer. These doctors represented the tops of their fields in both electrophysiology (pacemakers) and repairing holes in the heart using catheters rather than surgery. They brought with them one million dollars' worth of advanced catheters and pacemakers that had been donated by medical equipment suppliers in the US.

At the end of their one-week visit, I asked the lead cardiologist about his experience. He said it was one of the best experiences he had ever had, because the patients and their families were so respectful. When he came down the hall in the morning, they would stand and bow to him, thanking him profusely. I then

asked how much time he had had to teach, during the visit. He replied that he had taught very little – the Chairman of Cardiology could already do everything he could, and with much inferior equipment. This cardiologist was eager to return to the hospital with his training fellows and residents, so that they too could experience working in this environment.

Significant Results and Lessons Learned

The hospital's Infection Control project has had significant results. A huge problem in hospitals around the world, including in the US, involves post-operative infections and infections with resistant bacteria. For three months in the summer of 2010, we experienced no infections of wounds, of indwelling catheters, or pneumonia for patients on ventilators. These projects all fit within a campaign for patient safety led by the World Health Organization. In 2011–12, hospital staff at SSSIHMS implemented a Surgical Safety Checklist program. Their presentation at a conference of the Indian Quality in Healthcare Organization won first prize.

In January 2011, *American Journal of Medical Quality* published an article from the SSSIHMS-WHF hospital. Our project used an electronic discharge summary to decrease waiting time for discharge, from an average of ten hours to just four. This streamlined process helps patients significantly, many of whom must travel far and long, just to get home.

The lessons for me have been many. The first lesson was that patients' needs and safety can and must be put first – before monetary considerations. Second, even in a developing

country, good intentions and hard work can overcome many obstacles. Third was patience: in my work in the US, “time is money,” and work must be done quickly and efficiently. At the Sai Hospital, the pace is slower and new plans are implemented very slowly and at the “right” time. (Clearly, “I” am not in charge; it all happens in “divine timing.”) Fourth, to accomplish the best outcome, all patients must be treated with great respect, and their physical, mental, and spiritual needs are equally important to meet.

It is a joy to work at this unique institution. I whistle my way to work each day. When I am home in the US, I constantly follow up

on projects by e-mail. With all the talk about healthcare reform in the US, I feel the Sathya Sai healthcare system is a model for what healthcare should be, ideally. I am thankful to be part of this great model. ☸

—Dr Michael Rakoff

Shepherdstown, West Virginia

Illustration by Supriya Kharod

NOTE: Specialists in the US who would like to volunteer at the Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospitals may call Dr Hari Conjeeveram at 734-223-5173. For volunteering at the General Hospitals, email Dr Chandra Chari at crvmd9@gmail.com for further information.



***D**o not serve for the sake of reward, attracting attention, or earning gratitude, or from a sense of pride at your own superiority in skill, wealth, status, or authority. Serve because you are urged by love. When you succeed, ascribe the success to the grace of God who urged you on, as love within you. When you fail, ascribe the failure to your own inadequacy, insincerity, or ignorance.*

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 6:8, end quote following discourse of Mar 17, 1966)

A Hunger to Serve: Upgrading Our Service Project

The following is a sampling from the *SaiLoveinAction.org* website. The website features personal accounts of living the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba through Sai service projects around the world. Visit *SaiLoveinAction.org* often to see newly-posted stories from all regions of the USA and beyond.

A small Sathya Sai Center in Northern Colorado debated whether they had the resources to commit to doing more service. Their solution: a system to evaluate and monitor service goals, prior to “upgrading” their commitment to **“Do More Service Today!”**



“HOW CAN WE DO MORE service for Sai Baba and for those in desperate need, without over-turning the fragile little boat of our well-established but small Sai Center?” I often asked myself. “We can do much more!” I felt.

As president of a very small Sathya Sai Center in the sparsely populated Colorado ranchlands, 40 minutes north of Denver, Colorado, it had come to my attention since 2007 that the group was ready to be inspired and prepared to upgrade our main selfless service project. The ten of us had been successfully doing four or five minor projects, yet we felt that a team project outside the Center would be a “spiritual deepener” and a community contribution.

Thus it was that after donating food and funds to the Weld Food Bank in Greeley, Colorado, for eight years, we agreed to commit to enrolling in the Food Bank Warehouse Volunteer Training. If, after the training, we were still committed to working one night a month as a team, we would commit indefinitely to our service project “upgrade.” Since then, we have successfully developed a cheerful, competent, dependable team of food bank volunteers, without losing any members and without the complaints, power struggles, or arguments that sometimes plague such projects. Our organizational name is **TEAM SAI**, in which **SAI** stands for **Service in Action Initiative**.

Before the upgrade, some research was necessary for the group. In fact, we had to learn the answers to the questions we are often

asked by other Centers in North America that are interested in carrying out a similar project.

Our Sai Center members felt we could easily and capably fill the drastic need for county volunteers. As a final assessment of our potential dependability, this author requested divine input, and it came. We needed new guidelines and criteria for ensuring that we would be excellent volunteers who would be “low-maintenance” for the food bank warehouse and that the extra service activity would not threaten the weekly Center meeting attendance or other projects already in place.

“DMST” (Do More Service Today!): Is the service Doable? Manageable? Sustainable? Trainable?

In meditation, Sai Baba gave us a four-part readiness-assessment guideline for our Center, which may be applied to any Sai Center in the world. Our criteria for service upgrade involves a simple mnemonic device: “**Do More Service Today,**” or **DMST (Do-able, Manageable, Sustainable, Trainable).**

D = Is It Do-able? Is the project do-able with the current members’ ages, lifestyles, time, health, and stamina?

Our answer: This seemed like the perfect project for our ten members – four men and six women, ranging in ages from 21 to 74. All were in good physical condition with adequate stamina to lift boxes and to bend and stretch in the warehouse. Even more important, they all had a good sense of humor, worked well as a team, didn’t complain, and would represent the group well in the community.

M = Is It Manageable? Who will be in charge of member contacts, reminders, and updates, and as a liaison between the Sai Center and the community organization? Is that person honest, trustworthy, and dependable? Where’s the indication of a track record of success in dependability? Do they faithfully attend meetings, contribute leadership, and keep harmony, rather than engage in drama and conflict in the group?

Our answer: Our current service coordinator, though a fairly new devotee, met all the requirements wonderfully. The other officers and members were available for back-up support, if necessary. But the job description was clear that she was the project leader and must see to it that the required eight people or more are committed to coming each time, on time (which means 15 minutes early for all events) and “on purpose,” with a cheerful, can-do attitude.

S = Is It Sustainable? What is the likelihood that the members will sustain their momentum, attendance, and enthusiasm over time? Will they commit to a year or two, and then renew after that? How can the project continue to be compelling, and how can the members deepen their spirituality and gratitude and grow in their leadership skills in the project, over time?

Our answer: The project, due to the extreme and growing hunger in America and in Weld County, Colorado, has kept us not only interested but helped us raise our own food consciousness. Most members now grow their own gardens, do vegetable composting, and have learned to freeze and dry food for family use instead of wasting food or eating out often, as in former times. The group has learned

many new skills, such as preparing several thousand backpacks for youth at risk the past year; building emergency food boxes for needy families and elders; and sorting donated food items for expiry dates, leaks, and suitability for hungry recipients.

T= Is It Trainable? Most community service organizations today have a strong volunteer department, complete with a volunteer coordinator, a newsletter, training sessions, and annual volunteer recognition dinners or events.

Our answer: We happily participated in the training offered by the Weld Food Bank, which has a superb volunteer department and coordinator, who gives safety training and awareness classes to all new groups who join the 1,500 existing county volunteers who feed the hungry in the county.

Do-able, Manageable, Sustainable, Trainable . . . Then What?

1. What is your exit strategy? Always have an exit strategy! If members relocate, retire, go off to college, die, become incapacitated, etc., the added instability can put the project in jeopardy. Ensure that even if you or your group decide to move on, move up to greater regional, state, or national service, or re-think the commitment, there will be other volunteers in place to pick up the slack.

Our Answer: If we ever decide to re-think our involvement, 1,500 other volunteers will still be working for the food bank. So far, we are growing in teamwork and leadership and thoroughly enjoy our project involvement.

2. Apply your learning to other life areas:

Consider the problem you are addressing via service, such as hunger, and reflect on whether new legislation needs to be enacted in your state, such as in zoning (e.g., allowing for city food-animals, such as chickens or milk-goats, for family self-sufficiency); food safety (e.g., labeling of GMO foods); labor laws (for protecting the health of field workers from pesticides, injustice, and so on).

3. Teach what you know:

Share your knowledge and skill-sets with Center members. The Northern Colorado Sai Center has frequent workshops, taught by our members, on gardening, camping, self-reliance, preparing for emergencies, and first aid. We have camped together, taken field trips, shared articles, traded books, and stayed in frequent contact between meetings.

4. Insist on harmony:

Harmony is essential for every service project. At our meetings at Grace House, Harmony Farm, we treat each other with respect, love, and friendliness, including celebrating the “birthdays of the month”); we also welcome newcomers with warmth and interest, teaching them what we know on a myriad of topics. Attendees who prefer discord have quickly moved on.

5. Create a mission statement for yourself, your family, and your Center.

Since we are big fans of clear and not muddled or fuzzy thinking, we like the expression, “If you don’t know where you are going, how will you ever reach your destination?” It is immensely helpful to have clear goals for one’s life (qualities, virtues, accomplishments), your lifetime service, and for growing your Center in its service “output.” Sai

Baba says that *“Most think knowledge is power, but in fact, character is power.”* (SSS 37:1, 2004.1.1)

What We Have Learned and How We Have Grown

Northern Colorado Sai Center members, when asked to reflect on their growth and learning from both Center and individual service projects, have usually prefaced their answers with a chuckle, since the lessons keep coming. The current center service coordinator says, “It’s been fun to see the group become more bonded as a smoothly-functioning team, especially since we live in different towns in the area and primarily see each other at Sai meetings. We’ve really grown, and nobody complains about the work or occasional changes in our assigned tasks.”

Another member, a college music major, likes to regale the warehouse Sai volunteers with new songs as we fill backpacks for disadvantaged youth. “This project makes me realize how fortunate we are, compared to most of the population,” she says. “I have also enjoyed working as a volunteer for Kid’s Café, which provides hot meals and snacks for children after school and in the summertime.”

Another center officer says she enjoys the amount of work that gets accomplished in less than two hours each month. “It’s so much fun to see how the ladies collapse the food boxes and how the men move the large cartons for us, build new commodity boxes, and organize the pallets that we stack with hundreds of boxes each night after filling them. Together, we really do know how to tackle a job with joy and laughter and to meet and exceed our goals

in a short time! I look forward to any time we can work together.”

As for this author and her transformation during the various stages of said service project, many things come to mind. First, I fell in love with our Sai Center members all over again and have seen new depths of beauty in their character. Second, I thank Sai Baba over and over for directing us to this service opportunity and to working with the tremendous people at the food bank. Third, my love for the poor, the hungry, and the suffering has greatly expanded. Now I often go up to strangers who are in pain or who are destitute or hungry and ask them how I can help them right now – what do they need and when did they last eat? I take them to lunch; give them some water, a snack, and some cash; or gift them with an energy treatment.

In Service to the Golden Age

In conclusion, even though economic times seem gloomy around the world, we know from Sai Baba’s teachings that we are still in the Yuga Sandhya, or short intermediate period between two great eras (such as the Piscean Era and the Aquarian Age).

As you read this, a Golden Age of Peace and Plenty is emerging, with a huge global outpouring of healings and miracles, while the old paradigm is simultaneously unraveling to make way for the new, for the sustainable *satvic* (pure, balanced) values of peace, truth, love, right action, and nonviolence, which will be the firm foundation for the New Era.

Continued on page 48 . . .

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

Diploma Courses One and Two, June-July 2012 at Santa Barbara, California

*Let us all move together, let us all grow together;
let us all stay united and share our knowledge; let
us live together with friendship and harmony.*

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (March 16, 2005)



The Santa Barbara coastline, with the UCSB campus (where the ISSE courses were held) in the foreground.

(SOURCE: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SBSouthCoast.jpg>; CC-BY-SA-3.0-MIGRATED; Released under the GNU Free Documentation License.)

The Institute of Sathya Sai Education-USA (ISSE-USA) made substantial progress toward two of its more signal goals this past June as participants in Diploma Courses One and Two completed the residential phase of their requirements for these Courses. Courses One and Two were delivered concurrently and took place over seven days at the University of California, Santa Barbara (the previous year, only Course One had been offered), during the last week of June into the first week of July 2012.

The 42 participants came from all 10 US Sai Organization regions and included a significant number of professional educators, many of whom were young adults. As they continue to progress through the Diploma Course, several will be added to the Institute's human resource community and thus become better positioned to take part in extending Sai's divine teachings on education to schools, communities, and families throughout the nation.

Experienced Institute faculty provided enlightening and engaging presentations



Diploma Course 1: *Left to right, front row:* Kara Downs, Kalika Grana, Jan DiSanti, Meera Atreyam, Michelle Cervantes, Rohini Hak, Toby Johnson, Madhura Shetty, Doris Hampton (faculty), Ronne Marantz (faculty), John Johnson (faculty); *back row:* Bettina Biggart (advisor), Bea Flaig (advisor), Vishwarupa, Barbara Jahn, Digna Mola, Jasotha Kuga, Ayshwarya Subramanian, Ananta Gudipaty, Hymon Johnson, Sunil Lekhi, Cheruvu Murthy (faculty), Chitra Niranjana, Deborah Keaton, Renuka Rajani, Kavita Bhuyan, Jhuma Kamboj, Shelly Gupta, Creta Schiermann (faculty), Megan Bennett (faculty), Kathleen Salzano (faculty).

on designated topics, while participants exhibited consistent and well-focused engagement through discerning comments, incisive questions, and interactive work. Several described the atmosphere as akin to Prashanthi Nilayam. On the final day, to the great delight of the faculty, candidates in each Course demonstrated impressive ingenuity and substantial learning through first-rate cooperative presentations and simulations.

The work of the Institute, being entirely focused on the promulgation of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV), is distinct from that of Sai Spiritual Education (SSE). SSE is an integral part of the US Sai Organization and is coordinated nationally

by Mrs Berniece Mead. SSE is expressly for devotees of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and their children, while SSEHV operates under the auspices of the ISSE-USA and is designed to spread Sai's divine teachings on education to the general public.

Both SSEHV and SSE apply the philosophy of Sathya Sai Educare through the fostering of the five universal human values of Truth, Right Action, Peace, Love, and Nonviolence, and other common elements. Yet the organizational structures, approach, emphases, and primary audiences have practical differences.



Diploma Course 2: *Left to right, front row:* Juanita Johnson (adjunct faculty), Rosa Lina Medina, Cheruvu Murthy, Yamini Bala, Ronne Marantz, Waynal Crowder; *second row:* John Johnson, Bettina Biggart, Hymon Johnson, Bea Flaig, Doris Hampton; *third row:* Kanwal Bahri, Elizabeth Wu, Pat Wing, Ramavidya Jones, Kalika Grana, Kathleen Salzano, Wendy Ward-Hoffer, April Skrobiza, Creta Schiermann, Megan Bennett, Anandamayi Whitaker, Beth Clark. *Not in photo:* Berniece Mead (advisor), Tom Scovill (faculty), Kay Scovill (faculty), Gopika Freeman-Womack (faculty).

Institutes of Sathya Sai Education

Delegated by the Education Committee of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation (SSSWF), the authority and responsibility of the Institutes of Sathya Sai Education throughout the world include Diploma Course instruction and certification, along with approval and oversight of all SSEHV public initiatives and programs.

The Institute of Sathya Sai Education - USA continues to build a broad and astute resource base, refine its methodologies, and prudently extend its reach. One such recent example of an extension taking root is a newly approved SSEHV home schooling project in a San Diego, California, school district, initiated by Dr Kathleen Salzano, an Associate of the Institute and new member of the faculty.

Course One, with 20 participants, ran from June 24–30, 2012. Course Two, with 22 participants, began on June 25 and ended July 1. Subsequent to completing this year's coursework, participants are now in the process of completing their fieldwork, a requirement of both Courses, under the guidance of Faculty Advisors.

Courses One and Two will again be offered in 2013, by application only. Course Three, the final requirement for the Standard Diploma, will be offered in 2014.

Quality-Conscious Refinement

Mindful that an exemplary internal environment and superb all-around quality are critical to all programs and activities using

SAI EDUCATION: VALUES IN ACTION

Sai's Divine Name, the Institute remains in a continuing process of refining the work it has undertaken while building effective and supportive relationships. A book on Sathya Sai Educare compiled by Pat Wing is near ready for publication, which will be our first signal publication. A major project led by Wendy Ward-Hoffer to enhance and dramatically expand our educational resources is also underway.

The ISSE-USA is moving forward as practical, while doing our utmost to keep the goals of spiritual development and self-transformation immediately before us.

The Institute, like all organizations bearing Sai's divine and venerated name,

is a field of action intended to support and sustain movement toward the goal of spiritual awakening.

We pray to use this blessed opportunity to do so in ways that are friendly, flexible, and loving, while demonstrating how best to conduct exemplary human-values-centered education from top to bottom and, more important, inside-out.

We invite your interest and urge you to work with us along lines of action that will be pleasing to our enigmatic, all-knowing, all-loving Namesake. ☸

—Hymon T Johnson, EdD
Director, ISSE-USA



ISSE-USA Contact Information

Persons interested in the work of the Institute, in attending upcoming Diploma Courses, or in assisting with institutional development may kindly contact the Institute at isse-usa@cox.net.

Those interested in SSEHV school-related projects, please contact Kalika Grana, chair of the Partnership Schools Committee, at kalika_grana@yahoo.com.

Those interested in SSEHV community-based programs may please contact Mrs Doris Hampton, chair of the Community Programs Committee, at waddoris@swbell.net.

Leading a Spiritual Life: Self-Satisfaction

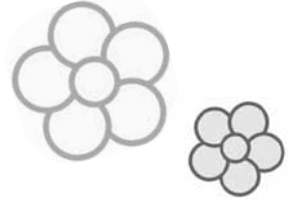
The USA Sai Young Adults produce a quarterly newsletter that delves into topics of significance in spiritual understanding and practice, as part of an organized Spiritual Discipline Program. (Current and past issues of the YA Newsletter are downloadable at saiyousa.net.)

This year's topic is "Leading a Spiritual Life," with each issue focusing on one of four tenets elucidated by Sri Sathya Sai Baba as forming the foundation for life: Self-Confidence, Self-Satisfaction, Self-Sacrifice, and Self-Realization. The excerpts that follow are from the July 2012 issue, on the meaning and practice of Self-Satisfaction.

Understanding the topic: What is self-satisfaction? Self-Satisfaction may be explained through Sathya Sai Baba's teachings on the following five attributes: **contentment**, **equanimity**, **omnipresence/omniscience**, **gratitude**, and **peace/bliss**.



We surveyed YAs across the nation on their insights on this very important topic, through a number of questions:



What does Self-Satisfaction mean to you?

1. Being content with what I have, what I am.
2. Waking up in the morning and not being attached to the physical world. Having a cap on desires and being content with the world around me, with all my actions, and having a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day.
3. Being self-sufficient, i.e., not depending on others or any external source to make me feel good (or bad) about myself or about my life. Completely aware (not just intellectually but beyond) of the divine presence within myself and therefore satisfied, since everything I need is within.
4. To be peaceful within – no restlessness due to jealousy, greed, expectations, disappointments, etc.
5. Self-satisfaction to me means that one is completely satisfied in the Higher Self, and the world has no pull or effect, positive or negative, on the person.

How do you practice or manifest Self-Satisfaction in your daily life?

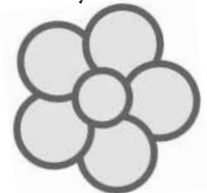
1. I smile every day; the Self-Satisfaction I receive by having someone smile back at me is all the joy the world needs today.
2. Start with pure intentions and weed out false intentions, such as competition, ego driven motives, etc. Ask Swami to make me the instrument and work through me so that no matter the outcome, I am able to surrender to His will and take any downfall as an experience for spiritual growth.
3. I contemplate on the past events and finally understand that whatever happened was meant to happen that way, and I should be satisfied with it because the best is yet to come. And as a matter of fact, the best does come and makes me self-satisfied.
4. By turning the awareness within (to the Divine) at every moment – such as a conversation, activity, or anything else – and try to do this whenever I can remember.
5. Confirm to myself that I am living the five human values.

How does Self-Satisfaction lead to Self-Realization?

1. It's another stepping-stone. You can only become one with God when you are satisfied with yourself.
2. Per Swami, when there is (Higher) Self Satisfaction, that leads to self-sacrifice – the sacrifice or destruction of the self (our ego). When that happens, there is no longer the feeling of separateness between you and me. All is one, there is only I - the Paramatma. That is Self-Realization.
3. When you are satisfied with everything around you, whether it's positive or negative, it will make the steps or path toward self-realization better.
4. I believe that every moment, when lived to the fullest and totally in the present, means that we are living in unison with the universe's principles. Whenever there is contentment with the self, a blissful feeling, feeling of abundance, joy, etc., it is a self-realized state.
5. Swami says we must love ourselves first and have self-confidence. This act of love and confidence toward our self can lead to self-satisfaction. I believe that ultimate self-satisfaction is when we have completely surrendered to Sai; thereby, every action becomes His work. This leads to self-realization because at this state we no longer believe that we are separate from God but are one with Him.

From where does Self-Satisfaction originate?

1. Self-Satisfaction comes from the knowledge that you don't need anything to complete you; you are already complete and whole.
2. Faith and confidence in Swami. Whatever I am is Swami's will and creation. Whatever I have/do not have is also His will. So I try to remind myself this fact constantly and Be Happy.
3. From within! From contentment with the Self's plan in life and knowing that all will be fine.
4. When you're working in God's Will and not fighting against it with your own. If you don't compare yourself to others and are satisfied with the level of ability you have, you can easily experience self-satisfaction.
5. Ultimately, self-satisfaction is a reward from one's actions. However, I like to think that it originates from your own self. Only you can decide if you are satisfied by an action you have taken. No one else has this power. Therefore, you decide your level of satisfaction. However, this must be done carefully and not mistaken with complacency.



Practical Tips on Obtaining Self-Satisfaction

Love Yourself Unconditionally

- We cannot obtain Self-Satisfaction if we don't love ourselves first. Every day, look into the mirror and say to yourself out loud, "Did I tell you today how beautiful you are and how much you are loved?"
- This should not be an ego-boosting statement and that all are equally beautiful. It's not the external body you are referring to, it is the Inner Divinity. Remember, the same Divine Light is also present in all; thus, all are beautiful and loved.

Follow the Inner Voice with Confidence

- When we follow the inner guidance and carry out Swami's will in our thoughts, words, and deeds, automatically we will be satisfied with everything that we are and do. There will be no restlessness or sense of comparison with others.

Be Thankful

- Remind yourself of all the things and people in your life that you are thankful for, especially when you feel restless and not content.
- Accept everything in life as a gift from God.
- Maintain a gratitude journal – on a daily basis find something you are grateful for and spend five minutes writing about it.

Remind Yourself of Whom You Really Are

- Swami says we are not one person but three: the one we think we are, the one others think we are, and the One we really are (God).
- Keep repeating/chanting *Soham*, meaning *I am That*, throughout the day; if we are working we may repeat it silently.
- Keep reminding ourselves that we are not the doer.

Practice Ceiling on Desires

- Practice not wasting **money, food, time, or energy**.
- Be appreciative of all four resources in your life.

Be in the Present Moment

- Remember the omnipresence of the Divine.
- Follow the inner voice with self-confidence.
- Do your daily chores.



—From **Summer 2012 USA Young Adult Newsletter**
 Spiritual Discipline Program 2012:
 "Leading a Spiritual Life" (Self-Satisfaction), saiyausa.net

A Gentle Wind

*Not everyone can create Light
Or change the breath of the sun
Into a wax pillar,
But the Candle Maker can.*

*Everyone needs candle light.
For when the sun sleeps,
The Candle Maker breathes light
Into every home.*

*He casts each candle as if it were a masterpiece;
It is, in His eyes.*

*Not all candles are cast the same,
But all are born of the same time-worn hands,
And all are of the same wax and wick,
And a flame is nothing less than a flame.*

*After all, Beauty is Light;
It is not a thing to be changed so easily
By just anyone, or time.*

*Candle Maker, let my candle burn bright
And light the darkness, if but once.
For light brings Light,
Whereas consumed candles yield only wax.*

*Candle Maker, cast my candle with your hands alone,
And make the wind a gentle one.*



—Aruna Kharod, Age 17
Schertz, Texas, April 2012

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During a personal interview with Sai Baba several years ago, this author asked, "Lord, when will the Golden Age finally be here?" He paused awhile and said, *"It won't be long, just several years. When you and others become peaceful and show others how to do so, with your love, then eventually we will have world peace and the Golden Age. But it starts within each person."*

Baba further says, famously, that the surest path to spiritual growth is service to others:

"The hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray." (Prema Vahini, ch 1)

Thus, the message is clear: **"Do more service today. Upgrade your service. Serve with every breath!"** And don't forget that service is a joy and a privilege, which, when accompanied by merriment, makes it the frosting on the cake of your life – or rather, GOD'S LIFE being lived through you!

—Connie Shaw

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