

Sathya Sai Newsletter **USA**



Vol 37, No 2 • Second Quarter 2013
• Mahasamadhi Reflections
• The Essence of Religions, Part 2



Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Mahasamadhi Reflections

The Essence of Religions, Part 2

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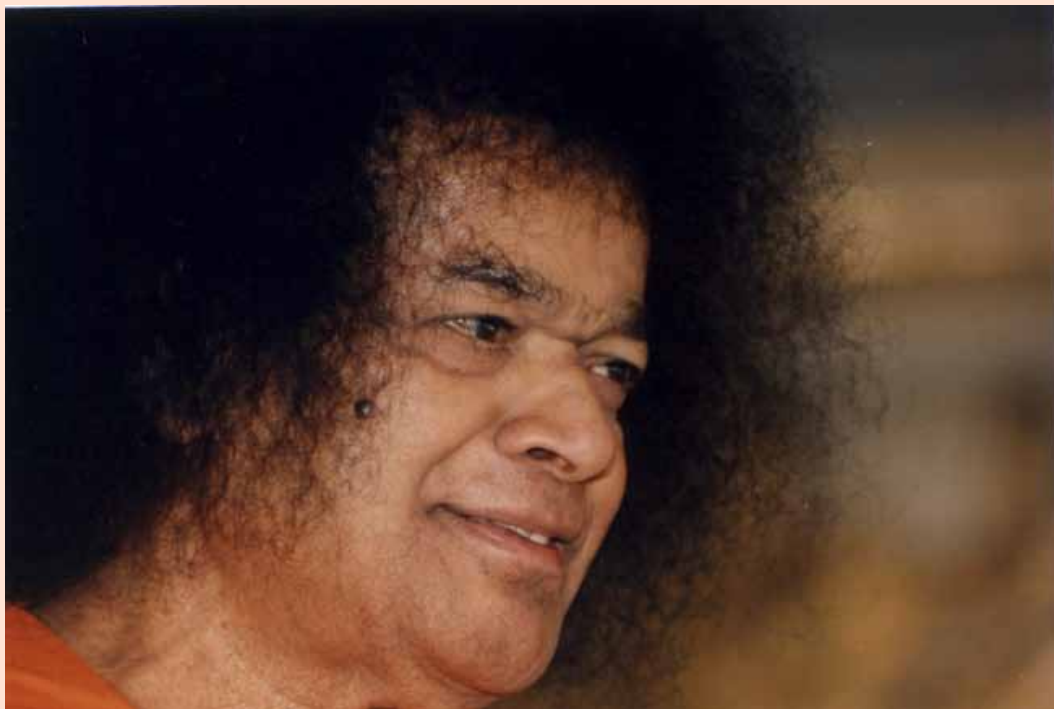
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Sai's Message



In the Sai organization there is no room for distinctions of race, religion, caste, class, or community. **All should regard themselves as the children of one God.** When they are united by this sense of divine kinship, they will act with **love** toward all. They should shed all narrow and limited ideas and engage themselves in service, with a heart full of love for all. True selfless service can come only out of a pure and loving heart..

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba, *Sathya Sai Speaks* (SSS) 17:27, Nov 18, 1984



Global Service Project

Avatar Declaration Day – “Serve the Planet” by Feeding the Poor

Greetings of loving Sairam to all of you. We are happy to announce that we will celebrate the Avatar Declaration Day on 20 October 2013 with a global service project, “Serve the Planet.” This year the focus will be feeding the poor. Devotees from all zones around the world will participate in this tribute to our beloved Swami.

On this day in 1940, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, in his infinite love and compassion, declared to the world that he is the Avatar who has come for the redemption of mankind. By holding on to his feet and practicing his teachings, we will reach the *summum bonum* of life.

Below is the text from Bhagawan’s biography, *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*, written by the late Professor N Kasturi:

On the 20th day of October 1940, the day after they all returned from Hampi by special bus, Sathyanarayana started for school as usual. The excise inspector of the place, Sri Anjaneyulu, who was very much attached to the little Baba, accompanied him as far as the school gate and went home rather reluctantly. He seemed to see a superb halo around the face of Baba that day, and he could not take his eyes away from that enchantment. Within a few minutes, Baba too turned back to the house.

Standing on the outer doorstep, he cast aside the books he was carrying and called out, “I am no longer your Sathya. . . . I am Sai.” The sister-in-law came from the kitchen and peeped out; she was almost blinded by the splendor of the halo she saw around Baba’s head! She closed her eyes and shrieked. . . . Neighbor Sri Narayana Sastri heard the noise; he listened and realized it was something serious. He ran in; he saw the splendor of the “halo” and fell at Baba’s feet. He too heard the historic declaration: “Maya (illusion) has left; I am going. My work is waiting.”

We will express our gratitude to Bhagawan on this Avatar Declaration Day by participating in the project, “Serve the Planet,” by feeding the poor. Swami emphasizes that giving food to the hungry is among the most noble and sacred of charitable actions. Regional officers will provide details regarding the implementation of this project. I pray to Swami that by his grace we will serve the needy with the understanding that the service is done by Sai, to Sai, through Sai. That is the purpose of this project, “Serve the Planet.”

Samasta Lokah Sukino Bhavantu –

May All the Worlds Be Happy.

—Narendranath Reddy MD
Chairman, Prasanthi Council

Sathya Sai World Foundation



New Members, International Education Committee

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With great pleasure we inform you that the membership of the newly-constituted Sathya Sai International Education Committee will now comprise of the following outstanding educators, who have made major contributions to Sathya Sai Education over many years:

Dr Pal Dhall - Chair
Ms Marianne Meyer
Dr Art-ong Jumsai
Dr Hymon Johnson
Ms Doris Hampton
Dr Dalton de Souza Amorim
Ms Genoveva Kanu

Dr Pal Dhall will be conducting the first meeting of this Education Committee in Prasanthi Nilayam during Guru Purnima 2013. We request your full support and cooperation to the new members of the Education Committee.

We appreciate all the good work done by the outgoing members of the Education Committee over the last several years. May Swami shower his choicest blessings on all who practice and spread Sathya Sai Education and Human Values around the world.

Lovingly in the service of Sai,

Mr Gary Belz

Dr Narendranath Reddy

Mr H J Dora

Mr Ramakrishna Anumolu

Men should cultivate science, right knowledge, wisdom, the illumined mind, and other good qualities, practice the truths contained in them in their lives, and prepare themselves to be shining examples to others.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Letter to a devotee, May 4, 1973 (*Prema Dhaara* 2, p 121)

Sathya Sai Newsletter USA Paperless Edition – Continued Invitation to Subscribe

As President of the Sathya Sai Baba Society & Book Center, based in Tustin, California, I am very pleased to announce that as a result of the online publication, the mailing list has expanded. We continue to invite readers to subscribe to receive announcements of the online issues of *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA*, now published in paperless format, free of cost to all who wish to receive it.

To Join Mailing List

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SathyaSaiNewsletterUSA.org

The *Newsletter* website now has a **current issue page**, as well as a **general information page**, and a **complete archive since 1976**, where all issues are available for viewing or download as PDFs.

Barbara Bozzani, Editor Since 1978

The *Newsletter* has been published for the past 37 years, and my wife, Barbara Bozzani, became editor in 1978, when we lived in Arizona. In those early years it was typed on 8-1/2 x 11 pages, duplicated, and mailed to

those who were interested. Then and in the years to follow, we had the blessings of Sathya Sai Baba himself giving directions to Barbara as to what the contents should include, as well as setting the subscription prices and how many issues per year to print.

Under her dedicated leadership and personal direction from Swami, the *Newsletter* grew from a photocopied bulletin into a bimonthly magazine reflecting the spiritual growth and evolution of the USA Sathya Sai Organization and Swami's American devotees.

In 2003, two years before the 80th Birthday Celebrations of 2005, our beloved Swami instructed Barbara to prepare a special 80th Birthday Edition and explained to her what type of articles should be published. At that time we lived in the mountains, at Lake Arrowhead, California, which allowed her to spend as much time as necessary to complete this special expanded edition.

Each time we visited Prasanthi Nilayam during those two years, Swami would give her additional guidance for this 80th Birthday Edition, which ended up being literally the largest edition ever published, in full color, at 156 letter-size pages.

I can personally say that Swami was pleased with the final result, which, besides going out to subscribers, was distributed during the 85th Birthday Celebrations at the Bookstore in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Ironically enough, after that edition's publication, Barbara no longer continued to be an active part of the *Newsletter*. Several times thereafter I suggested to Swami that we should change the editor's name as published in the *Newsletter*, but each time he would not answer. This was confusing to me until

I realized that the appropriate time would occur. Then I no longer asked him, and that time has come.

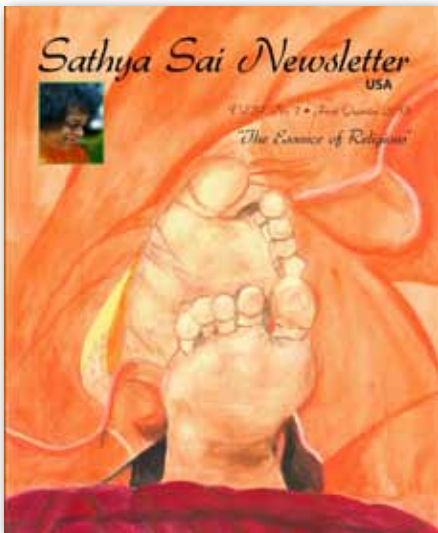
We at the Sathya Sai Baba Society & Book Center hope you will continue to enjoy the online editions of *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA*, and we wish you a very loving *Sai Ram*.

—**Bob Bozzani**, President
Sathya Sai Baba Society & Book Center

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sathysaibooksusa.org



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See also our complete [Sathya Sai Newsletter USA archives \(1976–2012\)](#), [here](#), to browse or download past issues.

An Extraordinary Journey

by Barbara Bozzani

While editor of the *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA*, Barbara Bozzani rarely wrote about herself. An exception occurred when Judy Warner compiled a collection of devotees' accounts in *Transformation of the Heart* (1990). Barbara's story is reproduced here.

To know where we are going in this journey through life, it is sometimes helpful to know where we have been. We are all God's children, but he has placed each of us in a unique set of circumstances. The influences of family, friends, and environment all leave marks, sometimes scars, on the psyche.

I had the good fortune to be born into a family that valued high morals and sound ethics. Truthfulness was a code learned early in life. But the other side of my early training was lacking in some areas. My family never spoke of God or love, nor was there much joy or creative expression. These came later, when I discovered the world beyond my home environment.

My mother conveyed the impression that an open display of affection or the giving of praise and reassurance to children would spoil them. After all, "it's a tough world and we must be able to deal with harsh realities." Perhaps it was the deep hurt she felt from her own difficult upbringing, coupled with the pain of separation from my father when I was still very young.

After the separation, as an only child, I was the focal point of her attention, and I felt her deep concern for my well-being and

security. She did an admirable job in a time when women, as single parents, were often shunned by society. She taught me to be neat and clean, to hold my head high, and to tell the truth.

Hard work was another of her teachings, for which I am grateful. Because of her German-Lutheran ethic, I worked part-time from the age of 11. It was sometimes quite difficult to balance a babysitting or a mother's helper job with my studies and school activities. Later I took on the task of making all my own clothes and was rather good at it.

My mother's sense of responsibility should have been somewhat relieved when she met and married a fine Greek gentleman, but the habit of worry was deeply ingrained in her personality.

Religious Explorations

My stepfather, besides easing our financial difficulties, opened the way for some cultural expressions. We traveled a little, read books together, went to museums, and talked of worldly events. Still, there was no spiritual interest shown by either parent. But I began to make my own religious investigations.

Much to my surprise, when Sai Baba did appear and walk before the crowd, I felt riveted to the spot and could not take my eyes from him. I had seen many pictures of Sai Baba but was not prepared for such a deeply moving experience.

I had gone to various Sunday schools and churches with friends, and had always felt great joy when hymns were sung and Bible stories were told. But, much to my dismay, I found that many of the “church people” who attentively listened to Christian teachings, such as “*Love thy neighbor as thyself*,” were practicing some form of prejudice in their daily lives.

When I was still quite young, a relative whom I trusted made an uncomplimentary comment about a group of Catholic nuns. I was shocked and hurt by this person’s criticism of the good nuns, who gave so much service to the world. Becoming aware of hypocrisy in those I loved was both confusing and disheartening.

As I grew older and became aware of the terrible things that happen in the world, I began to think that a good and loving God would never let crimes and atrocities happen to innocent people. My simplistic conclusion, as a disenchanted teenager, was that there must not be a God, and that religious beliefs must be a form of escapism for those who could not face reality.

Marriage and Family

The years rolled by, and near the completion of my education, I met a charming young man. On July 4, 1952, we were married in the midst of much celebrating of the national holiday. Bob was then an officer in the United States Navy. Our married life centered around parties and social gatherings, and all in all was most agreeable for both of us, yet there was something lacking, like one small missing piece of a puzzle.

With each new event, I thought, this is the thing that will make life complete. Upon Bob’s discharge from the Navy, he went into his family’s automobile business. By then we had one beautiful daughter, and two years later another baby girl, both of whom brought us great joy. Before the arrival of our son, we moved to a larger home. Bob now had his own prosperous business, and our family was complete. Who could expect more? But we both felt an inner restlessness.

At that time I had a friend who always seemed to be calm and peaceful. When I asked her to divulge her secret formula for composure, she said that she practiced *hatha yoga* and that she would be happy to take

me to meet her teacher. I took to hatha yoga with great interest and in a few years began teaching classes.

Indra Devi and Sathya Sai Baba

During this period, I also attended classes given by Indra Devi, who instructed us in the ancient, classic postures and later astounded us with stories of her spiritual preceptor, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Her stories created a longing within me to go to exotic India and see this reputedly amazing being.

The longing became an obsession. In the latter part of 1973, I convinced my husband that we should travel with a group of Westerners to see Baba at his ashram near the small village of Puttaparthi in South India.

Sai Baba had reportedly performed wonders such as Christ had done. My curiosity could not be assuaged; I had to see for myself. My husband was going through a rather difficult period in his life and was less than enthusiastic about taking a trip to India. Nevertheless, in February of 1974, off we went, with about 20 other curious pilgrims, for an unforgettable journey.

On the first day in the ashram, one of our travel companions came by the room and told us to get ready for *darshan* (being in the presence of a great spiritual being). Not knowing at the time what *darshan* was or how to get ready for it, we had to be advised: first bathe, then dress in clean clothing, and finally, proceed to the temple area to quietly await the appearance of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

All this I did while still being the ultimate tourist, not taking any of it too

seriously. Instead, I was thinking what a good story all this would be to share with friends and yoga students at home.

Much to my surprise, when Sai Baba did appear and walk before the crowd, I felt riveted to the spot and could not take my eyes from him. I had seen many pictures of Sai Baba but was not prepared for such a deeply moving experience. His natural grace and charm were beguiling. I forgot all the discomforts of jet lag and sitting in the hot sun wrapped in a sari. Something about his demeanor made my cold heart begin to soften; I felt a surge of joy.

For a long time thereafter, that joy felt like gentle ocean waves sweeping over me, then receding. I wanted to stay enveloped in that oceanic feeling, but it was too elusive. I didn't know then how fortunate we were, for Baba had told one of our group that he would see us the next day.

First Group Interview

We all arrived promptly on the temple veranda at the designated hour and were ushered into a large room. There were no embellishments, just a simple wooden chair on a platform for Baba. The rest of us tried to be comfortable on the cement floor, and then it happened again! As Sai Baba entered the room, all thoughts of discomfort disappeared, and the waves of joy took over. How could his presence cause such a reaction? He never sat in the special chair but seemed to prefer relaxing on the edge of the platform, standing before us, or moving through the group.

He then gave me a look I have come to know so well – the most kind and compassionate smile I had ever seen – and he said in the softest of tones, “I know, I know.”

Baba gave us a mini-discourse, and to this day, I don't remember a word he said, only the soft melodic tones of his voice and a feeling of happiness. At some point in the talk, he manifested a ring for a woman in our group. I was pleased, because one of my secret wishes had been to see some miracles. Indeed, I saw it clearly, as it appeared right under my nose. I was collecting experiences, and that was a pretty good one. But what next?

A Miracle Touches My Heart

Some days later, as we were sitting on the veranda waiting to be called into Baba's interview room, a handsome but distressed Indian family were ushered into the small inner room. The father was carrying his son, who was about 9 years old; the boy was wearing white socks that didn't really conceal his badly deformed feet. His spindly legs indicated that he had never run or played like other children. I felt a tug at my heart. I was grateful for the three healthy children we had left in the care of their grandparents in California.

After some time the door swung open, and, wonder of wonders, the family emerged, all of them weeping tears of joy. The young boy was walking on wobbly legs like a newborn fawn, his large brown eyes sparkling. I didn't even try to control my own tears.

Baba came out and gave some final instructions to the parents; then he turned to me and asked, “*Why are you crying? Don't cry; it's the first time he has walked.*” I replied through tears, “That's why I'm crying.” He then gave me a look I have come to know so well – the most kind and compassionate smile I had ever seen – and he said in the softest of tones, “*I know, I know.*”

I wanted that moment to last forever, but in an instant he had changed his demeanor and was showing deep concern for another of his children.

First Private Interview

Soon it was our turn to be alone with Baba. Our first private interview was an overwhelming experience. Bob and I and Sai Baba stood close together as Baba asked questions. He addressed me first, asking simple questions like, “*How many children do you have?*” At that moment, I was at a loss for words. He smiled indulgently and answered the question himself, saying, “*Three.*”

In the meantime, I stood mute – unable to communicate. I must have appeared more than foolish, but Baba was kind, as he understands all human conditions and frailties. During those few minutes, he outlined the character – both the strengths and weaknesses – of each of our children.

The passing years have revealed him to be 100 percent accurate.

His attention then turned to Bob, and they spoke of business matters while Sai manifested some *vibhuti* (holy ash) and stroked Bob's chest and heart area with the ash, saying, "*He is a good man, a good man.*"

This clear sign of loving approval caused Bob to do something I had never seen him do before – he burst into tears and cried like a helpless child. Sai Baba said, "*Business gives you no satisfaction, but all that will change.*" Bob brightened at that reassurance.

Swami, as he often refers to himself, turned again to me and said, "*Be patient. You need to learn to be patient.*" The interview was over, and I was still mute as we left. It took a long time to come back to earth. It had been the most unusual experience of my life, but I still failed to see that Sri Sathya Sai Baba was a divine being. I could only perceive that he was special and that he invoked higher ideals and emotions in me than I had ever known before.

Returning to the U.S.

While on the airplane back to the United States, we started planning our next trip to India. Already we were being drawn back, as if by some magnetic force. Bob, in a lighthearted spirit, began to tease me about Swami's comments on my being impatient. Later, we both had a good laugh at my narrow viewpoint and inability to accept criticism, even though it had been given so gently by Baba. I promised myself, then and there, to work on the problem of impatience.

Upon returning home, we resumed our activities, but somehow our lives had changed. Bob and I still cared about our old friends but found it difficult – even impossible – to resume the old round of social events. Bob dove deeply into reading everything about Sathya Sai Baba. I, on the other hand, had pressured him to go with me to India but was left feeling incomplete and confused by the experience.

Returning to India

In 1975, we returned to India, first touring and then continuing on to attend a World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Organizations and Baba's 50th birthday. There had been only one prior experience in my background to prepare me for life in an ashram, and this time it was more difficult, because of the large crowds that had gathered for the conference and birthday celebrations.

Again we received interviews, and Bob was given a lovely ring with Baba's likeness. In fact, many people were given "calling cards," as Swami calls the small gifts like rings and locketts, which he manifests.

Seeing the faces of those who received these items from Baba's own hand generated a feeling of great joy, and I began to long for one of those talismans. In fact, I became obsessed. But the more I wished for something, the more frequent were Baba's gifts to others! In one interview, he actually gave divine tokens to ladies in front, in back, and on either side of me! I must have looked green with envy, but all I got from Baba was a mischievous smile.

He often says, “I give you what you want, so that you will want what I have come to give.” But what did that message have to do with my desire to have one of his small gifts? What was to be learned from this spiritual stuff anyway? Why did intense feelings seem to be tearing me apart?

Doubts and Confusion

The following year, back home, I suffered from doubts and periods of loneliness and depression. Confusion mounted, and I wondered if I truly wanted to give up the social round, the conspicuous consumption and self-indulgence. But those shallow activities no longer offered pleasure, nor did anything else. I was on an emotional roller coaster. Baba has said, “*Sometimes I must break the heart in order to enter it.*” Perhaps that was what was happening.

Meanwhile, my husband was drawing closer to Sai Baba. He insisted that we have devotional songs (*bhajans*) sung in our home and that we study Swami’s teachings. In spite of mixed emotions at this time, I was looking forward to our next trip to India, for those journeys had become annual events of pain and pleasure. The attraction to Sai Baba was still impossible to explain.

Swami in Bombay

The next year, we took our three children and Bob’s mother to India. Baba showered grace upon all of them. I felt completely out of step; I contracted the flu and remained ill during the whole journey. At one point in Bombay, I expressed my wish to allocate some

worldly possessions to our children, for I felt certain I would die before returning home. I must have been having hallucinations from the fever, or wallowing in self-pity. Probably both. It was quite impossible to eat, and I became more and more weak. I scribbled a letter to Baba on hotel stationery, asking for his help.

Bob hand-carried that letter to the Dharmakshetra, Baba’s place of residence in Bombay, where Swami was scheduled to give a discourse. Baba walked past my husband and accepted my desperate note. All during his discourse he held that letter, making graceful hand gestures and pointing the envelope toward the thousands who had assembled to hear him. All this was not known to me until later, but I do remember feeling better during that time.

The next day, I had recovered enough to go with my family to the Dharmakshetra, where Baba received us. He held my hand during most of the interview and seemed concerned about my health, telling me, “*Eat.*” The next day, aboard our plane for the long flight back to the United States, my appetite was insatiable. Even more important, my heart had opened a little wider and my doubts were drifting away; perhaps this was my spiritual renaissance.

Padnamaskar

During our first trip to India, I had observed an unusual custom: many devotees wanting to touch or even kiss Baba’s feet. My first reaction to this was negative. On the following trip, I thought it was fine for Indians to practice this custom but not a

western lady. During the third trip, however, I had great longing to touch those perfectly formed, fragrant feet, and I had asked Baba several times for *padnamaskar*, as it is called.

I was told, “Wait, wait.” In the meantime, the longing grew. Only at the last moment of our last day in India did Baba allow me the privilege. He stepped forward, pointed to his feet, and said, “Do.” I fell to my knees, knowing in the depths of my heart that this was the most profound and sacred opportunity of my lifetime, a moment of great magnitude, the beginning of surrender.

In the following years, Bob and I journeyed to India to be near our beloved teacher once or twice annually. Occasionally, one or all of the children accompanied us. Baba always seemed to bestow his special grace on the young, and they responded favorably.

A Service Role

At this point (circa 1990), it has been nearly sixteen years since I first heard of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and I am actually horrified to think what life would be without him. At best, it would be an endless stream of empty events and meaningless activities. Certainly my life was headed in that direction before I knew Swami.

Baba exhorts his followers to serve. He says, “*Service to humanity is service to God.*” My service has taken the form of editing and publishing the *Sathya Sai Newsletter (USA)*. Highly qualified devotees have donated many hours to create a quarterly publication devoted to the phenomenon of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and his teachings. Working

on the national *Newsletter* is a joy as well as an awesome responsibility, because I am now convinced that Baba is the Lord incarnate; a complete avatar with all the powers, glory, and divine love that this engenders. He is the embodiment of love and has come to re-establish righteousness in the world. Only God can do that.

Lessons from Baba

Baba is our greatest teacher, for there are lessons in what he does as well as what he does not do. For example, I used to ponder; why, if he is God, does he allow starvation and devastating disease to occur? Baba has said that he could change all that in an instant, but in a short time the same human tragedies would return, and the world would be as badly off as before. Is it possible, then, that we do these things to ourselves?

Baba confirms what the Catholic Church has said for many years: that there is an abundance of food in the world but the distribution is not equitable. Surely we can’t blame God for this lack of concern for our fellow human beings. We can and do blame governments for not coming to the aid of less fortunate nations. However, Baba would have us look within our own hearts and ask what we as individuals can do to help our less fortunate brothers and sisters.

In regard to disease, I used to wonder why Baba does not cure at least those who come to him seeking his help. Now I understand that he seldom interferes with the individual’s need to undergo certain negative experiences. Even though such experiences

may seem tragic to us, in another perception, they could be considered grace, or the paying of karmic debts. Sooner or later we must all pay our debts. Since God knows our past, present, and future, why not surrender everything to him? Then, body, mind, and soul are in his keeping forever more.

Putting Lessons into Practice

The lessons have been numerous, but my own experience has confirmed that concepts must be put into practice. I was struck, for example, by the realization that I must forgive, and even learn to love, the father who abandoned me so long ago.

Swami declares that it is most important to love our parents, for they have given us human birth. He continues by saying, “*It is only through a human birth that we can realize God.*” And, further, there are souls in heaven waiting for the good fortune to be born.

In years past, I had been critical of some people for their subtle prejudice. Baba tells us that we have no right to judge others; often they are reflecting our own inner thoughts and feelings. Perhaps truly learning tolerance consists of not being intolerant of the intolerance of others.

Baba on Marriage

In a recent interview, Baba, when asked to define ego, quickly responded, “*It is ignorance, ignorance.*” According to Baba, marriage provides an opportunity to eliminate “this greatest human stumbling block.”

I can vouch for this, as I recall the many situations where Baba has had us face the

realities of married life. For example, on one of our trips, Bob and I arrived at Prashanti in the midst of a heated disagreement. Later, Swami scolded both of us for arguing.

On another occasion, I was rather annoyed with Bob but kept it to myself. Swami approached me during *darshan* and said, “*Always fighting with husband.*”

I responded, “No, Swami, not fighting.”

He then said, “*Yes – arguing here,*” pointing to his head.

He has told us, “*Marriage is like sandpaper, rubbing away each other’s egoism.*” And his teaching concerning the correct attitude in the relationship is quite specific: the wife serves the husband, and the husband has the task of protecting and caring for the wife. Each loves God, that spark of divinity inherent in the other.

Indeed, I have learned more about the roles of husband and wife from our beloved Baba than one could learn from any marriage manual.

Receiving a Ring

I have already mentioned my desire for a token of Swami’s divinity, one of his small gifts “manufactured” from thin air. After several trips to India and many interviews, it finally happened! At the time, I concluded that my motives were totally incorrect – after all, I had seen, talked with, and been given sound advice by the Lord himself. Who could ask for more?

The very next interview, Baba asked me, “*What do you want?*” I said, “You, Swami, you.”

He smiled indulgently, like a parent who is about to reward a small child with an ice

cream cone. With a wave of that beautiful hand, he presented to me a ring with the likeness of Shirdi Sai Baba (his previous incarnation) in bas-relief. I was thrilled; it was a magic moment of sheer delight.

He placed the ring on my right index finger, which I've come to feel is very significant. I must confess to being afraid at times to say "no," because someone might not approve of me. I truly think the likeness of Shirdi Sai Baba has given courage to my convictions. Placing the ring on the right index finger was, I feel, meant to make me more assertive, for it is this finger we use to indicate or emphasize a point. Swami has never confirmed this. It is my own perception; I only know that something has helped.

These are but a few of the lessons and experiences I've had since consciously coming

into Sai Baba's orbit. I say "consciously," because I now feel that he has always been guiding and protecting me. His love is so great that he even watches over those who do not accept his divinity.

My husband and I often have sensed his presence in both home and office, by the telltale fragrance of jasmine or *vibhuti*. We will be busily concentrating on a task, when suddenly his fragrance will occur, giving rise to an inexpressible feeling of peace and joy.

Indeed, he is with each of us always and in all ways. To know him, all we need do is love God and seek God's love in return. What better way to spend the rest of this extraordinary journey?

—**Excerpted from:** *Transformation of the Heart*,
compiled and edited by Judy Warner

Readng and enjoying the stories of the glory of [the Lord] – in some sacred spot or some temple or prayer hall, shrine or hermitage of a saint or sage, or in the company of the virtuous and good – is a source of great inspiration and joy. It makes people forget everything else.

Or, one can approach pious men and, serving them, listen to their exposition of the glories of God. Taste for such wholesome literature is the result of accumulated merit and endeavor. It is that merit that rewards one with such company!

Listening will be enough in the beginning; later, the stories will arouse interest in the nature and characteristics of God, and the aspirant will seek and find for himself the path to realization. Through that process of listening, a dirt-laden heart will be transformed into a clean, illumined heart, shining with genuine light.

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba** (*Bhagavatha Vahini*, Ch 1, p 5-6)

How Can I Thank Thee, My Sweet Lord Sai!

A mere speck of humanity
in this wide, wide ocean of life,
Tossed and buffeted by waves,
big and menacing,
Skimming on the surface,
floating aimlessly with the flow,
Even though cushioned with the
superficialities of existence,
A suitable partner, and children
four to give joy and hope,
Yet searching for something
beyond my grasp and scope,
I found Thee, My Sweet Lord Sai,
a beacon of light and love.

What radiance, what bliss
eternal, I saw in Thee, dear Sai!
In a trice, the tossing and
buffeting ceased, darkness fled;
Inexplicable joy suffused my
being. Dream it cannot be;

A refuge, a divine refuge from the
frets and foibles of life,
He gathered us all to His bosom,
more than a divine mother,
He patted away the creases and
wrinkles wrought by life.
He taught us sweetly the path to
serenity, the joy of eternity.

From the Abode of Peace, Thou
beckoned us so strongly,
Pulled hard by the magnetic
charm of Thy Holy Presence.

We came, one and all, to bask
under Thy divine splendor;
We came – not once but many a
time – to drink deep Thy Grace.
In Thy heavenly abode, we found
peace beyond human ken.
The sight of Thy orange robe at a
distance enthralled us all;
Thy darshan, the long-awaited
sight, bound us all in a spell.

Thou gathered us in Thy embrace
and enlightened our soul:
“Divinity thou art, forget not!”
was Thy constant chanting;
We learned twain Thy feet to find
sacredness in the whole of life –
“Help ever, hurt never” – thus
Thou taught us eternal wisdom.
“Service to man is service to
God” – Thou inspired us to serve all.
By constant
example, Thou showed
us the path to peace
and joy;
Thy work to
humanity paved our
paths to service and devotion.

Entrenched in Thy divine Love,
secure in Thy sacred teaching,
Neither fear nor failure ever
haunted us; safe in Thy strength
We basked, divine light bathing
us all, body, mind, and soul.



That Easter Sunday, the
sudden news of Thy divine
departure –

A departure without even a
farewell to Thy beloved children –
Saw us plunged in sudden shock
and sorrow, yet we strove to move on,
To bask again in Thy Atmic glory
and thank Thee for Thy gifts.

—**Kanaga Ranganathan**
Bethesda, Maryland

Photo courtesy radiosai.org

Sai Baba, Step by Step I Reach You!

From Canada I am here again at Puttaparthi
But don't see you ambling along gracefully
On the red carpet, a quivering golden halo
Around your head and letters in palm's hollow;
Or scooting around in your automobile gently,
To let the diverse devotees glimpse you fully!

The crunch of people all day long,
Shoving, pushing, seeking a good spot,
Has now shrunk almost to a drop.
Nor is the *seva dal** so rude and taut.
I don't much grumble your stark absence,
As I begin to seek you inwardly in silence.

Lately I felt the bliss you talked about a lot,
A beatitude that you bestowed on me.
It was a fleeting view of the Higher
Or an illuminated Mind, I know not.
Surely it was some ineffable glee,
A hint of what God's grace can grant.

* *Seva dal*: Ashram service/security volunteer.



Now I often recite *Namasamaran*,**
A talisman that guards me from harm!
I seek purity and make trio of Thought,
Word, and Deed as an effective balm,
A panacea prescribed by my Bhagawan.
I daresay it gives much peace and calm.

College degrees, a house in a leafy lane, progeny,
And more, all that I strove for over a long time,
Proved mere baubles, tinsel, and sheer frippery.
A Pyrrhic win that fetched me the whole tribe
Of vices like lust, greed, pride, and jealousy.
Insidiously they put a crater in my personality.

I turn now the mind's key to the right,
To let in faith, compassion, and love,
And see God in all and everywhere.
All that's showy, wrong, or transient,
I discard gladly after a critical review.
Yes, I am zero, and you are my hero!

—Prem Kumar
Edmonton, Canada

**Repeating the Name(s) of God to keep the mind focused on the Divine.

Five Spiritual Lessons That Arjuna Understood Only After Lord Krishna Left His Mortal Coil

In chapter 10 of the *Bhagavatha Vahini* (which contains lessons from the life of Krishna), our beloved Bhagawan Baba tells us of the profound Vedantic lessons Krishna's dearest disciple, Arjuna, understood only after Lord Krishna left his physical form in the Dwapara Age or *yuga* (about 5,000 years prior to Bhagawan Baba).

Listed below are five of these precious lessons, as explained by Bhagawan. Each lesson is eternally valid, applying to this age as well as during previous appearances of the Lord in earthly form. Perhaps we can dwell on these lessons to discover their relevance and usefulness in our spiritual journey to self-realization, in light of Bhagawan's leaving the mortal coil.

Lesson 1

(Arjuna, speaking to his eldest brother, Dharmaraja, in the presence of the other Pandava brothers:)

"We cannot sense the mystery of His Play. We have failed to understand it. There is no profit in worrying over that failure, now. With that deluding human form, he moved with us, mixed with us, dined with us, behaved as if he was our kinsman and well-wisher, our friend and guide, and saved us from many a calamity that threatened

to overwhelm us. He showered his divine mercy on us and solved for us the toughest problems, which defied solution, in remarkably simple ways." (Ch 10, p 84)

Lesson 2

"During all this time He was near and dear to us, we were carried away by pride that we had his grace; we did not try to fill ourselves with that supreme joy, to dive deep into the flood of his grace. We sought from him mere external victory and temporal benefits. We ignored the vast treasure with which we could have filled our hearts. We never contemplated on his real Reality." (Ch 10, p 85)

Lesson 3

"He guarded us as if we five [Pandava brothers] were the five vital airs (pancha-prana) for him. He came forward to help us and lead us in every undertaking, however small – and he fulfilled it for us. Brother (Dharmaraja)! What shall I say? We might be born many times over, but we can never get again such a friend and kinsman. I have received from him love much more intense than that of a mother, a love no mother can confer." (Ch 10, p 85)

Lesson 4

“On many an occasion He bore the burdens of the Pandavas as his own, and to relieve us of the bother, he used to plan measures within minutes and carry them on to final success. It is due to the gift of his grace that we Pandavas have survived in this world to this day.

“Why repeat a thousand things separately? Every drop of blood coursing through these veins is but a drop from the shower of his grace. Every muscle is but a lump of his love. Every bone and cartilage is but a piece of his mercy.” (Ch 10, pp 85-86)

Lesson 5

“Unable to understand this secret, we strutted about, boasting, ‘I achieved this,’ and ‘I accomplished that.’ Now it has become clear to us that without Him, we are but bags of skin.

“Of course, the fate of all men is the same. They forget that the all-ruling, all-knowing Almighty plays with them as puppets; they assume that they are the actual doers and

enjoyers; like me, they are plunged in ignorance of the basic truth. When we who are far-famed heroes and warriors are in this sad plight, what can we say of ordinary folk who have no chance of awakening into this wisdom (jnana)?” (Ch 10, p 86)

[Click [here](#) for the entire chapter in the *Bhagavatha Vahini* in which Arjuna reminds us of these teachings.]

In addition to the above, Bhagawan’s discourse delivered during Dasara on October 10, 2005, is a source of great solace and wisdom (see pp 24–31).

Let us get awakened to take up the challenge of leading our lives in complete accordance with Bhagawan’s teachings, with courage and conviction and with unquestionable faith in his omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence.

With most loving and humble *pranams* (salutations) at the lotus feet of our beloved Swami, our eternal guide and guardian.

—Vinod K Nagpal

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/saibabanews/message/42601>



The Lord’s Last Words

Dr Venugopal and his team of doctors wanted to ask Swami, “Swami, do you have pain in any part of the body?” – to which Swami just smiled faintly and didn’t reply. Then Dr Venugopal requested Satyajit to ask Swami the same.

Satyajit bent close to Swami’s ear – the entire conversation was in Telugu – and asked Swami, “Swami, the doctors want to know, do you have pain anywhere in your body?” This time Swami replied: **“NO! SWAMI NEVER HAS ANY PAIN. . . . SWAMI IS ALWAYS IN BLISS . . . !”** Those were the last words . . .

—SOURCE: B.N. Narasimha Murthy, April 2011

The Indweller Is God Himself

Give up the delusion of identifying with the body



During childhood, man develops absorbing interest in play in the company of other children; during youth, under the influence of cupid, he roams about in the company of women with infatuation; during middle age, he is entangled in worldly matters and deeply engrossed in hoarding wealth; lastly, in old age, he craves for this and that, not contemplating on God even at that ripe age. Unable to get rid of old habits, unable to develop interest in the Godward path, man wastes his precious human birth, deeply enmeshed in the web of karma. (TELUGU POEM)

Embodiments of love! Man spends his lifetime thus, deeply enmeshed in pursuing ephemeral things. He is carried away by unproductive thoughts, depending upon the particular stage of growth he is passing through. Ultimately, he realizes that he has in fact wasted his precious human birth in vain pursuits.

Is this the real nature of a human being? Is this what he has to learn in life? These activities are momentary, like water bubbles. They cannot provide lasting happiness to man. It is mere foolishness to spend one's time in such futile pursuits.

Final Days of the Krishna Avatar

When God takes birth in human form, people doubt as to whether he is born like any other human being, from the mother's womb, or out of his Divine Will. The fact is,

when God takes birth in human form, he selects his parents. He carries on with his avataric mission, with the help of the form he has assumed. This happens in every age.

It was the same with Lord Krishna in the Dwapara Yuga (era). He cultivated friendship with the Pandavas. In fact, he was friend, philosopher, and guide to them. He constantly protected them against the machinations of the wicked Kauvaras. When they were engaged in the Kurukshetra war with the Kauravas, Krishna donned the role of charioteer (*ratha sarathi*) to Arjuna and led the Pandavas to victory.

Arjuna Accompanies Krishna to Dwaraka

After the war ended, Lord Krishna informed the Pandavas that he would leave [from the Pandavas home in Hastinapura] for his palace in Dwaraka. He wanted one

of the five Pandava brothers to accompany him during this journey. Kunti, mother of the Pandavas, suggested that Krishna take Arjuna with him, since they had such a close relationship.

Krishna's Divine Advice: ***Give Up Attachment to the Body!***

Accordingly, Lord Krishna took Arjuna to Dwaraka and provided all comforts to him during his stay there. Arjuna was a bit embarrassed to avail himself of the services rendered by Lord Krishna to him. He told Krishna, "O Lord! How can I take services from you?"

Krishna replied, "Arjuna! You are mistaken. Whom am I serving? Is it your body? Even your body belongs to me. It is not yours. I am the protector of all beings in the world. Therefore you should not delude yourself, thinking that you are the body!

The body is made up of five elements and is bound to perish sooner or later, but the Indweller has neither birth nor death. The Indweller has no attachment whatsoever and is the eternal witness. Truly speaking, the Dehi (Indweller) is Devadeva (the God of gods) himself. (TELUGU POEM)

"I am that *Devadeva*. You identify yourself with the body out of delusion and say 'I.' But that is not your real Self. You are not the body. As long as you identify yourself with the body, you remain as the individual being (*jiva*). Once you come out of that delusion, you become one with *Deva*

(divinity, the Supreme Self). Hence, give up attachment to the body!

"The human body is like a doll. However, one has to perform all his activities (*karmas*) using the body as the instrument. Man has the right only to perform karma. The entire world moves on account of karma. I am the director of this cosmic play, O Arjuna!" said Lord Krishna.

Krishna Gives Up the Body

The Yadavas (clan/relatives of Krishna), with whom Krishna had spent his entire life, perished due to their ego and hatred. In the end, Krishna himself gave up the human vesture and left for his divine abode.

Watching these developments helplessly, Arjuna wept inconsolably. Unable to bear the separation from his dear Lord, friend, philosopher, and guide, he wailed, "O Krishna! You have been constantly protecting me and guarding me. Now that you have left for your heavenly abode, in whom shall I seek refuge?" At last, realizing the futility of spending his time in grief, he returned to Hastinapura.

[As he prepared to leave,] the city of Dwaraka presented to Arjuna a scene of total destruction. The entire Yadava clan had perished. Arjuna did not know what to do in such circumstances. He remembered the possibility of his mother Kunti inquiring about the welfare of Lord Krishna and the Yadavas. A hundred and one questions cropped up in his mind, but he had no answers for any of them. Finally, Arjuna collected all the Gopikas (pure-minded female devotees of Krishna) and started on

As long as you identify yourself with the body,
you remain as the individual being (*jiva*).
Once you come out of that delusion,
you become one with *Deva* (divinity, the Supreme Self).
Hence, give up attachment to the body!

his march out of Dwaraka, as per the divine command of Krishna.

Suddenly Arjuna and the Gopikas were surrounded by a horde of forest dwelling nomads, but to his utter dismay, Arjuna could not even lift his bow, the Gandiva.

This was strange indeed! The great warrior, Arjuna, who had torn into pieces with utter ease the opposing army lines in the Kurukshetra war, could not even lift his Gandiva bow now. He lamented at his helplessness and prayed to Krishna, “O Lord Krishna! What has happened to all my strength? Where is it gone now?”

He answered, to himself, “He who had granted this power to me has now taken it back!” At last, in utter helplessness and agony, he prayed to Lord Krishna, “O Lord! You will have to protect your Gopikas yourself, for I am helpless.”

Arjuna Returns to Hastinapura

Finally Arjuna reached Hastinapura, along with those Gopikas who could be saved from the clutches of the barbarians by the divine grace of Krishna. There, Arjuna found the people in great despair but could not understand the reason for their sorrow.

Meanwhile, Dharmaraja (Arjuna’s eldest brother) was very anxious to learn from Arjuna the welfare of Lord Krishna. Arjuna replied, “I will tell you everything that happened, in detail.”

Mother Kunti Hears the News

Mother Kunti was, however, even more anxious to know about the welfare of Lord Krishna. She inquired, “Son! Arjuna! Is my dear Krishna all right? Please tell me in detail as to what happened during your stay in Dwaraka.” She was so eager to know the facts that Arjuna could not but reveal the truth. Finally, he steadied himself and related everything about the departure of Krishna for his heavenly abode and the subsequent developments.

The moment Arjuna revealed that Krishna had shed his mortal coil, Mother Kunti could not bear the grief, and she collapsed on the cot on which she was sitting.

Dharmaraja rushed to her side and tried to console her, saying, “Mother! What was destined to happen has happened. These are all divine *leelas* (sport) of Lord Krishna. There is no use grieving over these developments. Please get up.” But Mother Kunti did not respond. She had left her mortal coil.

Time marches on, and all things that must be performed have to take their course.

He put her head on his lap and called all his brothers. He gave instructions to his brothers for performing the funeral rites of Mother Kunti. At the same time, he gave instructions for the necessary arrangements to be made for the coronation of young Parikshit (Arjuna's grandson), the heir apparent, as the king of Hastinapura.

Thereafter, he called [his brothers] Nakula and Sahadeva to his side and told them to make arrangements for the *mahaprastana* (final march) of the Pandavas to the Himalayas. Droupadi, the queen of the Pandavas, witnessing these developments, could not maintain her poise anymore. She could not bear the double loss of Lord Krishna's departure on the one side and the sudden demise of Mother Kunti on the other.

Dharmaraja called Arjuna and instructed him to make arrangements for the cremation of the dead body of Mother Kunti. Arjuna complied with his instructions. The brothers, too, could not contain their grief. They wept inconsolably on both counts – one for losing their dear Lord Krishna and the other over the death of their beloved mother.

Dharmaraja led the funeral procession, carrying the fire in an earthen pot – the same tradition was in vogue in those days also. As the funeral procession went along, the people of Hastinapura could not contain

their emotions. Finally, when the body of Mother Kunti was placed on the funeral pyre in the cremation ground, Dharmaraja lit the pyre. In a few moments, the mortal body of Mother Kunti was consigned to the flames.

The Coronation of Parikshit

The Pandava brothers returned home. The next item on their agenda was to perform the coronation of young Parikshit. What a great wonder! They had lost their dear mother; they had lost Lord Krishna, their very life breath, yet now they were prepared to perform the coronation of Parikshit with perfect calm and poise!

Time marches on, and all things that must be performed have to take their course. The kingdom of Hastinapura had to be protected. Thinking thus, the priests started chanting the Vedic mantras for conducting the rituals connected with the coronation of Parikshit. He was brought into the court and the royal crown was placed on his head, midst the chanting of Vedic mantras by the priests.

Parikshit was, however, very unhappy and pleaded with the Pandavas, "O my dear grandfathers! You are all great kings. You are still hale and healthy. Is it proper for me to wear the royal crown in your esteemed presence? Do I deserve to wear this royal crown? How worthless and insignificant am

! One of you, please wear this crown and rule the country.”

The Pandava brothers tried to convince Parikshit, saying, “Dear child! We will not be here any more to rule this kingdom. There must be someone to look after the welfare of the people as king of this great country. You must, therefore, shoulder this responsibility. The affairs of the kingdom have to be looked after. You should not flinch from your duty in insuring the continuity of the regal obligations.”

Explaining thus and convincing the young Parikshit, they sat down. Thereafter, the coronation of Parikshit as the King of Hastinapura was performed, as per the wishes of Dharmaraja. Parikshit, too, bowed to the wishes of Dharmaraja and allowed the coronation rites to be completed.

The Pandavas’ Final March

The Pandavas then started on their great final march to the Himalayas, straight from the royal court where the coronation of Parikshit was being held. They immersed the ashes of their mother, Kunti, in the holy river Ganges. Thereafter, they continued



their march in the Himalayas, proceeding one behind the other.

Dharmaraja, the eldest of the Pandavas, led the great march, with Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva following, in that order. Droupadi, as the wife of the five Pandava brothers, walked behind all the brothers.

While the Pandavas and their queen Droupadi continued thus along their great march to the Himalayas, Droupadi was the first to drop down (shed the mortal coil). Thereafter, the four brothers – Sahadeva, Nakula, Arjuna, and Bhima – dropped down, in that order, during the course of their journey, with none among them looking back at all during their march. For each of them, it was a lone journey to their final abode. In the end, Dharmaraja was alone, and he continued his march [until he too dropped the body].

In this manner, the Pandavas’ earthly sojourn came to an end. Pariskhit was grief-stricken when he came to know about their departure from this world. When the Pandavas set out on their *mahaprastana*, people were unable to bear their separation, and hence many of them shed their mortal coils, too.

**The Pandavas are ideals to the entire world.
We should emulate their ideals and sanctify our lives. . . .
When we follow the ideals of the Pandavas,
we will experience peace, happiness, and prosperity.**

It appeared as if destiny had been unkind toward the Pandavas, but who can understand its ways! No one except God can know the turn of events in one's life. One may don ochre robes, but that will not enable him to know what the future has in store for him.

The Pandavas symbolize virtues and valor. They were able to shed their mortal coils peacefully, as they had led their lives in an ideal manner and sanctified their time in the contemplation of God.

Like the Pandavas, King Parikshit was also one of virtues and valor. Even while carrying out his kingly duties, he spent his time in *Namasmarana* (repeating the names of God). When he took over the reins of Hastinapura, certain evil-minded kings joined hands and waged a war against him. They underestimated his strength and valor, thinking he was young and inexperienced.

But other noble kings came to his rescue. With their help, Parikshit vanquished the enemies and asserted his supremacy. He emerged victorious due to his unflinching faith in God. That is why I often tell you, *"God is your sole refuge, wherever you are – whether on the mountain top, or in the sky, or in the town, or in the city, or in the middle of the deep sea."*

When Parikshit was anointed as king, initially people were apprehensive as to how a young boy could shape the destiny of a kingdom. However, under the able guidance of Sage Kripacharya's son, Parikshit proved to be an efficient king. He followed in the footsteps of the Pandavas. He took some time off from his royal duties and went to the place where the Pandavas had shed their mortal coils. He performed *pradakshina* (circumambulation) at the spot and placed the dust from their footsteps on his head in reverence. He practiced and propagated their ideals.

Follow the Ideal Example of the Pandavas

The Pandavas are ideals to the entire world. We should emulate their ideals and sanctify our lives. We may have to face sorrows and suffering, but we should remain undeterred by emotional obstacles. Only then will true power and strength manifest in us. When we follow the ideals of the Pandavas, we will experience peace, happiness, and prosperity.

Students! You are young and have a long life ahead. Parikshit was much younger when he ascended the throne; however, he took up the challenge with admirable courage



and faith in God. He stood as an ideal to the young generation.

You should develop such courage and fortitude and strive for the welfare of society. That is the true ideal. Pray to God to bestow on you the necessary strength to hold on to this ideal. The Pandavas left the world long ago, but their ideal is eternal and ever fresh. You should cherish their ideal in your heart and try to follow the same in letter and in spirit.

Embodiments of love! Students! All of you are highly virtuous. You should be an ideal to others. Never give room for sorrow. Be always fearless. You don't need to be a slave to others. Have firm faith that God is always with you, guiding you and guarding you. Having God firmly installed in your heart and with the divine name on your lips, you should march forward, saying *Jai, Jai, Jai . . .* (Victory! Victory! Victory!)

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**, October 7, 2005,
(accessed at <http://sathyasaibaba1.tripod.com/dassera1-71005.htm>)

IMAGE CREDIT: Himalayas Himalayas by Piotr Wojtkowski

Interfaith Panel Discussion, Part 2 (Questions & Answers)

*From the Southeast Regional Retreat in North Carolina,
Memorial Day Weekend 2012*

The goal of the panel was a sharing,
a dialogue, where each one spoke from his
heart and shared how they relate to Divinity.

In the previous issue (1st Quarter 2013) we featured Part 1 of an Interfaith Panel Discussion focusing on the essence of religions. The panel discussion was part of the 2012 Region 3 (Southeast US) retreat.

The panel moderator was the regional president, Dr Axay Kalathia, and the panel members were Pastor Neville Steele representing Christianity, Mr Fize Mohammed representing Islam, and Prof Gnana Bhaskar Tenali representing Hinduism. Part 1 explored the essence of each faith through the eyes of its followers, how to be a better follower of the faith, misperceptions about the faith, and concepts of death and the afterlife.

At the end of Part 1, Dr Kalathia summarized by pointing out that many common terms were used by the panelists – *obedience, unity, surrender, love, faith, proper understanding of truth* – and that while there may have been some philosophical differences in their explanations, when it came to the heart, there were no differences.

Part 2, which follows, consisted of a question-and-answer session.

Our gratitude to Jorja Kelley for her labor of love in transcribing the entire panel discussion. —Ed.

NOTE: The entire video may be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/44560656> or at <http://vimeo.com/user9614745/videos>.

(It has been my honor to transcribe from video to text in order preserve what was said and better my own understanding. Certain phrases were edited for accuracy. Approved omissions to help the flow of the article are notated by“ . . . ”—JK)

Part 2 – Q & A

During Part 2, the panelists addressed questions from the audience.

What about putting words into action?

Question: *I've known of many interfaith panels where lovely dialogue takes place, but when are people going to go out and put the words into action in the community?*



Interfaith panel, May 2012, representing Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. From left: Dr Axay Kalathia (moderator), Pastor Neville Steele, Professor Gnana Bhaskar Tenali, Mr Fize Mohammed.

Dr. Kalathia (Moderator): . . . This interfaith panel is very interesting because it came about from the exact opposite way. The way this interfaith panel started is through work. This is how we met Pastor Neville. . . . We did service together; that's how we met each other, and that's how we opened up and said, "Let's try to find out about each other."

Pastor Steele (Christianity): Dr Axay indeed answered the question, because we did not talk and then think about what we should do. We were found doing, and it's because we were doing we happen to be here today. The more we do for others, the more we draw closer to the Almighty God.

As a matter of fact, [when I was] growing up, my grandmother always taught us the motto, "Service before self." I learned later on in life that service is the rent that we pay for occupying our space here on Earth. So if we don't serve, we have no right to be here.

Comment by Dr Sarvesh Sathiraju (Regional Service Coordinator): If I may just interrupt and add a comment to Pastor's statement. It was interesting what you already covered. The commonalities between us was the service. When we first did it, after a period of time, what he (Pastor Steele) was saying was almost as if I was sitting and listening to Swami's teachings, and that's what he was telling me, the experiences.

The second interesting thing [was], of course, that he said, “I just wanted to be humble. Have you heard of Sai Baba?” Then he comes with the history and the red book. Can you please tell everybody how you saw his (Sai Baba’s) picture? . . .

Pastor Steele (Christianity): Yes. You know, as a young man, I always sought the truth, so I listened to various philosophers, various religious leaders, and political leaders. I happened to be in Montreal, Canada, in 1975, and I was seated in my living room, and the television was on, and I was flicking from channel to channel, and suddenly I saw this person.

He looked just like how he looks in that portrait there (pointing to Sai Baba’s photo behind him). I was seated in my living room, like this, with my hands under my legs, like this, and I considered it to be a very meditative position. He appeared on the television, seated just in the manner in which I was seated. That blew my mind. That was amazing. I’ll never forget that day.

How to keep our children’s faith strong?

Question: *What are your thoughts regarding our children’s faith – how to keep it strong, especially with the concern that they may face discrimination in their school and community?*

Pastor Steele (Christianity): As far as faith and our children are concerned, it’s important that we teach them to know God, teach them to trust God, teach them the values that we hold so dearly as their parents and as adults.

In spite of the fact that prayer has been ruled unconstitutional in American schools, we should teach our children that they should pray. They don’t have to pray audibly, but they can pray from within, because prayer helps to deepen our relationship with God. Jesus taught us in the Bible that God is with you always, but you have got to recognize His presence by praying to Him at all times.

Prof. Tenali (Hinduism): I agree with what Pastor Steele said. It is the parents’ responsibility to ensure that the children understand their own religion to the extent possible. The common question – anything we say to our children – their common question is “Why?” We can tell them anything. “Why?” So if, as a parent, I do not know the “why,” there is no way I can convince my child about the “why.”

So it is very important, whatever the religion the child is born into, that the parents need to understand their own religion well, so they can explain the “why” of it in a manner that is understandable to the child.

Again, when a child asks a simple question, we cannot go on a lengthy philosophical discourse, because the child has neither the patience, interest, or capacity to understand it. So we need an understanding behind the fundamental principles of our religion, and to be able to transmit that in a way that is possible for a child to have an idea about, and then let them grow and evolve into better and better understanding as they go on.

“In Hinduism . . . it is unequivocally stated that we are divine. But for various reasons, that does not seem to be what we are experiencing.” —Prof. Gnana Bhaskar Tenali

Brother Mohammed (Islam): You know, I have always believed that the best way to teach is to live what you say. A child will follow not what the parents say but what the parents do. So, the example is the most powerful influence on the child.

If we walk the talk, and we practice these Human Values, especially in our homes, then we provide the best avenue for the child to learn – especially, even before the child gets to school.

In many instances in our Bal Vikas (spiritual and character education for children) classes, the children will say, “We look upon our parents as heroes.” They want to model their lives according to what Daddy does or what Mommy does, and, as was said in the parenting class, it begins from the moment of conception, and this is why parents are so important.

To me, that nine-month period is the most important period in the child’s life, because whatever the mother thinks, the child will be influenced; whatever the mother eats, the child will be influenced. Where she goes, who she interacts with, the company she keeps, the television shows she looks at, her conversations, all impact,

because the bloodstream of the mother is the bloodstream of the child.

If during that nine-month period, that parent, that mother can live a godly life and surround [herself] with divinity, you can be guaranteed that child will be a very evolved and highly-valued soul. So, parents need to understand how important and crucial their role is, especially in the home.

In Islam, with the five daily *namaz* (prayers), one of the daily *namaz* is done in the early hours of the morning. I know of families that come together – the old saying, “The family that prays together, stays together” – and prayer is what can really be the binding force in a family.

I want to share very quickly how important this is, and I’ve seen it happen in my own family; the second of the Nine-Point Code of Conduct (of the Sai Organization) is that we should have prayer or *bhajans* (group devotional singing) with members of the family at least once a week. Every Sunday in our home, we have this prayer session for about 45 minutes. There is a mandate in the home that it must be done on that particular day. So there’s a discipline that has been ingrained in the family.

So, we do the prayers: we do the Muslim prayer, the Christian prayer, the Hindu prayer; we sing devotional songs. The children then select a passage from anywhere that is value-based; then we do the closing exercises with a small period of silent sitting.

I'll tell you the great benefit that has happened over the years. One, the children learn to sing. Two, they learn the prayers of all the different religions. Three, when they speak, they develop confidence and self-esteem. When they do *arati* (Hindu ritual symbolizing being blessed by divinelight) or any other form [of ritual], they also learn respect and adoration of the parents.

Most important, what happens afterward in our home is that we have what we term, jokingly, a parliamentary discussion. We make a pot of tea, and then we sit informally and chat. We give the children a chance to express their views on anything that has happened in the home over the last week. We give them an opportunity to become part of the decision-making, so there is loving communication, respectful communication, between the children and the family. And so it has allowed the family bond to become stronger and stronger, and

as a result there is unity, there is harmony in the home.

So I really want to emphasize, more than anything else, my dear brothers and sisters, we need to focus more on our children. We cannot go outside and say we are serving Swami by neglecting our home. Your first

seva (service) starts in your home. Be good parents, and you don't have to do any other service outside. Swami will be pleased with that.



Pastor Neville Steele (Christianity)

Do duality-based teachings hold us back?

Question: *All three religions have elements of duality, setting apart God as high above us, while we are separate and below. Is this not holding us back from reaching divinity?*

Pastor Steele (Christianity): Well, in Christianity, there is no difference between Jesus and God. Jesus is God incarnate, or God made flesh. It's an understanding that is very difficult to explain, because if you can explain God, there would be no need for God. God is divine, and we are human, and we cannot fully understand ourselves, much less understand the one who made us. But

“God in his infinite wisdom, has allowed us to become like him, in that we ourselves begin to hate what is wrong. Instead, we cling to what is good and practice what is good, and that in itself manifests in loving God and in loving others.” —Pastor Neville Steele

when we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, we’re simply saying that the one who came from heaven to bring us back to the Father, we pay homage to him. It’s like if you want to see President Obama and you don’t have a way of getting to him, but you happen to know his daughter, Malia. Malia can easily get you to President Obama, because that’s his daughter.

In the same way, when we pray, and we pray in the name of Jesus, we are heard by God, because of the sacrifice Jesus made when he came into this world to show us the way back to God.

Prof. Tenali (Hinduism): In Hinduism, there is no doubt whatsoever the fact that everyone is innately divine, part and parcel of the divine. Duality [is], in the sense the question was asked, as I understand it, “is God separate from us?” – that we keep on praying, worshiping, and thinking, “Oh, there is some entity that is much more superior than the person that I am” – so we forever keep on telling ourselves that we are insignificant, that we are nothing, in such terms. So is there only going to be duality, forever? I hope that was the question.

The answer is, it is unequivocally stated that we are divine. But for various reasons, that does not seem to be what we are experiencing. We are experiencing a separation. We are experiencing a limitation in our awareness. Whereas God is supposed to be all awareness, infinite awareness – *sat* (being), *chit* (awareness), and *ananda* (bliss) . . . with no other qualifications added on to it. We are that same thing, too, is what Hinduism, all the Vedas, all the Upanishads, all the literature proclaims.

But since that does not seem to be what our experience is now, the mere assertion that “I Am That” is not going to right away transport us into that state.

[But] that assertion can be realized. That assertion needs to be made a reality by a certain process. So all these dualistic – so-called dualistic practices – that are part at least of the Hindu religion in the form of worship and prayer – or even if it means yoga, you are doing a certain process – so, all that is to arrive at the stage where one experiences oneness with the Divine.

So, in the process of getting to that ultimate goal, we use these steps. This is like a ladder. When we get there, we are there. But then, when we get there, our perception

will change, and then we realize, then, that we have always been God. It is not that “now I am not,” and then maybe another 10–15 more births later, I will become God. There is no becoming. *We are . . .* is what Hinduism, without a doubt, asserts.

We are God: “*Prajnanam Brahma: I am Atma Brahma.*” “*Tat Tvam Asi* (the Upanishad statement): Thou Art That. Thou Art That: you are already That!” That’s the ultimate realization that will come about when we go through certain processes. So, whatever dualistic attitudes or approaches one sees as part of the religious practices are a means to that end, of nondualism.

Brother Mohammed (Islam): I will

respond as to what happens in Islam. From what was said yesterday in a message, the holy Prophet Mohammed said, “He who knows himself, knows God.”

“*La Ilaha Illa Allah*” means that there is nothing but Allah (God). The Holy Koran states that “Allah is closer to you than your jugular vein.” So that means He is within us, the very core of who we are. In Islam they speak about the 70,000 veils that separate you

from Almighty Allah. Brother Gnana said it is a movement within, in consciousness, that with our spiritual practices, in whatever form, it helps to remove these 70,000 veils, and to the extent that we can do that, then the divinity manifests itself within us. We are already divine. There is nothing like attaining liberation (*moksha*). You are already liberated.

A beautiful example is given. When you have the moon and there are clouds blocking the light of the moon, is it correct to say that there is no moon? It’s just that the rays of the moon are being blocked by the clouds. In a similar way, that moon, that consciousness – call it whatever form is within us, and the 70,000 veils that



Brother Fize Mohammed (Islam)

Islam speaks about – are the clouds that block the divine light from manifesting.

Through rituals, through fasting, and the daily *namaz* (prayers), through doing good and holy acts, we are continuously removing the veils. When we are able to do this completely, then the realization comes that we are divine. Thank you.

Audience Comment: I’d like to share that there are some groups within Judaism where

“The very essence of religion is to love our fellow men and women, regardless of who they are, and to serve them.” —Brother Fize Mohammed

reincarnation is accepted – some sects of Orthodox Judaism, Kabbalah Judaism, the Jewish Renewal Movement, and Hasidic Judaism.

What about the caste system?

Question: *The caste system is often brought up as a criticism against Hinduism. Can you please comment?*

Prof. Tenali (Hinduism): Insofar as attaining God is concerned, caste has no role whatsoever to play. As can be seen from the numerous examples in India, there are many, many noble souls who are devotees of God, born into a very low caste but who attained God, became self-realized.

For those of you who are familiar, in the Tamil Nadu State they know that there are “*nayanas*.” They were born, several of them, in the lowest of the lowly caste, but that did not prevent them from becoming self-realized. That did not prevent the rest of the society to accept that they could realize God.

So those who may have been the highly born, say the Brahmins or the others, they did not have a problem in accepting that this person who was born in a low caste has actually liberated himself and has attained God. Society accepted it with no friction

whatsoever. So, the caste system and the reasons behind, the original reasons behind it, are not hindrances for spiritual growth.

Is our basic nature one of “sin” or “love”?

Question: *How do you address the assertion that one is a “sinner,” in the light of Swami’s teaching that we are “love”?*

Pastor Steele (Christianity): As I indicated earlier, we don’t have to teach children to do wrong. Doing wrong is natural to a human being. However, God, in his infinite goodness, has allowed us to receive his Essence, his Holy Spirit, when we are born again.

Physical birth gives rise to a physical being, and spiritual birth gives rise to a spiritual being. I say that to say when we are “born again,” it means that we no longer are [so] prone to sin. It is not that we are *sinless* (one word), but we do *sin less*. Do you understand?

So, God, in his infinite wisdom, has allowed us to become like him, in that we ourselves begin to hate what is wrong. Instead, we cling to what is good and practice what is good, and that in itself manifests in loving God and in loving others.

Dr. Kalathia (Moderator): Just as a corollary to that, I want to paint this scenario:

You have Person A who believes he's divine. Yet he walks around lying, stealing, murdering, and is a drain on society. Person B believes he is a sinner, and to repent, he walks around telling the truth, serving his fellow man, always concerned with "what can I do to help society?"

So, instinctively, which person would we want living in our society and being part of our family? Person B. So what is the difference? Is it more what their belief system is, or is it what their belief system prompts them to do? Just a comment I wanted to make.



Professor Gnana Bhaskar Tenali (Hinduism)

How to respond to the idea that only one faith is correct and others wrong? How to show love to those who hate?

Question: *How do you answer someone who claims that only one of the three of your faiths is correct, and the others wrong? Also, how can you show love to someone who only shows you hate?*

Pastor Steele (Christianity): When Jesus came into this world, even before he came, the destruction of his life was planned. He entered a world that hated him, and he told us as his followers, we too will be hated. Hatred and the evil that is in this world helps us to draw closer to God. The closer we get to God, the purer our hearts become, so that we cannot have hatred for anyone.

If someone says to me, "I don't like you," immediately I will begin praying for that person, because unless we experience the love of God, we cannot be united as One.

And I'm thankful that I feel the love of my brother here, and my other brother at

the end. And I know that this augurs well for our final destination, where God will be with us.

In essence, when you look at Christianity today, yes, there is hatred, even between Christians. But the fact of the matter is, not every Christian is born again. Not every Christian has the love of God in his or her heart. It is when we can love truly; then we can say we know God. Unless we love, we don't know who God is.

Brother Mohammed (Islam): I'm going to just take a page out of the Bible where it says, "It is easy to love those who love you." The true test of love is to love those who condemn you, who spitefully persecute you, who threaten to kill you. That is the true test of love.

In the life of the Holy Prophet Mohammed, he manifested this regularly in his life. In fact, in his 62-year life span he was called *El Amin*, "the Trusted One." And so great was that love, that out of that love flowed forgiveness.

I'll give an example: there was a Holy War that was fought, where he was trodden upon. So great was one of the enemies' hatred toward him, that she killed the uncle of the Holy Prophet Mohammed – this one lady, . . . such was her intense hatred toward him.

When that particular person was captured, [the Prophet Mohammed] singled her out and brought her to the front of the gathering and said, "From today on you are forgiven. You are set free." That was the kind of love that allowed him to win over his enemies: the selflessness of his love.

Now, coming back to what you are saying, [about] a vying and competition that one religion out there [ought to be] rallied around . . . It is said that anyone who feels that his or her religion is greater or better than another's has not understood the core of his own. Because, as we all have discussed here, the very essence of religion is to love our fellow men and women, regardless of who they are, and to serve them.

So, I'm not going to make a distinction, if a person in need . . . I'm not going to make a distinction to serve them based on religion, caste, creed, or color; just the very need of that person should allow love to flow to them.

When Swami says to "*love all, serve all*," it cuts across all barriers of religion, caste, creed, or color. So from that perspective, how we can change that, is what we are doing, especially in the Sathya Sai Organization.

When Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and many from different religious walks of life can come together under the divine umbrella of love and sing toward Christ and Rama and Krishna and Allah, with no conflict, then we are well on the way of creating religious harmony in the society. The Sathya Sai Organization is a wonderful example of this, so we must continue in this vein to deal with situations where one is [put forth as] "greater than the other." When we really understand the value of each religion, we can then see the oneness of it, because all the great masters taught the same message.

Jesus, Swami said, sacrificed his life and poured out his blood to instill the value of love and compassion in the heart of humanity. Krishna taught the message of love. The Holy Prophet Mohammed's life was an example of selfless love. So we are all talking the same language. Thank you.

Prof. Tenali (Hinduism): Well, at least I can tell you for sure that there is no Hindu who says that Hinduism is the only religion that should be surviving on earth. Every Hindu fundamentally is taught that this entire world is one family. So there is no question of saying

that “this is the only religion that should survive, and I cannot accept other religions.” It is not at all in the Hindu religion to begin with, not even in ancient times.

“*A no bhadrah kratavo yantu vishwataha*” is a Rig Veda statement – which means we are talking about thousands of years past – that means, “Let noble thoughts come to me from all directions.”

(Rig Veda 1.89.1)

So, wherever there is a noble thought, in terms of a preaching on love, sacrifice, service . . . these are all accepted and inherently part and parcel of Hinduism.

So, a Hindu should never really have any problem whatsoever with any other religion or whatever their practices or their beliefs. They accept so much so, that as part of Hinduism there is also a branch called the *nastikas* (atheists). *Nastikas* are the nonbelievers, those who think that there is no God. Even they are accepted as part of Hinduism.

If even those who don’t believe in the existence of God itself are accepted, there is no question of fighting with somebody else who thinks God is some other form. So in

Hinduism, there is no question whatsoever of animosity toward any other religion. If any Hindu talks otherwise, it simply means they don’t understand their own religion.

Dr. Kalathia (Moderator): I really don’t think we have time for any more questions or comments. Because this is the Sathya

Sai Retreat, I think it’s appropriate that we let Sathya Sai have the last words. I’ve got a few quotes from Sathya Sai:

Religion is three-fourths character. Only those who preserve

character can be pronounced truly religious. (SSS 12:20 Nov 15, 1973, end note) . . . *No person can claim to be religious if he merely observes the sacraments and rules, and fails to be upright and compassionate.* (SSS 9:30, Oct 28, 1969)

There is only one God; he is omnipresent.
There is only one religion, the religion of love.
There is only one language, the language of the heart. There is only one caste, the caste of humanity. (SSS 11:52, Dec 24, 1972)



Let the different faiths exist. Let them flourish and the glory of God be sung in all the languages and in a variety of tunes. Respect the differences between the faiths and recognize them as valid, as long as they do not extinguish the flame of unity. (Sanathana Sarathi, Dec 1981, p 274)

When people who are fanatical in their beliefs about God approach us, we must welcome them with a smile and be eager to listen to them, with a heart filled with devotion to God. When someone who is passionate about his or her work approaches us, we must share with them our skill and strength, and toil together.

By this means, it is possible to bring harmony between followers of various faiths and cultures. It will bring together various schools of thought and beliefs.

How wonderful it would be if this kind of harmony and friendly cooperation becomes more prevalent. How happy the world would be if everyone comprehends that their viewpoint can at best be only the partial truth, and that it requires the harmonious commingling of many other facets to arrive at the whole truth. (Sathya Sai Vahini, ch 10, "The Yogis," p 73)

Om Sai Ram

—Transcribed by Jorja Kelley
Ft Walton Beach, Florida



Black Mountain, North Carolina, conference grounds, venue for the Interfaith Panel Discussions

SaiLoveinAction.org

WHAT IS SAILoveinAction.org? Inspiring stories of service projects from the USA and around the world – with a focus on how service transforms the one who serves, or how service fosters spiritual growth, or how it exemplifies the highest spiritual teachings. Some recent postings from various US regions are featured below. Click on the links to access the articles.

- The website continues to grow, now with approximately 100 articles now published! India has joined in, in a big way, with the Sathya Sai Seva Organization contributing articles from nearly every state in India.
- Audio recordings of some of the articles have been created at the request of *RadioSai.org*, which has begun incorporating the stories into their “Thursday Live” programming. The audio recordings will also be added to the article pages in the *SaiLoveinAction.org* website.
- A recent innovation allows selected articles to be displayed, alternatively, in either English or another language, according to the locality.

—Sai Love in Action Team

Service Is Love in Action:



Service to Migrant Farm Worker Communities

GLENDALE/ARCADIA CA Sai devotees distribute bags of groceries and toiletries to 500 indigent needy families living in agricultural communities in Southern California. [Read article...](#)

Andre House of Hospitality Service Project

PHOENIX/MESA AZ Adult and Young Adult (YA) volunteers consistently feel the unseen touch of the Divine Hand in helping to feed the homeless and poor weekly at André House in Phoenix, Arizona. [Read two articles...](#)



Teaching Values to Preschoolers IOWA CITY IA

Giving love and teaching character values to preschool children at a Head Start program provides happiness and character growth to a dedicated volunteer. [Read article ...](#)



Newspapers for the Elderly JACKSON MS

The simple service of providing a weekly copy of a regional newspaper enriches and brings enjoyment to elder citizens of Jackson MS. [Read article ...](#)

Tree Planting BRIDGEWATER NJ

To do something for the environment, the Bridgewater Sai Center planned a tree planting project to coincide with Earth Day and committed to caring for the trees for two years. [Read article ...](#)



Philadelphia Homeless Feeding

MEDFORD LAKES NJ Volunteers serving the homeless feel they are the ones receiving the benefit, and a young adult reflects on spiritual growth from engaging in a service project providing food to the homeless. [Read two articles ...](#)

2012 Free Medical Camp

ROCHESTER NY A doctor, inspired by Sathya Sai Baba's teachings on a doctor's role in society and that service should be directed to fulfill a local need, collaborates with area Sai Centers, Rochester General Hospital, the Salvation Army, and other agencies to host a free medical screening camp in 2012 for the medically underserved and uninsured. [Read article . . .](#)



Nursing Home Visits

FARMINGTON CT Volunteers of all ages focus on love and compassion and “see themselves” as they bond with residents of the Avon Health Center, a nursing home. [Read article . . .](#)

NAVIGATING the SaiLoveinAction.org website (from the home page):

- **Double-click on the map** to zoom toward the center of the map. (It pays to zoom in 100%, as some dots are on top of each other – multiple stories from the same location.)
- **Flat Map View:** Click on the “Flat Map” button (lower left corner of the home page). In some browsers and on handheld devices, the Flat Map option may work best.

Participate! SaiLoveinAction.org invites stories about selfless service projects. To submit, please send an email with a short description to: submissions@SaiLoveInAction.org. A team member will get back to you with more information and guidelines. An editor will be assigned to help you develop and polish it and provide guidance about images, quotes, audio/video clips, and so on.



Institute of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE-USA)

Updates for the US Sai Community

Message to Teachers:

Do not condemn yourselves as petty peddlers of knowledge. You are the makers of the future of mankind. You can make it bright and joyful or mar it as dreary and dreadful. You can weaken or strengthen the foundations of life. You are the planners and engineers who lay the royal road of peace and prosperity. You are the ray of hope that illumines the dismal night enveloping all countries.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba, June 14, 1983

The work of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education-USA (ISSE-USA) is moving nicely along by our Beloved Father's great grace. I write to share news with the U.S. Sai Community at this time of significant and continuing progress in our development as a national Institute.

Completion of Critical, Sustaining Projects

Since we completed our second Diploma Course in July 2012, we have been hard at work on two major Institute projects.

Review of Diploma Courses One is a comprehensive review of our Diploma Course experience thus far, with the objective of enhancing the quality, effectiveness, and accessibility of what we offer through our annual residency.

This review project was co-chaired by Drs Kathleen Salzano and Cheruvu Murthy and staffed by Kalika Grana, Doris Hampton, M Srinivas, and Bea Flaig.

Recommendations from this group included a number of ways to refine and re-combine the subject matter, improve our pedagogical effectiveness, and enhance the overall experience of participants. Also included was a well-considered recommendation to reduce the amount of time required to complete Courses One and Two.

Resource Development The second project involved the ambitious development of a wide range of new resources. This project was essentially designed to replace the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (EHV) Curriculum Manual that has been in use for several years. The vast, well-organized, and up-to-date store of new lesson plans and resource

materials will support Sathya Sai EHV school and community programs at every level and be available through our website, which is in development.

These resources will have two levels of access, one with samples and examples for those who happen upon the site, and the other through a password-protected area reserved for those who complete ISSE-USA Courses and undertake Institute-sanctioned programs. April Skrobiza, Beth Clark, Megan Bennett, and Wendy Ward-Hoffer all played key roles in this project, with support from a number of persons who contributed lessons and a variety of lesson plan elements.

New Partnership School and Community Programs

Leaders from the Institute conducted an official site visit to Sapiientia Montessori School in Austin, Texas, last fall, to assess its readiness to become an ISSE Partnership School. After a comprehensive review that included structured school and classroom observations, interactions with students and teachers, and a meeting with a roundtable of enthusiastic parents, we approved Sapiientia as our first official Partnership School.



Sapiientia Montessori School, Austin, Texas

While it is not a Sai School, per se, all who visit the school can readily experience the environment and culture of love and the practice of human values among the teachers, staff, and students. Sapiientia (“wisdom” in Latin)

Montessori School is owned and operated by Kalika and Alex Grana, both of whom play important roles in the Institute and in the U.S. Sai Organization.

We have also approved two new Sathya Sai EHV community programs, one initiated and led by Kathleen Salzano, and the other by Beth Clark. We are also discussing formal Institute association with two other ongoing EHV programs run by devotees.

Our endeavor to work in positive and productive unity with all who wish to promote Swami’s EHV programs in the public arena is a central aspect of our mission and something we believe is naturally beneficial to all concerned. Official association with the ISSE-USA will permit these devotees to use Swami’s Name and receive access to the growing number of resources we make available to Institute-affiliated programs.

We firmly believe that all sincere efforts to merge the common rivers of Sai education

aimed at the U.S. secular community can only enhance the flow.

Another recent initiative with a nonprofit, service-learning organization and three associated schools in the Phoenix, Arizona, area is also moving forward. This is a new sphere of involvement for us that must be carefully considered, yet since there is a critical mass of interested community workers and educators in that locale, we will return for another round of instruction and facilitation in the months to come. Depending on what our experience suggests, we may establish a partnership agreement with this organization, and possibly with the schools.

On We Go, in Love and Service

Our direction for the foreseeable future is to encourage local Sathya Sai EHV initiatives among those who complete our instructional programs, to identify and partner with schools that are like-minded and wish to focus on a human-values-centered process of education, and seek opportunities at educational institutions and community organizations to share information about the Institute and Sathya Sai EHV.

Examples of these efforts will include approaching more Montessori and other

schools with similar philosophies, and arranging forums at universities and other places where we presently have contacts. Similar to what is occurring in Phoenix, we will also remain alert to additional opportunities that may arise in other regions.

We will selectively include more professional educators and community service workers in our Diploma Courses who are not presently part of the Sai Organization. We will also continue to seek additional human resources from within the Sai Organization, elevate our own interactive culture and methods of communication, and seek ways to bolster our overall effectiveness and sustainability of all programs and initiatives.

We continue to make progress on the ISSE-USA website, putting in place sufficient infrastructure to respond effectively to the range of inquiries that will surely arise.

We are deeply inspired and robustly sustained by our beloved Sai's all-pervading love and will continue on our march in a manner that gives honor and glory, or as some might say, "the proper props," to the enriching work we have been given.

—Hymon T Johnson, EdD
Director, ISSE-USA



Today, educational institutions are growing in numbers, but there is no growth of a broad outlook among the educated people. Education should serve to enlarge the vision and broaden the outlook of the people. Everyone should be made to feel that his or her welfare is bound up with the nation's well being.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sept 24, 1987, National Symposium on Value Orientation



Dr Kathleen Salzano – Coordinator of Instructional Programs, ISSE-USA

Om Sai Ram, with fond greetings to each and all.

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Kathleen Salzano as Coordinator of Instructional Programs for the Institute of Sathya Sai Education-USA (ISSE-USA). The role Dr Salzano is assuming was formerly referred to as Chairperson of the Diploma Course Planning and Oversight Committee.

Dr Salzano holds a BA degree in Foods and Nutrition, a MA in Person Centered Education, and an EdD in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in Organizational Development. As a multiple-subject credentialed teacher, she has taught at the kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 4th-5th, and 5th grade levels. Working with second language learners, she has taught reading and science. She has also served as a master teacher to university student teachers. Kathleen served as an Adjunct Professor in education at the US International University in San Diego and has worked in Community Education, Network Relations, and Marketing with two major health care providers. Kathleen was also owner and CEO of Teachers Success, Inc, a nonprofit organization that focused on creating more efficient communication systems within schools and school districts. She received a Kappan Research Award for Outstanding Research in the Field of Education.

Within the Institute, Kathleen has served as a member of the faculty and most recently as co-chairperson, along with Dr Cheruvu Murthy, of a special Ad Hoc Committee to review and make recommendations concerning our current Diploma Courses. She has also been of signal assistance in recent partnership school and community program initiatives undertaken by the Institute.

Please join me in welcoming Dr Salzano to her new leadership role.

In Service to Excellent Sai Education,

—**Hymon T Johnson**, EdD
Director, ISSE-USA

New National YA Reps to Step into Service

Ms Lakshmi Jagannathan and Mr Satheeshan Siva

Dear National Officers, Regional Presidents, and Central Council Members,

It is my pleasure to announce the selection of the new National Young Adult (YA) Representatives, **Ms Lakshmi Jagannathan** and **Mr Satheeshan Siva**. Lakshmi and Satheeshan bring great energy, enthusiasm, leadership, and humility in doing Swami's work. They will begin their term July 22, 2013, (Guru Purnima) and until then will be mentored by Aparna Murali, our current National YA Representative. During the transition period from now until July 22, they will be working under Aparna as YA National Reps.

Lakshmi Jagannathan

Lakshmi Jagannathan was born in Bangalore, India, and moved to Dallas, Texas, with her family at the age of 10. She attended Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) classes in Dallas, and after graduation joined the local YA program. As a YA, she had the opportunity to be part of many group pilgrimages to Prashanti Nilayam, including the Region 10 pilgrimages in 2003 and 2005, the World Youth Conference in 2007, and most recently in 2009 with Region 7.

Lakshmi has held several officer positions, first as the Dallas Sai Center YA Rep and later as Region 7 YA Rep. She has been an integral part of the national team responsible for all the wonderful YA newsletters and study circles that have been produced over the past few years. She functioned as co-lead, along with Aparna, for the national YA newsletter and study circles from 2011 onward. She also participated at the national level for a number of preconference initiatives, including the Gayatri-chanting initiative for the national YA conference in 2009.

After receiving her bachelors degree at Southern Methodist University, Lakshmi joined UC Berkeley and successfully completed her PhD in Electrical Engineering in May 2012. She currently works for Intel as a product quality and reliability engineer and lives in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, with her husband Srinath. Lakshmi remains deeply grateful to Swami for his loving presence, grace, and guidance.

Satheeshan Siva

Satheeshan Siva was born in Nigeria to Sri Lankan parents, lived a few years in Singapore, and then spent his childhood and youth in Australia. He was introduced to Swami at birth through his mother's side of the family. Satheeshan began attending SSE at age 7 and after graduating joined the YA program in Sydney. He continued to participate actively in the YA program after moving to the United States in 2005. He has had the opportunity to visit Swami in Puttaparthi on five occasions, including Christmas 1993, where he was blessed to perform in the Divine Presence as part of the international children's play.

Satheeshan is an active member of the Sathya Sai Center of Manhattan, New York, currently serving a second term as the Manhattan Center Devotion Coordinator and Male YA Representative. The YA group at his center has grown from a handful to more than 40 YAs since he began serving in these roles. He created the website for the Manhattan Sai Center and the Metropolitan NY Sai Center and is part of the web team for the Sai Love in Action Project (sailoveinaction.org).

Satheesan completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, before moving to the USA in 2005. He currently works in the software engineering field, financial industry. He is grateful to Swami for all the opportunities to serve, lessons learned, and being an instrument of His Divine Love.

We anticipate that Lakshmi and Satheeshan will continue to raise the YA program to even greater heights, as Aparna has done over the past 2½ years.

Accomplishments of the Past Term

Aparna Murali has been an ideal and loving leader, who, along with a large team of YA Regional Representatives and Advisors, and YAs across the USA, has accomplished many significant milestones, including the Living in Sai spiritual discipline program based on the nine-point code of conduct. This program culminated in a first Young Adult USA pilgrimage to Puttaparthi in November

2011. In March 2011 Swami had blessed and recommended the timing of this pilgrimage directly. This pilgrimage included a wonderful music program in the Kulwant mandir.

The YAs have also:

- Released an English Bhajan CD during the 86th Birthday Celebrations (2011) in Puttaparthi;
- Provided 14 **Chinna Katha** audio plays for Radio Sai;
- Conducted a spiritual discipline program in 2012–2013 based on Self-Confidence, Self-Satisfaction, Self-Sacrifice, and Self-Realization;
- Held a second National YA leadership retreat in 2012;
- Developed a national YA calendar of events and a new and improved YA website, www.saiyoungadultsusa.org; and
- Planned the upcoming August 2013 Zone 1 Youth Conference, another first.

Newsletters and Study Circles

Monthly newsletters and study circles in 2011 and quarterly newsletters in 2012–2013 have helped YAs focus on Swami’s teachings and put them into practice. The quality of the newsletters and study circles has been superb, and they have been used as study circle guides for Sai centers in the USA and Sai YA groups from other countries.

Aparna Murali will continue to serve as the Zone 1 YA Coordinator. We are most grateful for Aparna’s boundless energy, enthusiasm, and loving leadership. She is an ideal role model and pure instrument of Swami’s love as a center member, SSE teacher, National YA Rep, and Zone 1 Youth Coordinator.

May Swami shower his blessings and love on Lakshmi, Satheeshan, and Aparna in all their endeavors.

In Sai’s loving service,

—**Dr Mike Congleton**

President, USA Central Council

May 6, 2013

Save the Dates:

Sai Youth Conference, Zone 1 (USA, Canada, West Indies): Aug 23–25, (Fri–Sun) at Camp Green Lane, Philadelphia PA. **Theme: One for All, All for Sai.** Contact: Aparna Murali at saiyoungadultsusa@gmail.com, or see the YA website at www.saiyoungadultsusa.org/.

The Violin Story

An old man was visiting a city for the first time in his life. He had grown up in a remote mountain village, worked hard raising his children, and was enjoying his first visit to his children's modern homes.

While being shown around the city, the old man heard a sound that stung his ears. He had never heard such an awful noise in all his life, and certainly never in his quiet mountain village! Following the grating sound to its source, he came to a room in the back of a house where a small boy was practicing on a violin.



"Screech! Screech!" came the discordant notes from the groaning violin. When he was told that the instrument of such torture was called a *violin*, the old man decided he never wanted to hear such a horrible thing again.



The next day, while visiting another part of the same city, the old man heard a beautiful sound, which seemed to caress his aged ears. He had never heard such an enchanting melody in his mountain valley! Following the delightful sound to its source, he came to a room in the front of a house, where an old lady, a *maestro* (master of the instrument), was performing a sonata on a violin.

All at once, the old man realized his mistake. The terrible sound he had heard the previous day was not the fault of the violin, or even of the boy. It was just that the young man had yet to learn his instrument well!

With a wisdom that simple folk often show, the old man thought it was the same with religion. When we come across a religious enthusiast causing a lot of strife with his beliefs, it is incorrect to blame the religion. It is just that the person has yet to learn his religion well.

Likewise, when we come across a saint, a *maestro* of her religion, it is such a sweet encounter that it may inspire us for many years, whatever the person's beliefs.

But that was not the end of the story. . . .

The third day, in a different part of the city, the old man heard another sound that surpassed in its beauty and purity even that of the *maestro* on her violin.

This was a sound more beautiful than the cascade of the mountain stream in spring, the autumn wind through the forest groves, or the song of mountain birds after a heavy rain. It was even more beautiful than the silence of a mountain hollow on a still winter's night. What was the sound that moved the old man's heart more powerfully than anything before?

It was a large orchestra playing a symphony.

For the old man, the reason the symphony was the most beautiful sound in the world was that, first, every member of that orchestra was a *maestro* of his or her own instrument; and second, they had all learned how to play together in harmony.

"May it be the same with religion!" the old man thought. "Let each one of us learn, through the lessons of life, the soft heart of our beliefs. Let us each be a *maestro* of the love within our religion. Then, having learned our religion well, let us go further and learn how to play, like members of an orchestra, with other religions, in harmony together!"

That would be the most beautiful melody!



—Story and illustrations courtesy [radiosai.org](http://media.radiosai.org)

http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_06/01FEB08/12-violin.htm

—Illustrated by S B Krishna, SSSU

Sai Spiritual Education Lesson Plan

"The Violin Story" (GROUP 2)

VALUE: Peace • **SUBVALUE:** Harmony

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE: (lesson purpose) Understanding the underlying harmony of all faiths

QUOTE: *All hearts are motivated by the One and only God; all faiths glorify the One God; all Names in all languages and all Forms that man can conceive of, denote the same Divine Principle, which is best worshiped through pure love.* —Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 8:22, July 4, 1968)

OPENING: (3 Oms, Prayer, Repetition of God's Name)

- **Prayer:** *"The light of God surrounds us all; the love of God enfolds us all; the power of God protects us all; the presence of God watches over us all. God is in us all, and all is well."*
- Review previous lesson's Life Application activity (practiced during week).
- Introduce current lesson's subvalue and discuss quote.
- **Affirmation:** *"I see God in all."*

DEVOTIONAL GROUP SINGING: (Song to reinforce the value/spiritual principle):

"Unity in Sathya Sai" (listen to song, [here](#), sung by Region 2 SSE students)

REFRAIN: *Sathya Sai, Sathya Sai; Unity in Sathya Sai.
Om Sai Ram, Om Sai Ram; Om Sai Ram, Om Sai Ram.*

Rivers are many, water is one; Swami teaches truth is one.

Stars are many, sky is one; Swami teaches truth is one.

Sathya Sai, we are one; Sathya Sai, we are one. REFRAIN

Nations are many, earth is one; Swami teaches truth is one.

Religions are many, message is one; Swami teaches truth is one.

Sathya Sai, we are one; Sathya Sai, we are one. REFRAIN

Have children make up other verses, e.g.: *Lamps are many, light is one . . . ; Bulbs are many, current is one . . . ; Beings are many, breath is one . . . ; etc.*

PRE-STORY QUESTION(S): *What are some of the common beliefs that all faiths share?*

STORY: "The Violin Story" (See pp 53–54.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (related to story, subvalue, and affirmation)

- *How were the first and second sounds that the old man heard different?*
- *What was the mistake that the old man realized? What prompted him to realize his mistake?*
- *How did he compare this to religious beliefs?*
- *What elements made the symphony the most beautiful sound the old man had ever heard?*

- *What does the symphony represent? (unity of faiths, living in harmony) What can we learn from this?*
- *What did the old man mean by “learn the soft heart of our beliefs”?*
- *What does it mean to become a “maestro of love”?*

Discussion on judging others: Review with students the negative judgment the old man made about the first sound he heard and discuss what it means to have negative judgments about others of a different faith. For example, some groups do not join in birthday celebrations or salute the flag, or may dress differently. Have students **self-reflect*** on the following questions:

- *Do I have any judgments about any religion, in the way its members worship, think, dress, act, etc.? Do these things affect how I feel about them?*
- *What can I do to build harmony with other faiths?*

Discuss how to overcome feelings of differences or dislike (“non-harmony”), using Sai’s sayings as a guide.

ACTIVITY: Harmony Among Faiths (Provide an experience of the subvalue/spiritual principle.)

1. Make a **poster** depicting unity of faiths.
2. As a class, design a **questionnaire** to interview a person whose religion is different from yours. In particular, ask them what the most important beliefs of their religion are.

Sample questions for the questionnaire: (Invite students to generate questions.)

*Do members of your faith sing to the Lord? How do you show your love for God?
Do you have lessons on how to be a good person? What are good actions and thoughts?
What is the teaching about truth? Do you study scriptures?
How does someone learn to make his or her faith stronger?
Are people taught to help others who are in need?
Do you pray? What prayers you are taught?*

LIFE APPLICATION: What Faiths Have in Common: Using the questionnaire designed in class, interview a person who follows a religion different than yours. What similarities did you find with your own religion? Write about these things and share with the class next week.

***Self-reflection** can be continued as part of the Life Application. As a follow-up to the discussion, have students write personal responses to the questions in their spiritual journals.

C*ultivate the feeling of oneness between people of all creeds, all countries, and all continents. That is the message of love I bring. That is the message I wish you to take to heart. Foster love, live in love, spread love – that is the spiritual exercise which will yield the maximum benefit. —Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 8:22, July 4, 1968)*

USA Events and Conferences – 2013



NOTE: Some of the 2013 regional conferences have already taken place. Where possible, we have provided [links to video and audio recordings](#) from the conferences – readers may also check their regional websites for media postings of talks and sessions from recent conferences. Many thanks to the regional and national officers for keeping us informed. Regional retreat/conference updates and information may also be viewed at the official USA Sai website:

us.sathyasai.org/ or us.sathyasai.org/infoconf.htm.

Prof G Venkatraman, former Vice-Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and director of *RadioSai.org*, and eminent scientist and author, is visiting and speaking in many of the USA Regions from May–July. The website saiyoungadultsusa.org has a national listing of events featuring Prof Venkatraman.

Region 1 (Northeast): May 24–26 (Fri–Sun, Memorial Day weekend), at Sage College, Troy NY. **Theme:** *Be Alert Be Aware (B.A.B.A.).* Speakers: Mrs Berniece Mead, Prof A Anantharaman. Visit nesaicenters.org.

USA Events and Conferences – 2013, cont'd . . .

We will be adding more audio/video links to these listings as they become available. In our next issue, watch for additional media links from the recent regional conferences.

Region 2 (Mid-Atlantic): May 24–26, (Fri–Sun, Memorial Day weekend) at Camp Westmont, Poyntelle PA 18454. **Theme: *God is Love, Live in Love***. Speakers: Prof Anil Kumar, Drs Soumya and Sethuraman Panchanathan. Visit: retreatregistration@sathyasai-region2.org.

Region 3 (Southeast): May 24–26 (Fri–Sun), at Ramada Gateway, 7470 Highway 192 West, Kissimmee FL 34747. **Theme: *Love in Action***. Speakers: Mr Leonardo Gutter, Dr Sunny Anand, Prof Rangarajan (live webcast from India).

Region 4 (Mid-Central): May 17–19 (weekend *before* Memorial Day weekend), at Camp Wyman, Eureka MO (near St Louis). **Theme: *Inner Voice – Accessing the God Within***. Speakers: Dr Phil Gosselin, Dr Raghavendra Prasad. Visit: stlsai.org/.

- **Audio Links from the Region 4 Conference:** Talks by Dr Gosselin and Dr Prasad, Bhajan & Veda Sessions, Q&A, and YA Program are posted at the Region 4 website, stlsai.org/, or click [here](#).

Region 5 (North Central): Aug 30–Sept 2 (Fri–Mon, Labor Day weekend), at Camp Henry Horner, Ingleside IL. Program to be announced. Contact: Hari Conjeevaram, hconjeev@hotmail.com.

Region 6 (Pacific Northwest) (www.saicenters.info/saiusaregion6/): **Aug 31–Sept 2** (Sat–Mon, Labor Day weekend), at Silver Falls State Park, Sublimity, Oregon. Program to be announced. Contact: Ram Pochincherla, rampochincherla@gmail.com.

Region 7 (Northern California and Northern Nevada) (www.region7saicenters.org/omsairam/): **Aug 30–Sept 2** (Sat–Mon, Labor Day weekend), at Walker Creek Ranch, Marshall CA 94940. **Theme: *Constant Integrated Awareness: Wi-Fi within, Wi-Fi with HIM***. Speakers: P V Shankar, Michael McCarty, and Berniece Mead. Info: www.region7saicenters.org. Contact: Jerry Pesce, sai48@sbcglobal.net.

Region 8 (Southern California, Hawaii, Las Vegas NV): May 25–26 (Sat–Sun, Memorial Day weekend), at Sanathana Dharma Temple, 15311 Pioneer Boulevard, Norwalk, CA 92549. **Theme: Atma to Atma via the Atom.** Speaker: Dr G Venkatraman of Prasanthi Digital Studio and *RadioSai.org*, Past Vice-Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Visit: www.region8saicenters.org/Conference.

Video Links from the Region 8 Conference – Talks and Presentations:

- **Dr Narendranath Reddy:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWFUryCXOvk>
- **Prof G Venkataraman:** Watch for his talks to be posted on *RadioSai.org*.
- **Dick Weaver Performs (original devotional songs):** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQy6RbHcnCg>
- **SSE Children's Play:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IiSE5Ak2TcI>
- **Joe Phaneuf on Communicating with Love:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsNRJPFvR5k>

Region 9 (Southwest): Aug 30–Sept 2 (Fri–Mon, Labor Day weekend), at Bodhi Manda Zen Center, Jemez Springs NM. **Theme: From Form to Formless.** Speakers: Shyam and Sarojini Kanagala; Audrey, April, and Warren Bailey. Contact: Elaine Hausman, 505-660-0283, ehausman@rockridge.biz.

Region 10 (South Central) (www.sairegion10.org/index.php/home): **Upcoming Events**

- **Prof G Venkataraman:** Austin, Dallas, Houston, Jun 21–23
- **Prof Anil Kumar Public Forum:** Dallas, Jul 20
- **SSE Camp:** Aug 31–Sep 1 (location TBA)
- **Dr Choudary Voleti:** Aug 31–Sept 1 (Austin/San Antonio or at location of SSE Camp)
- **Avatar Declaration Day:** (Global Service Project): Oct 20, details TBA

Sai Youth Conference, Zone 1 (USA, Canada, West Indies): Aug 23–25, (Fri–Sun) at Camp Green Lane, Philadelphia PA. **Theme: One for All, All for Sai.** Contact: Aparna Murali at saiyoungadultsusa@gmail.com, or see the YA website at www.saiyoungadultsusa.org/.



Sathya Sai Newsletter USA

Sathya Sai Newsletter USA is a free quarterly publication based on the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It also includes literary contributions such as articles, poetry, and memoirs based on Sai's teachings and the experiences of devotees from the USA and beyond. Regular features include Sai Organization activities in the USA, International Sai Organization announcements, and contributions from all wings of the USA Sai organization – devotional, educational, service, young adults, and children's programs. *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* is published online free of charge under the auspices of the Sathya Sai Baba Society & Book Center, in cooperation with us.sathyasai.org.

Archive of past issues: Click [here](#) to access our complete archive from 1976 to present.

Submission guidelines: *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* welcomes literary contributions of interest to the Sai community, photographs, original illustrations, Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) stories and lesson plans, young adult contributions, and regional reports. Please submit text in an e-mail or word document (not as a PDF or slide presentation) and send photos in JPEG format (artwork may be scanned and saved as JPEG images). We are unable to return submissions, so please keep a copy for your files. Submissions are reviewed, selected, and edited for appropriateness at our discretion. With all submissions, please include the author/submitter's name, location, and contact information. Kindly also include complete citations for all quoted material (including dates of discourses from which quotes are drawn).

Submissions may be e-mailed to ssnusa@sathyasaibooksusa.org, or sent to the following address: *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA*, c/o Sathya Sai Baba Society & Book Center, 305 West First Street, Tustin CA 92780-3108.

Editorial questions: Write to ssnusa@sathyasaibooksusa.org.

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Your thoughts, words, and deeds must be saturated with my message. Then, they will spread effortlessly and efficiently, and the face of the world will be transformed.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (*Sathya Sai Speaks* 8:19-2, May 17, 1968)