

Sathya Sai Newsletter **USA**



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Focus on Communications



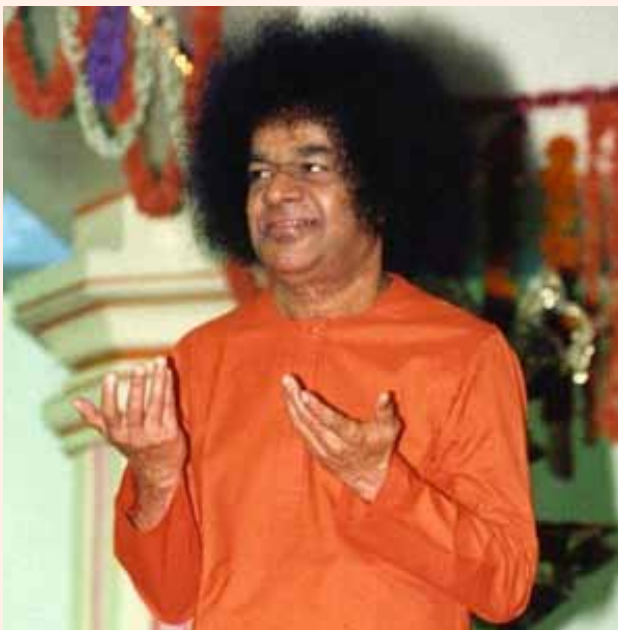
Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



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MAY ALL THE BEINGS IN ALL THE WORLDS BE HAPPY.

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FILL YOUR EVERY WORD WITH LOVE



Fill your every word
with love; fill your
every act with love.

*The word that emerges from
your tongue shall not stab like
the knife, nor wound like the
arrow, nor hit like the ham-
mer. It must be a foundation
of sweet nectar, a counsel of
consoling Vedantic wisdom, a
soft path of blossoms; it must
shower peace and joy. . . .*

*Love for love's sake; do not
manifest it for the sake of material objects or for the fulfillment
of worldly desires. . . . Treat every one – whoever he may be – with
the all-inclusive compassion of love. This constructive sympathy
must become the spontaneous reaction of all mankind.*

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba, *Sathya Sai Speaks* (SSS) 9:16, July 29, 1969, [pdf](#).

HAVE YOU WONDERED WHAT MESSAGE YOU GIVE?



Have you wondered what message you give When the folks of the world turn to you?

Is it filled with love and devoid of hate,
Saying, "To thine own Self it's time to be true"?
Does your smile welcome all, and your speech beckon each
To recognize the God within?
Or have you shut off the Light and turned from the Source
and hidden behind a false grin?

Have you wondered what message you give When you hold your hand out to the poor,

And the neighbor in need who lives cross the street
Now stands at the stoop of your door?
As you look in their faces and try not to judge
The soul by the package it wears,
Can you see only God, the One and the All,
Saying, "I'm here to help shoulder your cares"?

Have you wondered what message you give When challenge thrusts in your face?

Here's a simple suggestion, if not tried before:
"It's now time to rely on God's grace."
Do you set an example of calm and deep peace,
Resolved not to get all harried?
And trust in the Lord and hear God's sweet voice:
"Remember, your burdens I've carried."

**Have you wondered what message you give
When one wants to stand in your presence?**

Because the energy vibes, which radiate out,
Are filled with the Divine's holy essence.
Just to look in your eyes, soft and warm with God's love,
Soothes and comforts their tormented beings;
Reflected from you, to the you within them,
It's their Divine Selves they are seeing.

**Have you wondered what message you give
When acting your ups and your downs?**

Does your face have a smile? Is your attitude bright,
Or are you one perpetual frown?
Neither good nor bad, not praise nor great blame
Can shake your foundation within
When anchored to God – your strength and your faith,
This is the place to begin.

**Have you wondered what message you give
When you know you have conquered your fears?**

Your losses and gains have rattled your mind,
Yet bliss has dried up your tears.
To limit desire and detach from the snares
Of all that would bind you to birth,
Long have you practiced, with patience and wisdom,
Now knowing their invaluable worth.



**Have you wondered what message you give
When you love without thought of your needs?**

Focused only on others and the Divine within All,
What better way to extract all those weeds:
Envy and pride and anger and hate –
Separate each from their goal
Of placing a barrier between God and the Self –
Realignment with one's Divine Soul.

**“So many messages I give as you travel your path,
Liberation you yearn for so dear;
Is the message I speak, through words and deeds
To you abundantly clear:
To be divine love every moment you breathe
And cherish the God of great glory?
Is your purpose for being, your reason to live,
To exemplify God's greatest story?”**

—Rev Karen Chenoweth, Broomfield, Colorado

Accessed at http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_08/01DEC10/05-h2h_special-02.htm



Interview with the author: Read “My Life, My Soul, My Cosmic Christ,”
an interview with Karen Chenoweth, author of the preceding poem, conducted
at the *radiosai.org* studios in 2010. Click [here](#).

Communications Workshop

Based on Sathya Sai Baba's Teachings

This article is a summary of a communications workshop, given as a slide presentation by Dr Joe Phaneuf in May 2013 at the USA Sai Organization Region 8 (Pacific South) Conference in Norwalk, Southern California.



THE GOAL OF THIS WORKSHOP is to improve our communication with family, friends, colleagues, co-workers, and everyone else we interact with throughout the day.

Speak to Swami Himself

The simplest and most powerful technique to do this . . . is to **remember we are speaking to Swami himself**. This simple remembrance will change everything! We love our dearest Swami so much that when we are speaking to him, we will automatically speak to everyone with love, respect, and humility.

Why are communication skills important? We each have a unique role to play in this life. The way we communicate with others determines how successful we are in this role and is also a good way to measure our spiritual progress or spiritual growth.

A man or woman of good character has unity and purity of thought, word, and deed. Only God, and each one of us, knows if we have unity of thought, word, and deed, and whether or not all our thoughts, words, and deeds are based on the foundation of love.

Actions: Our Most Powerful Communications

The most powerful way we communicate who we are and what we stand for is through our actions. Actions speak louder than words!

Our dearest Swami is the best role model in this regard: he inspired and is inspiring people all over the world to serve those in need, by his loving example of the way he led his life. His message that everyone has a birthright to receive high quality medical care, values-based education, and pure drinking water was communicated in the most powerful and beautiful way by:

- a) the hospitals he built, which provide the highest quality, free medical care with love and compassion;
- b) his educational institutions, which provide the highest quality free education, based on the five human values (truth, right action, love, peace, and nonviolence) and the two pillars of knowledge and compassion;
- c) his water projects, which have provided free and pure drinking water to more than 12 million people in India who had suffered for many years due to lack of pure drinking water.

If we want our children, SSE students, or colleagues to behave in a certain way, **we need to lead by our example**, because what we do is much more important than what we say.

The Power of Our Words

Here are some words of wisdom that show how powerful and long-lasting our communications can be:

I've learned that people will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel. —Dr. Maya Angelou

Swami has said the same in different ways. We have to be especially careful about what we say, since unkind words cause a wound that can fester in the heart of another person for years:

Practice moderation in speech – it will help you in many ways. When the foot slips, the wound heals after a few months; when the tongue slips, the wound it causes in the heart of another will fester for life. (SSS 1:10, July 22, 1958)

Smile!

Smiling is a simple and powerful way to communicate with others and should be a cornerstone of our communication skills.

At the 3rd World Youth Conference in July 2007, Swami said, **“When we smile, love bubbles up in us.”**

He has reminded doctors that they should greet each patient with a smile and give them the **“capsule of love,”** because this will speed their progress and help their healing.

This same greeting would apply to all of us, regardless of our profession. Smiling is also the best way to make a heart-to-heart connection and is a universal language whereby we can communicate with others, regardless of background or country of origin.

Silence / Moderation of Speech

Silence or moderation of speech is also important. Swami has said that before we speak, we should consider several things, which we can remember as **“T.H.I.N.K.”**:

T – Is it true?

H – Will it hurt anyone?

I – Will it improve on the silence?

N – Is it necessary?

K – Is it kind?

(See, e.g.,: radiosai.org, *Sai Inspires*, 12 June 2013)

Various scriptures have also taught:

- Speak the truth.
- Speak the truth in a pleasing way.
- Avoid speaking a truth that is hurtful. (SSS 18:26, Dec 5, 1985)
- And, in order to avoid speaking a truth that is hurtful, sometimes . . .
- Silence is golden.

Regarding moderation in speech, Swami has said:

The bond of love and brotherliness will be stronger if people would speak less and speak sweetly. Silence (mounam) has been

prescribed as a spiritual practice for this same reason. You are all aspirants at various stages of the road, so this discipline is valuable for you also. Practice moderation in speech; it will help you in many ways. When the foot slips, the wound heals after a few months; when the tongue slips, the wound it causes in the heart of another will fester for life. (SSS 1:10, July 22, 1958)

Swami also shares about the tongue:

The tongue is liable to commit four errors:

- (1) uttering falsehood,*
- (2) finding fault with others,*
- (3) excessive articulation, and*
- (4) indulging in scandals.*

These have to be strictly avoided if there is to be peace for the individual and society. (SSS 1:10, July 22, 1958)

About Finding Faults – Look Inside!

Regarding finding faults with others, Swami has given a number of guidelines:

- (a) There is a very good chance we have this same fault in us.
- (b) We should see good in others and look for faults in ourselves.
- (c) We should be lenient when judging others and harsh when judging our own actions.
- (d) Focusing on the faults of others can contaminate our minds, and faults of others can even enter our mind.

If we do not have the role of a supervisor, where our job responsibility is to evaluate a

person's actions, both good and not good, then why are we judging others' actions?

The following is a beautiful quote from Swami that we should reflect on whenever we start seeing faults in others:

“The others are part of yourself. You need not worry about them. Worry about yourself; that is enough. When you become all right, they too will be all right, for you will no longer be aware of them as separate from you. Criticizing others, finding fault with them, etc. – all this comes out of egoism. Search for your own faults instead. The faults you see in others are but reflections of your own personality traits.

Pay no heed to little worries; attach your mind to the Lord. Then, you will be led on to the company of good people and your talents will be transmuted. Consider everyone as children of the Lord, as your own brothers and sisters; develop the quality of love, and seek always the welfare of humanity. Be like the bee, drinking the nectar of every flower, not like the mosquito, drinking blood and distributing disease in return. If you continue to love, you will be loved in return. (SSS 1:11, July 25, 1958)

“First Understanding, Then Adjustment”

Swami teaches us: *“First understanding, then adjustment.”*

(See, e.g., SSS 26:26, July 21, 1993; SSS 28:34, Nov 21, 1995; Sharon Sandweiss, Nov 19, 2009, http://www.sssbpt.org/pages/Prasanthi_Nilayam/sharonsandweisspeech.html)

Swami has said that most of the time, we do just the opposite! Before we listen to another person properly, to understand how they feel or what they want, we may cut them off and start giving them advice, before we have properly understood them.

I show a cartoon to depict something many of us do – a situation that occurs at meetings at the office, or even at Sai Centers in our study circles.

In each instance, someone is talking – and they think others are actually listening



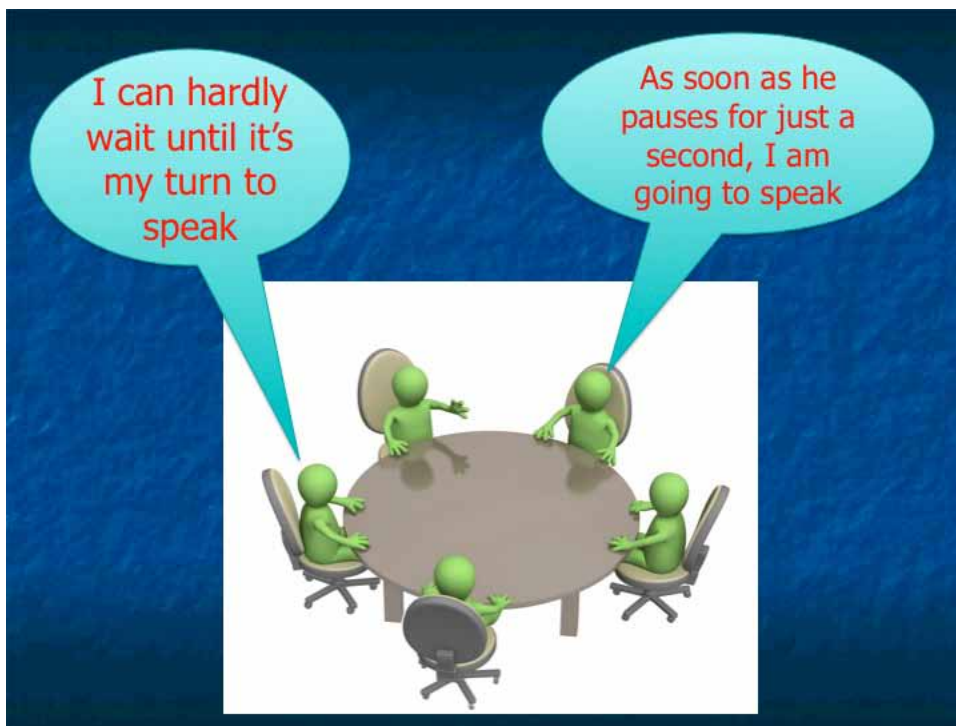
to them! Often times, people who appear to be listening are not really paying attention to what the speaker is saying and instead are thinking about what they are going to say next and are just waiting for their chance to speak.

For Understanding, Build Listening Skills

The first mistake we make is that we don't listen properly and cut off the other person before they are finished saying what they want to say. When we do this, we are not practicing the first part of "*first understanding, then adjustment.*"

Then we go right to the adjustment part and think this means giving the other person advice. Often times the other person does not want or need advice; they just want to have someone listen to them. So, just expressing





empathy or giving the other person the capsule of love by listening to them is all we need to do. If we are not sure if they want advice, we can find out by asking them, “Would you like advice on that, or can I help in some way?”

One of the ways we can listen attentively is to put ourselves in the other person’s shoes and listen the way we would like someone to listen to us. Or we can imagine that the person we are speaking to is someone we have tremendous respect for, such as our dear grandmother. For those who are devotees of Swami (or any other guru), we can remind ourselves that we are listening and speaking

to our dearest Swami, who resides in the heart of each and every person.

When we remember that God resides in the person we are speaking to, we will automatically listen with patience, humility, respect, and reverence.

Summarize to Improve Understanding

Repeatback One good method to make sure we have really understood the person we are listening to is to summarize or repeat back what the person has just said. This is something we should do when we want to be sure we have really understood the person we are speaking with.

Avoid making assumptions It is best not to make too many assumptions about what the other person is thinking or what the other person wants, because when we make an assumption about what another person wants, often times we are wrong.

It is important to summarize what we think the other person is saying or what the other person wants. Why? Because nothing is so simple that it cannot be misunderstood!

Inquire further After we have listened carefully to the other person, it is time for our response (the “*then adjustment*” part). Before going to the adjustment phase, we should remember that we might need to ask further questions or summarize what the speaker has said, to make sure we understood them.

Express empathy Often times **people just want to be heard**, and when we express empathy – “That sounds very difficult,” “I am sorry to hear that,” and so on – this alone may be all we need to do, which is giving them the capsule of love.

Have advice? Wait to be asked If they ask for advice, we can give advice, and we should remember to keep it short and simple. If we are not sure if they want advice, we can ask, “Would you like to hear what others have found helpful in this situation?” or, “I am sorry to hear that; can I help in some way?”

Praise publicly, critique privately If we are a supervisor or it is our role to give people feedback, we should always keep in mind the rule of thumb to praise and acknowledge in public, and give feedback for improvement in private. Also, we need to have built a relationship with another person before they

will be open to criticism or suggestions for improvement in areas they need to improve.

Build a “Positive Account” in Relationships

There is a concept known as “building a positive bank account” in the area of relationships. The rule of thumb is that we need to make three to five deposits (compliments or acknowledgments) before we can make a withdrawal (give someone a suggestion for improvement).

We should keep this in mind when giving criticism to family, friends, and co-workers. This method is certainly a good incentive to look for the good in others and build a nice relationship with them by praising their good work and acknowledging their good actions, whenever we get a chance to do so.

Give feedback when it is your duty (as a supervisor at work or other position where it is one’s duty to perform job evaluations) and remember the importance of developing a relationship beforehand, where you have a positive balance in your relationship account (many more praises and acknowledgments than criticisms).

Lead with positives When giving feedback, one may start by pointing out a person’s positive points and then transition into areas where the person needs to improve.

Avoid “BUT ...” Another tip to remember is not to negate a compliment or positive point by saying BUT. If you tell a person something positive and then say “BUT,” this may indicate to him or her that you didn’t really mean the initial compliment.

Use “AND . . .” Here is an example of how to give positive comments along with suggestions for improvement: *“John, what I notice about you when you are at your best is _____, AND . . . what I notice about you when you are not at your best is _____.”*

Accepting Criticism

How about when people criticize us or point out areas where we need to improve? Swami has told us that we should **listen carefully** when people are criticizing us and **be open** to this criticism – because they may be right! If they are correct, then we should be grateful to the person who is pointing out our faults, and we should do our best to correct them.

If, on the other hand, when we honestly evaluate and reflect on the criticism and realize that it is not true, then we should just take it as a test from God.

“Test Is Taste for God”

Swami gives a couple of examples. We have to pass a test before graduating from one grade to the next at school. Similarly, in the school of life, God gives us tests, which we need to pass before we can graduate to the next grade. (See, for example, SSS 3:7, March 1963) Criticism about us, if it is not true, is one of these tests.

Another example Swami gives is that when we hammer a nail into the wall, before we hang a picture or other item, we shake the nail and make sure it is firm in the wall before placing the picture. (SSS 6:23, Sept 8, 1966)

Similarly, when people criticize us (and the criticism not true), God is testing the firmness of our faith, patience, fortitude, and love for others. So, the next time we are criticized unjustly, just remember:

- (a) This is a test to graduate to the next class.
- (b) God is testing the strength of the nail in wall. God likes to test us. As Swami says, *“Test is taste of God!”* (SSS 31:45, Dec 25, 1988. See also, SSS 2:32, Mar 6, 1962; SSS 18:15-1, July 7, 1985; SSS 19:11, June 3, 1986; SSS 30:21, Sept 14, 1997)

Helping When Possible; Saying “No,” Nicely

Swami also has said, *“You cannot always oblige, but you can always speak obligingly.”* (SSS 31:19, April 26, 1998)

Many of our mothers have taught us the same: *“There is always a nice way to say no.”*

When a person asks us for specific help, and we can do so, we should jump at the chance, for God may not give us this chance again.

We cannot always, however, do what a person asks us to do. In this situation, it is good to find out what they are trying to accomplish. We may be able to help in some way, even if it is not the exact way they had in mind.

When we have to say no, one nice way of doing so is: *“I really wish I could do _____. Now, what I can do is _____”* – or something like that. This keeps your statements positive, rather than saying, *“I can’t do that.”*

Some people say the idea that *“you cannot always oblige but you can always speak obligingly”* does not work in many business

situations or in the “real world,” but nothing could be further from the truth.

Showing Respect

Speaking obligingly does not mean that you will be labeled as a “yes person,” or that people will walk all over you, or that you cannot hold your ground and be firm on an issue. Speaking obligingly is just a way to show respect for another person’s viewpoint. It does not mean that you have to agree with what the other person is saying.

Swami has likewise said that if we want people to respect us, we first have to show others respect. (Summer Showers 1974-2:28, pp 181-182) This also is true for family interactions. Speaking obligingly is one of many ways we can show respect when we are communicating with others.

Remember: “Yes, AND . . .”

We touched on this somewhat before, when talking about ways to give criticism, but again, another powerful way to show respect at work, home, and in all situations is to avoid using “Yes, BUT . . .” when responding to another person who is stating their point of view, and, instead, use the positive connector, “Yes, AND . . .”

This helps to show respect for the other people’s views, and if our view is different, “Yes, AND . . .” will help the others to keep an open mind and hear our viewpoint, since we have just respected their opinion.

An example would be after hearing someone state a viewpoint on some matter, and we see things slightly or dramatically

different, we could say, “Yes, *that’s a good point – and for this situation, my approach would be . . .*,” and then give our viewpoint.

To recap:

“Yes, BUT . . .”

- a) may indicate disrespect;
- b) is judgmental;
- c) is exclusive;
- d) discourages brainstorming or having others express their ideas.

“Yes, AND . . .”

- a) shows respect;
- b) is nonjudgmental;
- c) is inclusive;
- d) encourages others to express their opinion and helps brainstorming sessions bring out group wisdom.

Handling Conflict

Just listen When listening to someone who is angry or upset, sometimes just listening is all that is needed. We don’t have to give advice or solve everyone’s problem. Most people just want to be listened to when they are upset.

Handling our “hot buttons” What should we do when someone pushes our “hot button”?

- a) **Get curious instead of furious** (“*First understanding, then adjustment.*”)
- b) **Demonstrate empathy** (“Give the other person the capsule of love.”)

When We Cannot Oblige

How do we handle conflict when the person with whom we are speaking wants

something we cannot give, or asks for something we believe is not good for the situation? This is a chance to practice all the above strategies:

- a) **Listen attentively and patiently.** (“*First, understanding.*”)
- b) **Give the “capsule of love.”** Demonstrate empathy every chance we get: “I am sorry to hear that.” “That sounds like a very difficult problem.” Give the other person the “capsule of love.”
- c) **Summarize or repeat back** what you have heard the other person say. This helps most people to calm down, because they know you have actually listened to them carefully, and it also checks for understanding. If you did not understand their request, they can help clarify it for you.
- d) **Validate their opinion.** This is very important. This does not mean we must agree with the other person or that we will do what they are asking for. It does **show respect** for their opinion and thinking. For example, “Mr. Smith, from what you have told me, I can see why you think that XYZ is the best course of action.”

“Yes, AND . . .” Now, be careful. Here is the bridge, where you will give your opinion, which is different. We don’t want to negate everything we have done so far by using a negative connector such as “Yes, but . . .”

When we do so, it takes something away from all the positive connection we have built up in steps (a)–(d). So, **be careful, and use a pregnant pause, or just use a positive connector, such as “Yes, AND . . .”**:

“Mr. Smith, from what you have told me, I can see why you think that XYZ is the best course of action.” (This shows we respect the person’s opinion.) “AND, from my experience with this situation, I have found that ABC is the best course of action, and here are the reasons: _____ . . .”

This helps others keep an open mind to our viewpoint, when it is different from their viewpoint.

The Art of Apologizing

How to make an apology: keep it short and simple . . . and don’t make excuses!

How to make an apology when you are really in “hot water”:

- a) I am sorry.
- b) My mistake.
- c) Please forgive me!

E-mail Communications

E-mail is a good way to share ideas. E-mail is *not* a good way to resolve differences. In fact, most of the time when we try to resolve differences via e-mail, things get worse.

When we disagree about something via e-mail, we should show restraint and not

respond immediately. We should collect our thoughts and not send an e-mail that may hurt another person's feelings and make things worse.

Instead, we should speak to the other party, in person if possible, or, if this is not possible, discuss the issue on the phone. Speaking with the person face to face is best, and next best is on the phone. Doing this will give us a better chance to understand the other person's viewpoint and then work through our differences.

Avoid negative comments Never say anything negative about a person in an e-mail. In the first place, if we want to point out someone's shortcomings, it is best to speak with the other person directly rather than criticize them behind their back in an e-mail.

Also, whatever negative thing we may say about another person, may end up circulating around the world via e-mail to many people. Also it has happened many times that the person you are criticizing may be accidentally copied on an e-mail and receive your behind-the-back criticism. Talk about doing something embarrassing!

Use subject lines The subject line should clearly explain the content of the e-mail and should make the other person want to open up and read the e-mail. And don't forget to put something in the subject line – often times people forget to do this.

Having a well-thought-out subject line is very important for another reason. Down the road, you or others may want to come back to this email. If the subject line describes

the content well, it will be easier to find, when you or others do a search to find the important information in this email.

Keep e-mails short and to the point Listing a few bullet points will make it easier for others to read. Thoughtful and well-written e-mails take some time to compose. This time is well worth it, so that others don't waste their time reading a diffuse and confusing e-mail.

Mark Twain once wrote a long confusing letter to a friend. At the end of the letter he wrote, "I apologize for the long letter; if I'd had more time, it would have been shorter and to the point!"

An e-mail should also have all the needed info for others. If you are sharing info about an event, it is best to list the name of the event, date, location, time, and all other necessary info, including links to register or get directions.

Include all the info Please don't say something like, "For directions or registering, kindly refer to the previous e-mail from a week ago."

We should make it easy for the person reading our e-mail to get all the information they need, nicely summarized in our most recent e-mail to them. I must say, our U.S. Sai organization regional presidents are very good at doing this!

CCs Who should we send the e-mail to? Everyone who needs to know – and no one else. Saying something negative about another person is bad enough and should be avoided; even worse is sending this type of e-mail to many people who should not have been copied on the e-mail.

Fwds When forwarding e-mails, again, send to everyone who should know – and no one else. Also, explaining the reason for forwarding the e-mail in the subject line is needed.

Keep the subject line current A group of people may start discussing ABC in a chain of e-mails, and a few days later the topic has changed to XYZ.

Many times, the subject line stays the same, and this is confusing to those who receive it. When the topic or content of an e-mail changes, the subject line should also change to reflect what is being discussed currently.

Additional E-mail Etiquette

Here are a few miscellaneous points to bear in mind when e-mailing:

- **Don't share official Sai organization e-mail lists** Some people will be tempted to use them for commercial purposes or other ways that are not proper. We may do this inadvertently if we don't pay attention to the next bullet point.
- **Use BCCs** Blind copy long lists of e-mail addresses, to prevent sharing of many people's e-mail addresses without their permission (but, be transparent about who is receiving the e-mail). This keeps e-mail addresses private, which helps prevent many problems down the road, such as someone hacking into a person's address book and then sending out spam, a virus, or worse.

- **No negative BCCs** Do not send an e-mail to a colleague saying something negative, or pointing out a mistake the person has just made, and then blind copy the person's boss or as many other people you can think of, to make sure they all know (behind-the-back style) about the mistake your colleague just made.
- **Be Careful with "Reply All" ...** Be careful about hitting "Reply All" or sending to an entire e-mail list. In most cases, this is to be avoided, because you may be sending spam inadvertently to your co-workers or those in the Sathya Sai Organization. On the other hand, when communicating with others on a committee or other small groups, hitting "Reply All" is appropriate when people are sharing ideas.

Enjoy God's Darshan All Day Long

Remember, communication is key to all areas of our life, including our spiritual growth. When we communicate well, everyone benefits.

The best way – to listen and then communicate with patience, respect, humility, and love – is to remember Who we are speaking to! We each have the opportunity to speak with, interact with, and have God's *darshan* (see God) all day long – if only we remember!

—Dr Joe Phaneuf
California



WORDS

Whatever my thoughts, I said those words
To innocent friends who didn't deserve

To hear me speak my mind each day,
To listen to my opinions and hear my say.

Little attention or thought to tidings I gave,
For to my tongue I was a slave.

An endless stream of advice and chatter,
Most of which didn't matter.

A statement tossed in lost despair,
Where it fell, I didn't care.

Foolish words, words without mind,
Tumbling tongue, thoughts so blind.



The other eve, as I lay to rest,
The conscience of me got the best.

As I turned and rolled in my bed,
The voice became louder in my head.

My words were the cause of others' pain,
And I had only my tongue to blame.

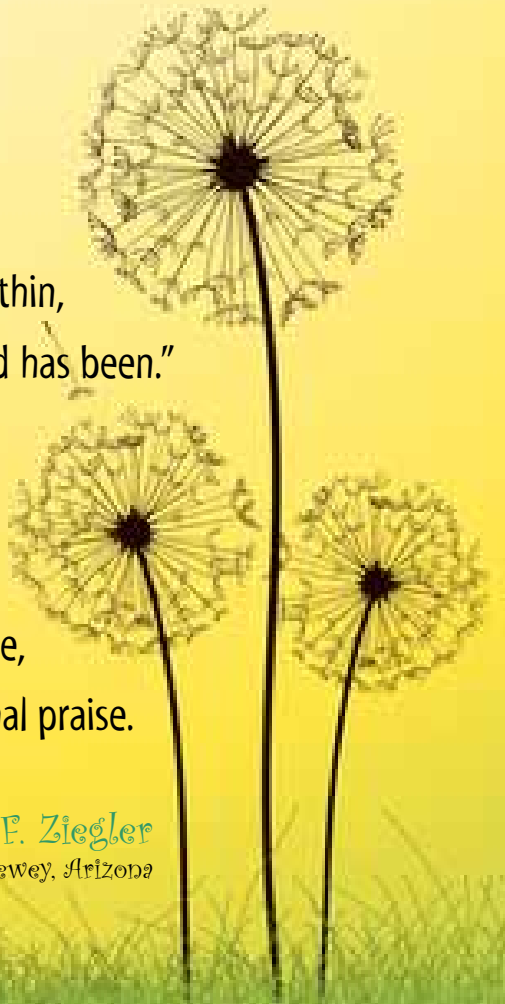
Then I heard my conscience sternly say,
"It is the truth I speak to you this day.

"Discipline thy mouth and the tongue within,
For your speech will tell where your mind has been."

That very tongue that spoke unkind,
That very mouth that talked so blind,

Is the selfsame part that utters the phrase,
"Sathya Sai Baba, I love you," in devotional praise.

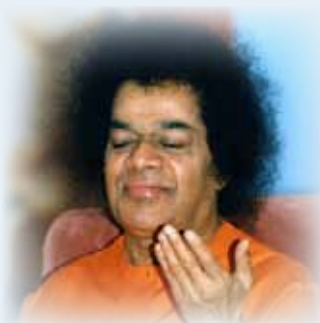
—J. F. Ziegler
Dewey, Arizona



The Power of Speech

Exercise Constant Watchfulness Over the Tongue and the Mind-Chatter

The inner conversation and controversial chatter continues from morning till night . . . This perpetual dialogue is at the bottom of all the miseries of man . . .



MAN HAS THREE INSTRUMENTS gifted to him: the mind, which involves him in thought; the power of speech, which enables him to communicate his thoughts; and the power of action, by which he can execute his thoughts, alone or with others, for himself and for others.

Mind and the Bondage of Mind-Talk

The mind designs thoughts that are either helpful or harmful. The mind can lead man into bondage, deeper involvement in desires and disappointments. [Or,] it can lead man into freedom, detachment, and desirelessness.

The mind is a bundle of likes and dislikes. Mind (*manas*) is the seat of *manana* (ruminating on sense-inspired and mental

experiences). The mind is engaged in two activities: planning (*alochana*) and dialogue (*sambhashana*).

Both these follow different lines. Planning is intent on

solving problems that present themselves before the mind. Dialogue multiplies the problems and confounds the solutions, causing confusion and adoption of wrong and ruinous means to solve them.

The inner conversation and controversial chatter continues from morning till night, until sleep overtakes the mind. It causes ill-health and the early setting in of old age. The topics on which the chatter is based are mostly the faults and failings of others and their fortunes and misfortunes.

This perpetual dialogue is at the bottom of all the miseries of man. It covers the mind with thick darkness. It grows wild very

quickly and suppresses the genuine worth of humanhood.

The talk that inhabits the mind during the waking stage persists even in dreams and robs man of much-needed rest. And the sum total of all this exercise is, to speak the truth, nil. No man can call himself full and free unless he succeeds in stopping this evil.

Remedial Disciplines to Reduce Mental Chatter

The Upanishads announce certain remedial spiritual disciplines (*sadhanas*) to get rid of this obstacle to inner peace. The first discipline is *pranayama*, regulation of breath. Pranayama is not gymnastics, nor is it a formidable exercise. The inhaling of air is *purakam*; the exhaling is *rechakam*. The retention in between is *kumbhakam*. The mind has to concentrate on the periods of retention, inhaling, and exhaling. When attention is fixed thus, the inner talk on other irrelevant matters will end, and mental strength is acquired.

The second discipline is immersion in beneficial activity (*karma*) – that is to say, service to people, which will help diminish the ego sense [through] acts that are good and godly. When one's thoughts are engaged in such activities, the mind turns away from the talk it indulges in.

Again, the disciplines of listening to spiritual advice (*sravana*), reflection on spiritual teachings (*manana*), discovering ways and means of confirming faith in the spirit (*nidhidyasana*); also of repeating the names of God (*japa*) and withdrawal of the

mind from sensory pursuits (*thapas*), have been prescribed by the scriptures – more for the silencing of this mental chatter, this inner talk, as a preparation for attaining reality, than for its realization.

For, it is only when the mind is cleansed and clarified that it can achieve such a profound task. Only then can the lessons taught and the experiences undergone be pure and unsullied.

Speech

The second instrument gifted to man for uplifting himself is speech – the use of words. Speech is charged with tremendous power. When, through speech, we communicate to a person something that upsets his balance or shocks him into grief, [such] words completely drain off his physical strength and mental courage. He falls on the ground, unable to stand.

On the other hand, when, through speech, we communicate something happy or unexpectedly cheering, he gets the strength of an elephant. Words do not cost anything, but they are priceless. So, they must be used with care. They must be employed not for gossip, which is barren, but for pure and productive purposes only.

The ancients recommended the vow of silence in order to purify speech of its evils. A mind turned inward toward an inner vision of God, and speech turned toward an outer vision [of God] – both will promote spiritual strength and success. (*Vidya Vahini*, ch 18, [pdf](#))

Practice moderation in speech. This will help you in many ways. It will develop

Words do not cost anything, but they are priceless. So, they have to be used with care.

the divine quality of love (*prema*), for most misunderstandings and factions arise out of carelessly spoken words.

When the foot slips, the wound can be healed. But when the tongue slips, the wound it causes in the heart of another will fester for life. The tongue is prone to four big errors – uttering falsehood, scandalizing, finding fault with others, and excessive articulation. These have to be avoided if there is to be peace (*shanti*) for the individual as well as for the society. The bond of brotherhood will be tightened if people speak less and speak sweetly. You are all spiritual aspirants at various stages of the road, and silence as a discipline will be valuable for you. (SSS 1:10, July 22, 1958, “*Viveka and Vairagya* [Discrimination and Detachment],” [pdf](#))

Uttering the truth is easy, but lying is full of problems. One has to take a lot of trouble to cover up one lie with more lies. That is why it has been said, “Speak what is truthful and pleasing and do not mention unkind truths (*Sathyam bruyath; priyam bruyath; na bruyath sathyam apriyam*).”

God is the embodiment of Truth, and Truth is the foundation of the universe. This Truth is beyond the mind, and it transcends space and time. You must live up to this Truth and realize that the Divine is present in everything. Only when you can recognize

the omnipresence of the Divine will you be able to experience God. (SSS 21:26, Sept 15, 1988, “Devotion Is the Panacea,” [pdf](#))

Merge Speech into the Mind

Embodiments of divine love! Control of the senses must be the primary aim of students, not the fleeting pleasures of the sense objects, which give but a little momentary joy followed by endless misery. The sensory perceptions, namely, hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, and smelling, are more powerful than the sense organs. The most important among the sense organs is the tongue. If the tongue is conquered, it virtually amounts to mastering all the senses.

The tongue has two important functions: eating and talking. Whoever is able to conquer these two faculties of the tongue can merge himself in the divine Self. When the tongue stops talking, the mind starts chatting. To control the mind’s prattling, the intellect has to be awakened. Then one should gently persuade the intellect to turn gradually toward the Atma (inner divinity).

True *sadhana* (spiritual practice) consists in the technique of merging the *vak* (faculty of speech) into the mind, the mind into the intellect, and finally the intellect into the Atma. Forgetting this sacred and royal road available to man, it is sad that he chooses

True *sadhana* consists in the technique of merging the *vak* (faculty of speech) into the mind, the mind into the intellect, and finally the intellect into the Atma.

to indulge in sensual pleasures, which ultimately drown him in deep sorrow. No one tries to find out what the ultimate source of animation for the insentient senses is, nor does one seek to know who is the real enjoyer of all the pleasures derived through the senses.

Students should recognize that there is an intimate relationship between the external world and the internal world within oneself. Is it the body, or the senses, or the Atma that experiences the pleasures of eating delicious food, seeing a beautiful sight, or smelling a fragrant object? It is not the body, much less the sense organs. The real experienter in all these cases is the Atma, which is the causeless cause of all that exists and which fosters, sustains, presides, and rules over all the things in the universe.

Atma is the basis for the manifested world and the original source of motivation for the internal world. Only when we recognize the cardinal role of the Atma as the root cause of everything will the deceptive and transient sense organs cease to have dominance over us.

The Influence of the Tongue

Of all the sense organs, the tongue has an overriding importance and influence. Mastery over this one sense organ will enable one to master easily all the other sense organs.

The Kathopanishad has compared the senses to horses. A horse can run fast, but once a bridle is put in its mouth and held tight, all its movements can be easily controlled. How can a small bridle control such a large, strong, and fast-running animal? The mouth is the most important and vulnerable part of the horse, from the standpoint of keeping it under control. Once the mouth is bridled, the entire animal comes under control.

Likewise, in the case of man also, the mouth is the most important among the five sense organs. With the help of a small rudder, we can save a big boat from a fierce cyclone. With a small spark we can kindle a bonfire. The power of speech is like a spark of fire. By controlling the tongue, one can virtually acquire control over the world itself. The power of speech can be used either for a noble and sublime purpose or misused in a mean and mischievous manner. It can be utilized for blessing or for blaming.

As the poet Jayadeva sings, addressing the tongue in words that combine compliments with counseling:

O my dear tongue! You are sweet. You have the capacity to discriminate between good and bad taste, so I am telling you the supremely benevolent truth. Do not indulge in idle talk; instead, busy yourself

with singing the sweet and glorious names of the Lord—Govinda! Damodara! Madhava! and so on.”

There is a familiar saying: “A slip of the foot may not cause much harm, but a slip of the tongue will land you in hell.” Reckless use of your tongue can grievously hurt others’ hearts, and no doctor on earth can heal the wound caused by a harsh word.

Effects of Sense-Object Contact

When the senses come in contact with sense objects, they can give rise to immense pleasure as well as endless pain. For instance, someone outside is abusing you; as long as the abuse is beyond the range of your sense organs, you are not in any way affected by it. But once the abusive words reach your ears, you become enraged and excited beyond control.

What is the reason for your being upset like that? As long as there was no contact between the sound waves and your ears, you were unruffled. It was the subsequent contact between the two that provoked the strong reaction in you.

To give a contrasting example: someone outside is praising you, extolling your admirable qualities. As long as you have not



heard his words of praise, you derive no joy, nor do you entertain a feeling of endearment toward him. But once his words of praise have reached your ears, you rejoice in them and develop great love for the speaker.

What is the reason for the hatred in the first example and for the love in the second one? It is only the contact between the senses and their objects.

Thus it becomes clear that the senses can enjoy peace only when they do not come in contact with sense objects. In the alternative, one should be able to maintain a feeling of equanimity, without giving way either to elation or agitation, in spite of a contact between the senses and their objects, and irrespective of whether the outcome of such a contact is pleasant or otherwise.

It should, however, be recognized that it is neither easy nor always possible to prevent the senses and their objects from coming into mutual contact. On the contrary, it is possible, with some effort, to develop an attitude of equipoise, notwithstanding such contacts, which are often unavoidable. To foster such an attitude, you should resort to the path of inquiry and thereby develop

Be conscious that every word we utter or hear will leave an impression on our consciousness and provoke reactions that may or may not be beneficial. This is the reason the company of God and godly people is to be sought.

the firm conviction, “I am neither the body nor the sense organs. I am the ever-blissful Atma.” Only when you are unshakably established in this conviction will the sense organs cease to trouble you. It is only through the pursuit of this path of inquiry, accompanied by the constant contemplation on the idea that you are nothing other than the Atma, that you can transcend the human limitations and experience your divine Self under all circumstances.

Four Lapses of the Tongue

Students should note that too much talking is harmful to their mind. They should not concern themselves with any matters other than their studies. They must remember that they are seekers of knowledge and not seekers of extraneous things. Only after finishing your studies can you engage yourselves in other activities. Even then, you should be guided by the rule of moderation; never exceed the limits, either of talking or in other matters relating to your daily life.

The tongue is prone to four types of lapses: (1) uttering lies; (2) carrying tales against others, (3) criticizing or scandalizing others; and (4) excessive talking. It is these four tendencies that deprive man of his peace of mind. One should speak only the

truth. Of course, in some rare cases, it may be dangerous to speak the truth. Under such circumstances, one should be discreet enough to avoid speaking either truth or untruth. Only thus can one be a success in society. (*Summer Showers* 1990, ch 5, “Road to Divinity,” p 29, [pdf](#))

Next, about the tendency to talk overmuch: speech is produced cheaply, but it has high value. It can elevate as well as demean. Listening to a speech, a zero can rise into a hero, or a hero can collapse into a zero. Speech can inspire or plant despair. It must be true and sweet, not false and [merely] pleasant.

Man must endeavor to acquire speech untouched by subterfuge, limbs untouched by cruelty, hands free from violence, and thoughts free from vengefulness. Frenzy, fanaticism, and bursts of anger have to be controlled, for they lead to disasters to an extent beyond calculation.

By constant practice, one can also resort to the vow of silence (*mouna*). The mind too must desist from wandering while the tongue is desisting from talking; otherwise the vow cannot be fruitful.

Be conscious that every word we utter or hear will leave an impression on our consciousness and provoke reactions that may or may not be beneficial. This is the

reason the company of God and godly people is to be sought. (SSS 15:42, May 20, 1982, “The Triple Purity,” [pdf](#))

Sweet and Loving Speech

Be always saturated with *prema* (divine love). Speak softly and sweetly. Do not use harsh words against anyone, for words wound more fatally than arrows. Sympathize with suffering, loss, and ignorance. Try your best to provide timely help or share a soothing word. Do not damage anyone’s faith in virtue and divinity. Encourage others to have that faith, by demonstrating in your own life that virtue is its own reward and that divinity is all-pervasive and all-powerful. (SSS 16:24, end quote, [pdf](#))

You experience joy and misery through the ear. Therefore, avoiding the cruel arrows of harsh words, one should use words that are sweet, pleasant, and soft. With that softness, add the sweetness of truth. When making the words soft, if falsehood is added, it will only clear the way for more misery. Hence, a spiritual aspirant should use very soft, sweet, true, and pleasant words. The mind of such aspirants is Mathura (where divinity takes birth, Krishna’s birthplace), their heart is Dwaraka (the residence of the Lord), and their body is Kashi (site where enlightenment is studied; i.e., these are equivalent to the greatest of pilgrimage sites). Such persons can be recognized by their good qualities. (*Prema Vahini*, ch 21 “To Become a Mukta,” p 73, [pdf](#))



When I speak to you, I do not pause to examine whether I am following your rules of grammar; the words pour from the heart, full of divine love (*prema*). The heart renders all words sweet and soft. Sweet words and sweet manners lead to sweet actions and sweet reactions. Fill the heart with love; then, the words coming out of the heart will be full of vitality and power. There is no power (*shakti*) more effective than love (*prema*).

The “grammar of love” makes the words enter the hearts of the listeners and moves them into acceptance, appreciation, and action. . . . I exhort everyone to cultivate love, for, I am love, and when you manifest love, you are but expressing me, the Indweller of your heart. (SSS 12:33, “The Poetry of Love,” April 1, 1974, [pdf](#))

W.A.T.C.H.

The word *WATCH* has an important message to convey. *WATCH* means:

W Watch your Words

A Watch your Actions

T Watch your Thoughts

C Watch your Character

H Watch your Heart

The watch that you wear may break some day or another. But this *WATCH* is unbreakable: Watch whether you are speaking good or bad. Watch whether you abuse others or appreciate them. You should not use your tongue to abuse others; abusing others is a sin. You cannot escape the consequences of your sinful acts.

Everything has reaction, reflection, and resound, and it comes back to you in some form or other. Hence, exercise control over the tongue. . . . That is why it is said, “Silence is golden.”

Once words become less, the activities and vagaries of the mind also become less. . . . Every sacred act has manifold rewards. (*Summer Showers* 2002:11, May 26, 2002, “Sense Control Is the Highest Sadhana,” p 171, [pdf](#))

You must exercise constant watchfulness over your feelings and reactions, and endeavor to keep selfishness, envy, anger, greed, and other such evil tendencies from entering your minds. These are nets that entrap you; these vices overwhelm and

subdue your holiness so that you can no longer be influenced [by the good].

Then you forget yourself and behave worse, like a person caught in a frenzy – blabbering as your tongue dictates, without regard to the effect – good or evil – and engaging your hands in work that it [your sensory impulses or taste] favors.

Be aware and keep these in control! If you carefully discriminate, you can be recognized by the good company you keep, the noble works you delight in, and the pleasant words you utter. (*Vidya Vahini*, ch 17, p 93, [pdf](#))

All the chaos in the world is due to people leading double lives. They say one thing and act differently. There should be unity in thought, word, and deed. True spirituality consists of promoting human unity through harmonious living and sharing the joy with one and all. Devotional singing and all forms of worship are good actions in themselves but are not spiritually important.

Devotion consists of expressing love toward all. You cannot effect a change of heart by speeches, which often lead to confusion and conflict. Better than speeches is the practice of love, with faith in the Divine. Follow the path of love and redeem your lives! (SSS 22:7, Mar 24, 1989, “Let Practice Prevail,” [pdf](#))

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba



The Photo That Grew a Rose and Two Other Stories

By Barbara S Stein



I HAVE THREE LITTLE SAI STORIES to share, small tales but full of the sweetness, charm, and mystery of Sai-incidence. The first is how I learned of Sathya Sai Baba and met a devotee, Dr Somar Cooppan, who gave me a photo of Sai Baba. The second is how a picture of a rose grew on that photograph. The third story is how I later found the Sai Center in Brentwood, New Hampshire.

How I Learned of Sai Baba

All this started somewhere around 1996. One afternoon I was driving home to Winchester, Massachusetts, after food shopping. At the time, I was listening to an audiotape by Caroline Myss. She related a story of becoming very ill while at Findhorn in Scotland during a lecture tour in Europe. She had a very high temperature and was very ill. The doctors tried to bring down the fever, but nothing worked, and she felt she might die. She awoke the next morning at 4.00 and recalled a friend she had back in Chicago who worshiped Sai Baba.

She knew little about Sai Baba but began to pray to him. Later the same morning, she was handed a letter that had arrived for her. It was from a woman she had met during her European tour. In gratitude for what Caroline

Myss had done for her, the woman had sent Caroline a packet of *vibhuti* (holy ash) that she herself had received when she had visited Sai Baba. Caroline took the *vibhuti* in a glass of water, and shortly thereafter her temperature was gone and she felt well again.

I had heard many stories of people being healed in unusual ways (holistic medicine is one of my interests), but there was something about this story that made me turn the car around and drive immediately to a bookstore in Arlington, Massachusetts, hoping to find a book about Sai Baba.

As fate would have it, the store had one copy left of *Man of Miracles*, by Howard Murphet. I bought the book and, after reading it, wanted to learn even more about Sai Baba. There was no address in the book to contact an organization, so I decided to call the publisher of the book, feeling sure he would know the location of a Sai Baba center. He did not know anything about a center and only had an address where he sent books in the area, which was an address in Wellesley. He referred to the place as an historic society and gave me the address.

My next quandary was how to get a telephone number, when I had no name to go with the address. I decided to call the fire department in Wellesley. The fireman who



*Make your life a rose that speaks
silently in the language of fragrance.*

—Baba

answered the phone was very polite and told me he could not give me a telephone number or the name of the person at that address. I pleaded with him for several minutes, explaining why I had to reach someone at this address. He finally gave me the phone number of Dr Cooppan, who invited me and my husband to his home. We spent two hours with Dr Cooppan, who told us many fascinating stories about Sai Baba. Later, I read nine more books about Sai Baba.

Before we left, we asked Dr Cooppan if he had a picture we could have of Sai Baba. He went upstairs and came back with a picture, saying this was the picture I should have. He also gave me a small pamphlet called *Leela Kaivalya Vahini*. I must admit I tried reading the booklet, but it seemed too complex for me at the time, and I put it away.

The Story of the Rose

On Valentine's Day that year, my husband Peter gave me a cut-stem rose from the supermarket. We put the rose in a vase and watched the blossom open. After two weeks, we realized the rose was still alive. It did not die, and even grew another shoot. Then, as we watched in amazement, we noticed another bud growing from the end of the shoot.

Because this seemed so unusual, I telephoned several florists and greenhouses. Each person I spoke with said they had never heard of a cut rose growing an additional shoot and bud. The rose and the bud kept going for at least another month.

During the same period, I noticed a small smudge in the lower right corner of the Sai Baba picture from Dr Cooppan, which I kept on my altar. As I looked at it from different angles, it seemed to look like a small rose. I called Peter; he looked at and said he was not sure what it was. He was not sure that it looked like a rose.

Some weeks went by, and I became more and more certain that what I saw looked like a rose. Even Peter said, "Maybe – it could be."

As the years have gone by, the original smudge has definitely become a full-blown rose. This rose, like the Valentine's Day rose, also grew another stem, and then a second rosebud.

I hope this means that Sai Baba is watching over me. Today, the photograph of Sai Baba has two roses in full bloom, on two stems. (See photo 1.)

The little book, *Leela Kaivalya Vahini*, did not come to my attention again until about 2008, when I was sorting out some of my meditation books and came across it. I had not seen the book since the mid-1990s.



Photo 1: *Picture from Dr Cooppan, as of 2011.*

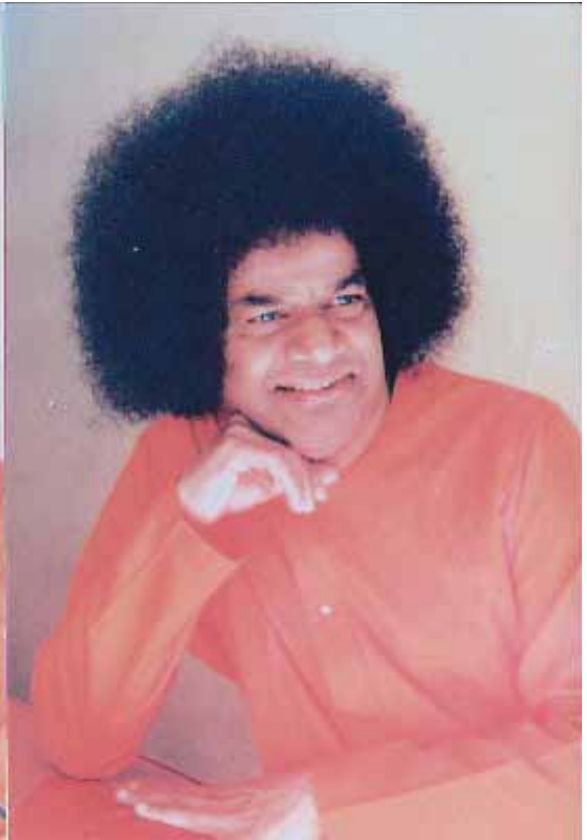


Photo 2: *Picture from Leela Kaivalya Vahini.*

When I opened the book, it opened to a page with what looked like the same picture as the one Dr Cooppan had given me – except there was no rose in that picture. (See photo 2.)

The two pictures are not exactly alike but are so very similar that I have always thought they must have been taken during the same photography session. Sai Baba's posture, head, hand, arm, and clothing are nearly identical in both photos.

But in 2011 I noticed for the first time that in the picture with the rose, Sai Baba seems older than when we first got it. Baba's posture and general appearance are similar, but he looks visibly older in the rose picture. It is as if he had sat still for a long, long time, and someone had clicked the shutter some years apart. He aged, and meanwhile, a rose grew into my picture.

Finding the Brentwood Sai Center

We moved from Massachusetts to New Hampshire in 2003. A yoga studio was several blocks from our new home. I spoke with the woman who ran the yoga studio and discovered she was teaching a dance kinetics program for which I had the original tape from the Kripalu Center. Subsequently, I loaned the tape to her.

A year later, after noticing a For Sale sign on her house, I dropped by several times to get my tape, but it seemed no one was ever home. I decided to telephone but did not have a telephone number for the studio. I searched the Internet for the name of the yoga studio, searching under our area without any luck. I then tried searching for it in the Seabrook area, of which our area is a part. The yoga studio was still not listed, but to my surprise, a Sai Baba Center in Exeter, the town next to us, was listed.

I was amazed to learn of a Sai Center so close to us. I called the telephone number listed on the website, and a person answered the phone. I thought perhaps the Sai Center might also be offering yoga, since it had come up during my search for the yoga studio, but I was told, “No, we are not a yoga center.”

I asked if they were in Exeter, and the answer was, again, “No, we are in Brentwood.”

Yet, the number was correct. I got the address and went to my first meeting at the Brentwood center and explained how they were listed on the Internet. Other members tried several times on the Internet to get the same result I had gotten when searching for yoga centers in Seabrook, but none of us could ever again find a reference to a Sai Center in Exeter at this particular phone number. So that is how I found the Brentwood Sai Center.

—Barbara S Stein

East Kingston, New Hampshire



When a rose is held in the hand, its fragrance can give the holder joy; the fragrance can be enjoyed by people standing near. So, too, when your intelligence is saturated with the fragrance of virtue and charity, you can derive contentment and joy, and those around you also can share in the peace and harmony.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 12:32, March 10, 1974), [pdf](#)



Surrendered at the Feet of the Lord

by Angie D'Aleo

ALTHOUGH I'D LEFT THE school where I worked in north Carson, California, right before my youngest son was born in 1989, I kept in touch with a colleague, a young man, William, a "newbie" who was spiritually curious and a seeker. William and I had numerous discussions about Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It was fun to have both him and Sai Baba in my workaday life.

So, I wasn't surprised a couple years later when William phoned me upon his return from a backpacking trip around India. What did surprise me was that he had not journeyed to Puttaparthi to see Baba for himself. Another quirk: he brought me back a photo of some beautiful feet, toes in a line, like cascading pearls, onto a plain, small, round, tufted, orange velveteen cushion.

Although there was no title or name on it, I sensed it was an image of Swami's feet, and I fell in love with the sweet roundness and orange surfaces – and, of course, the serenity of its anonymity. It was a picture to cherish, to honor.

My husband and I had purchased a condo near the old downtown of our port city (near the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach) in 1992. Our building was one of the very few non-rentals on the block.

It was hard to get to know our neighbors or to feel totally comfortable amid the hubbub of that very busy street. Immediately to the east of us was the Salvation Army church and food pantry, with its daily lines of hungry clients; to the west, an apartment building, windows staring onto our porch and living areas.

Besides the crowding from outside, it also happened that our sons no longer "enjoyed" sharing a room – even though they had the master bedroom with its own bath. We were all outgrowing that space. I wanted a dog, and my husband, Pete, wished to have an artist's space again.

So, I began looking for a "forever" home that would fit all our needs. No rush, or so I thought.

Then, unexpectedly, the coroner visited next door and carried out a neighbor whose bedroom window was visible from our front porch. He had been murdered in his bed! Our boys watched wide-eyed with the other neighborhood children as the gurney took the body to the van, and then, more horror ensued: the blood-stained mattress was dragged out and propped up in the alley.

Our sons were terrified, insisting on sleeping on the floor next to our bed, too frightened to go into their own bedroom, with



My precious photo of Swami's feet

the scene of the crime undraped and visible from our porch and front door.

I had posted that precious photo of the Lord's feet above my van's visor. Staring at those holy feet, I shared with the Lord the dire need to find a good place to move – and quickly.

As I drove to and from work, took my sons to their sports practices and the myriad other trips mothers make in the course of their waking hours, I entreated upon the Feet to take on the great burden of finding a house that met ALL of our needs: a bedroom for each boy, a workout area and studio space for my husband, and – because of a strange dream I kept remembering – a canyon out the back door; all these were on the list of requirements.

Earl Wagoner, a fellow choir member and retired engineer and self-employed realtor, gave us a list of potential places for sale. I combed the streets of San Pedro, targeting and checking out canyon areas in which to spot “For Sale” signs. Upon seeing a house for sale on Crestwood

Street, I dismissed it initially as too small. The lot was long and narrow, as was the house – but then I saw that the arroyo it abutted overlooked a small park.

Then, inside, the house was a mess! Knotty pine wainscoting below foil-and-flocked wallpaper; stained oak floors; garish paint; cobwebs hanging from nicotine-stained, “cottage cheese” ceilings; orange floors with avocado accents; weeds climbing the walls; and cat stains throughout greeted us as we surveyed the house, family room, shed, and yard.

It was a nightmare – and the garage was a mystery. Someone had bent the electric garage door – trying to see inside, perhaps – and we would have to wait until after the close of escrow, the electrical utility connection, and a visit from a garage-door expert, to be able even to survey the home completely.

We bought the house anyway; my husband was “on board” after his atypical dream of living on a canyon. When I asked him if we should use

the shed as a playroom for our boys, he replied no; his idea was to consolidate all my “holy things” there, in one designated area. I was to have my very own *puja* room (chapel)!

With that, plans began. A stained glass window from the condo was relocated for “Swami’s room” – and He would have the only view of the park.

Escrow complete, floors refinished, bathrooms made usable, tenting behind us, and after seriously major cleanups, we moved into the house. Pete was still awaiting the ability to workout in the garage, as the garage door expert’s visit was yet to take place.

After the door was straightened and a new motor installed in the automatic door, we stepped into the vacuous, two-car space, curious as to what we would find. It was almost totally empty, save for dust, cobwebs, a discarded built-in cabinet – and, in the farthest corner, hiding under more debris, a SMALL, ROUND, TUFTED, ORANGE VELVETEEN CUSHION.

I immediately picked up the cushion and ran to the van, grabbing the Feet picture and comparing the cushion in the photo with the cushion from the garage. It was a PERFECT MATCH!

Having had the opportunity to ruminate on this startling occurrence for almost 20 years now, I am still awestruck, feeling much like the character, Susie (played by Natalie Wood), in “Miracle on 32nd Street,” who discovers Kris Kringle’s cane in the house she’d asked Santa for . . .



The orange cushion in my puja room. The sari was given to Camille Svensson by Swami during the 1980 World Conference (which she later gave to me). It says on the inside that He presented it to delegates.

To us, it was confirmation that Swami wanted this house for us. He wanted His own room; he wanted my husband and sons to have their own spaces to work, be creative and safe, and rest in and enjoy. He wanted all of us to feel nurtured, safe, and happy.

I am grateful for His personal care, as well as for my openness to the urgings of Spirit – and for surrendering all my burdens at the Feet of the Lord. It is an honor and boon to do so.

—Angie D’Aleo
San Pedro, California

Leela-Lesson in Detachment



THE FOLLOWING EXPERIENCE occurred during a month-long visit to Prasanthi Nilayam in 2012. It started out with one of the dhobis (laundry workers) who station themselves outside the North 1 accommodations building. I had given her a long dress to clean three days previously, and she still hadn't returned it. I had been asking for the return of the dress for the previous two days, but she kept telling me she didn't have it. So, I went upstairs and declared, "Swami, everything is yours. I surrender the dress!"

Then I went to get ready to go out, but my darshan purse, the small purse of the size they allow into Sai Kulwant Hall, containing a few rupees, canteen tickets, tissues, and my room keys, had disappeared. I knew it had been in the room the night before, because after I came back to the room for the evening I had taken out the prasad (food distributed at the end of devotions in the Hall) from it and put it on the table, along with the purse, and hadn't touched the purse since then.

I went to the table and, sure enough, the prasad was right where I had left it, but the purse was mysteriously gone. I went to work searching for the purse, but it was nowhere to be found. I am a champion searcher; everyone in my family comes to me in our home in New York when they have lost something in the house. I knew that the purse was in the room and that I

should be able to find it easily, given the limited space of the room.

Somehow the whole situation reminded me of Swami's incarnation as Krishna and how he used to pull pranks on the gopis (cowherd maiden devotees). I just knew this was what was happening with my purse.

I said out loud, "Swami, please give me my purse back!"

Instantly I heard the sound of something dropping. I looked down at my feet, and there was the purse I had been looking for, which most certainly had not been on the floor while I was searching the room previously.

Swami had been mischievous, just like Krishna, but also with a serious intent. I thanked Swami for the return of the purse and left for the morning prayer session with the lesson that when you tell Swami you surrender everything to him, you better be prepared for him to test just how surrendered you are.

The next day as I was leaving the building, the dhobi came up to me with a sheepish grin on her face and handed me the missing dress. Contemplating Swami's leela (divine sport), I had been able to shed all attachments and emotions pertaining to the dress and the dhobi. Upon truly surrendering the situation to God, there was no longer any reason for the dress to remain "missing."

—A Devotee

Culturally-Appropriate Centers

Inviting dialogue on how to reach out and welcome all:

- *What is a religiously-neutral and culturally appropriate center?*
 - *What messages are we conveying to newcomers?*
- *How to make centers more welcoming and visitor friendly?*

By Susan Sullivan and Michael Rakoff

THE USA SAI ORGANIZATION has been stressing the need for Sai Centers in America to make their programs more locally and culturally appropriate. We thought it might be helpful to share some of our experiences as newcomers to Sai, along with what we have done and are doing to make our center, the Sathya Sai Center of Washington, DC, more welcoming to guests and newcomers.

Two American Newcomers' Experiences in a Sai Center

Susan: In 1994-95 I began reading about Sai Baba as a result of a *leela* Swami gave my brother, Mark. I also read books about people's experiences with Swami. I found out about a center that was close to my home and started to attend, periodically, beginning in 1997-98. At that point, the local center had no greeters. During many of my early visits, no one spoke to me. I attended the meetings alone. The program was from another country, and I felt uncomfortable each time I went.

Looking back at my early experiences, the meetings would have felt welcoming to me if a center officer or designated greeter

would have spoken to me before and/or after some of the meetings. If only there had been someone to answer my questions about the devotional part of the meeting, such as: what was the purpose of the flame, why were people bowing and touching a picture of feet, why was there nothing of the program in English, and why did the men and women sit separately? Interacting with a representative would have made the meetings feel more inviting to this Roman Catholic-raised woman from the Midwest part of America.

The center did have a video, audio, and book-lending library that I utilized, which was very helpful for my developing devotion to Swami. From audiotapes I listened to English devotional songs and was immediately drawn to them. I was able to buy a few of these English tapes, from different sources, and would play them almost continually in my home and car.

Sadly, those English tapes as CDs are no longer available for purchase on the Internet, for new devotees in search of a Sai connection. It was the English songs and books about American and Australian persons' experiences that kept my inner fire lit and pulled me back occasionally to the Sai Center.

In September 1999 I went to India with a group from the center to see Sai Baba. The experiences and interviews during that trip changed my life forever. I immediately became fully devoted to Swami and made changes in my lifestyle to bring me into alignment with his teachings and expectations.

After the trip, I attended the center more regularly and began participating in the center's service activities. The songs sung at the meetings to unknown deities had no meaning to me. I found reading the English translations in a songbook distracting, so I made up and sang my own words of love to Swami, using the music of the bhajans as they were being sung. (Nowadays, many centers have a screen projecting the song words, with their English translations, which is helpful and inclusive).

At the time, the center devotional program would occasionally include "Love Is My Form" or a couple of other English songs, but this was infrequent and limited to only one English song per meeting. So, when I would attend, I would consistently complain internally to Swami, asking why was there no singing of English songs, when everyone spoke English.

My thought was that the singers were performing a service when they sang. They were singing to uplift the group, which could be done in either language. At that early point it was entirely too intimidating for me to consider leading an English song, as I had never sung publicly.

Michael: When my wife, Susan, first introduced me to a Sai center in early 1999, I was unimpressed and not inclined to go back. The center felt very strange to me, even though I had spent several years with a Zen Buddhist *sangha* (community), and many visits with a Native American (Lakota) medicine man, participating in holy ceremonies in South Dakota.

I look back at my confusion, which stemmed from experiencing unfamiliar and baffling sights, such as an altar with unfamiliar religious icons, an empty chair, a picture of feet with slippers that people touched and kissed, study circles making references to foreign writings, songs sung in foreign languages, and so on.

I wonder how much more comfortable I might have felt if the rituals had been explained by an official. I regularly saw Americans come once – and not come back. Now I wonder how many American newcomers might have experienced what I did and had no desire to return. I returned only because of Susan.

Susan first went to Puttaparthi with a group in late 1999; they had three interviews in ten days. The group returned home very united by their experiences and decided to meet monthly to render service and enjoy a potluck meal and share Sai experiences. I joined these activities. Although I still had no clue who Sai Baba was, I immediately felt at home with the group. I felt these were the kind of people I wanted to be with.

The personal interaction with the lovely and loving people in the group that Susan

He taught me it wasn't a particular language or the words that were important; what mattered was the pure vibration of love from an open heart.

went to India with is what kept me coming back. The following year (2001), I made my first trip to Puttaparthi. Afterward, I still did not know what an *avatar* (incarnation of God) was or if Sai Baba was one, but it did not matter, because I read the teachings and saw the practices of Sai Baba and the devotees, and knew their intent and practice was genuine.

The next year, I was in an interview with Swami and became convinced of who he was. I increased my reading of his writings, tried to make changes in my daily life, and continued with the service projects. The center meetings still felt foreign and held no meaning to me, but some devotees were friendly toward me.

Swami's Directive and Lessons Learned

Susan: In September 2004, in an interview with Sai Baba, unexpectedly I was told by him that I could start a Sai Center to sing English devotional songs, with the directive that the Center was not just for singing and talking, but we must “do *seva* (selfless service).” After listening to my years of inner complaining about non-English singing, he was gifting me with an opportunity for many new experiences and future lessons.

So, with Michael, two other American-born devotees, and myself as the officers, we held the first English-language meeting of the new Sathya Sai Center of Washington DC, on Ladies Day, November 19, 2004, with six of us in attendance. We have met every two weeks thereafter. In January 2005, in another interview with Swami in Prasanthi Nilayam, he expressed his happiness with the new Washington DC Center, noting it was very small. He sent his love and blessings to the devotees.

What do I mean by English-language center? The opening and closing prayers are sung or spoken either in English only, or in both English and Sanskrit. Chants are in both languages, the Arati (Hindu ritual of imbibing divine light) song is sung in English, without a flame. Since its beginning in 2004, our Center's altar has displayed only Swami's picture, a framed Sarva Dharma (lotus design signifying all paths) symbol of the ethical values, and one bouquet of flowers on the altar. No Ganesh or other statues, no *padukas* (Lord's sandals), and no picture of Sai's feet.

Song lyrics and translations, if needed, are on a video screen for all to follow. The first few years, a typed list of song and chant

lyrics was given out at each meeting. In the beginning, the devotional songs were only in English. Since 2006 the song mix has been about 50/50, English/Indian songs, with Spanish songs also included.

During the first six years, as the Center president, I learned many lessons from Swami. One of the first lessons was that having all English songs was narrow and led to exclusion in the same way as having all Indian songs had made me feel excluded previously. He taught me it wasn't a particular language or the words that were important; what mattered was the pure vibration of love from an open heart. This he accepted.

He taught me that all meeting visitors must be made to feel like honored guests. The DC Sathya Sai Center is our members' spiritual home, and we welcome visitors as if they were entering our homes. He taught me that the centers bearing his name are for honoring unity in diversity.

I learned that Swami was not a Hindu; Swami was and is beyond religion. He belongs equally to all people. All people are his children. All names and forms for God are his. He made it clear to me that his DC Center must reflect his universal teachings and his universal love for all people, all nationalities, and all cultures.

I learned directly from him that it's not the end result of a group task or project that matters most; rather, it's how his devotees work together to maintain unity throughout the process. That's what pleases him. I learned that unity is the most important path; he'll take care of the outcome.

We do not wear shoes during our meetings, but this is at the request of the yoga center where our meetings are held. Otherwise, we would allow people to wear their shoes, as American newcomers are uncomfortable taking off their shoes. The majority of people sit on chairs. Swami's only requirement is that men and women sit separately, which they do.

We started our small center's website in 2007 (www.saicenterdc.org), and, with official permission, focused the site toward visitors. For example, we have a list of center customs and protocols on our website. To date, more than 30,000 visitors have viewed the site, and over 48,000 page-views have been accessed by visitors from the US and around the world.

During study circle time at the center meetings, we discuss Swami's teachings and how they affect our lives, our values, and our spiritual practices in a way that appears to be meaningful to others. We feel we are on the right track, as the attendance at our study circles has been virtually identical to the attendance at the devotional singing programs since the beginning of the Center.

Currently we average about 25 members and two guests at our meetings on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. The occasional 5th Sunday of the month has been devoted exclusively to meditation training and practice, in lieu of a regular meeting. With the newest change in center officers (occurring every two years), we will be looking into what's needed to start a new service project on the 1st Sunday of each

month. The intent is to benefit our members and to provide an opportunity to bring guests to join in a new service activity.

Michael: Our center membership is international. We have members who came, as Sai devotees, from Europe and South America, as well as a few long-time devotees who are Americans and some who are Indian-born. The Center has been comfortable for young adults, with a combination of Americans of European origin, Indian origin, and native born. Two of our 2013 selected center officers are young adults.

The members are open-minded, friendly, and genuinely happy to see each other. From the beginning, we have been blessed by Sai with virtually no friction among our membership. We've been told many times that visitors felt welcomed and included.

Monthly Gatherings and Guests

Michael: Our DC Sai Center has members from a very wide area surrounding Washington, DC. A few travel nearly two hours to get to the meetings. The overall distance makes it a challenge to socialize and be in "good company." So, two years ago we started having a monthly "gathering" (*satsang*). We meet one Saturday a month at a devotee's home at 3.30 pm.

We start the gathering with a service project, preparing food for a homeless shelter, to be delivered later that evening. We then have a share-a-dish potluck dinner. Immediately following the meal we discuss a spiritual topic and how it affects our lives, or watch a film followed by a discussion that

relates the new knowledge to our personal practice and Swami's teachings.

In this setting we have been inspired by not only Swami films and quotes but also messages from contemporary movies such as "I Am" by Tom Shadyak, or spiritual or service-focused clips from *TED.com*, for example. All the programs focus us to think and talk about Swami's teachings and how we choose to live as a devotee of God in the world today.

Susan: The gathering is an easier way than at the center meetings for newcomers to join us in a friendly, non-threatening, and interesting set of activities. The food preparation helps to lower the veil of newness our guests may feel when coming into a new situation. We begin with a chant, after which everyone quickly begins to focus on the tasks of the service project.

Casual conversation with our guests about Swami, or their lives, can happen naturally. Guests are relaxed as they work side-by-side with our members for the good of the homeless we are all serving. Together, in a spirit of love, high energy, and happiness, we prepare nutritious food for our homeless brothers to enjoy. Guests have said it's fun to participate in service projects with us.

For dinner we gather in the living room, casually talking in small groups, with our guests included. Immediately following the meal, the program and discussion starts.

The discussion leader makes sure every person has opportunities to share with the group, if they wish, and no one person monopolizes the discussion. Our members

find the gatherings to be a wonderful way to build unity and a sense of community among our center members; it helps us to understand better how to live righteously, and reminds us of the importance of our spiritual paths. The evening concludes at 7.30 pm with a brief chant. Guests and members are sent off with extra food and extra love.

The Way Forward

The DC Center officers are beginning to take a critical look at our meeting structure and our monthly gathering and service projects, trying to identify attractions and barriers for newcomers. We have worked since the center was founded to make it culturally appropriate in appearance, program, attitudes, language, and behaviors, but there's always room for improvement.

We have found the monthly gathering and specific service projects can be more conducive venues than meetings to welcome and introduce guests into the Sai experience. Our center's monthly gathering is similar to what Michael and I first experienced as newcomers. It was at one of my 1999 group's monthly meetings that I led my first English devotional song. I felt surrounded with love and encouragement by the group

as I ventured into a new level of devotional expression.

America is a country of 313 million people. We feel that at some point in the not-too-distant future, Sai's presence will become known openly in America, and its citizens will flock to Sai centers. The Sai Center of Washington DC prays to be ready to receive them. We are committed to being a religiously neutral and culturally appropriate center, focused on Sai's teachings of ethical values, with love as the basis.

With that in mind, we are thinking about how to improve and make our center activities even more welcoming to all. We hope our experiences may become food for thought or be of help to others. We invite feedback about what has worked for other centers when they have welcomed newcomers. Any and all constructive suggestions from devotees, and especially visitors, would be most welcome. Let's start a dialogue. Write us at: saicenterdc@gmail.com.

Loving Sai Rams,

Susan Sullivan and Michael Rakoff

Sathya Sai Center of Washington DC

May 2013



Remember, the persons whom you serve are temples where God is installed.
Worship them with the flowers of good words, timely help, and vigilant care.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 7:31, October 4, 1967)



Administrative Changes and New Appointments

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

Om Sri Sai Ram. Greetings of love to all of you. By the grace and blessings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Sathya Sai International Organization had uplifting and productive meetings and presentations in Prasanthi Nilayam during Guru Purnima. We received positive feedback from many of the officers. In view of the great enthusiasm and dedication of the leaders and devotees to go forward in the divine mission, as per their recommendations we made important changes in the administration of the Sathya Sai international Organization as follows:

Zonal Chair and Central Coordinators:

- **Mr Valery Voshchinin** is appointed as zonal chair of Zone 8, comprising of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Byelorussia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tagzhikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine.
- **Mr Amar Karki** is appointed as central coordinator covering the countries of Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Sri Lanka is now included in Zone 4.
- **Mr Billy Fong** is appointed as central coordinator for Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Brunei.
- **Dr Gautam Tewari** is appointed as central coordinator for the West Indies.

Prasanthi Council: The Prasanthi Council is reconstituted, and the present members are:

- **Ms Marianne Meyer**
- **Dr Art Ong Jumsai**
- **Dr William Harvey**
- **Mr Leonardo Gutter**
- **Dr Narendranath Reddy**

Committees:

- International Sathya Sai Youth committee:
International coordinator, Mr Shivendra Kumar
- International Disaster Relief committee:
Co-chairs, Mr John Behner and Dr Jack Feely

Continued, next page...

- Information technology committee: Chair, Dr Venkat Sadanand
- Hospitality committee: Co-chairs, Mr Harshad Patel and Mr Rohan Balasuriya

We pray and trust that with the continued dedication of the officers and with Swami's blessings and guidance, His mission will continue to move forward in leaps and bounds.

Jai Sai Ram.

With loving regards,

—Mr Gary Belz

Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

—Dr Narendranath Reddy,

Chairman, Prasanthi Council



Prasanthi Council



Guru Purnima Celebrations, 2013

Two weeks of International Programs and Presentations

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS:
greetings of loving Sairam to
all of you.

It is with great humility and joy that I have the opportunity to share events from the recent 2013 Guru Purnima celebrations glorifying our Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, our Guru and God.

Bhagawan has said that the *guru* is the one who reveals the *guri* (goal) to the disciple. *Guri* here refers to the goal of the Atmic Principle (principle of the inner and omnipresent divinity). The term *guru* means one who dispels the darkness of ignorance and

gives the light of wisdom. *Gu* means one who is beyond attributes (*gunas*), and *ru* means one who is beyond forms (*rupas*). So, when we hold on to Sai, he helps us to cross the ocean of *samsara* (worldly existence) and reach the supreme goal of attaining God (Brahman), who is beyond name, form, and attributes and transcends space, time, and causation.

Hence, on the auspicious day of Guru Purnima, spiritual seekers all over the world expressed their love, reverence, and gratitude to Bhagawan for guiding them along the spiritual path.

Guru Poornima 2013 marks the golden jubilee of the miraculous event in 1963, when Bhagawan, in sheer compassion and love for his devotees, healed himself of a paralytic stroke that he had taken upon himself. Bhagawan subsequently made the historic declaration to the world, that Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the Paripurna (fullest of the full) Shiva-Shakti Avatar.

Talks, Presentations, Service Activities

The festival of Guru Purnima was celebrated in Puttaparthi over a two-week period, filled with inspiring talks by senior devotees, dramas and dances by young adults and children in Sai Kulwant Hall, musical concerts by accomplished artists, and inspiring service activities, including medical camps and food distribution (“*Narayana seva*”). Presumably, many of you witnessed the live programs from Prasanthi Nilayam via the Radio Sai Global Harmony network.

July 17–20 An international conference with the theme, “The Divine Legacy of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba,” was conducted by Zone 4 (Southeast Asian countries). True to the conference’s title, many senior devotees shared their experiences and lessons learned at the divine lotus feet of Bhagawan. The program was uplifting, and all the participants of the conference were filled with joy.

July 22 In the morning, Guru Purnima was heralded by a melodious musical offering by students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL).

Sri Satyajit Salian, currently the head of the Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini Program, then gave a detailed update of the progress of this Program in spreading this unique model of education throughout India.

Dr Dalton de Souza Amorim, Professor, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Chair of Zone 2B (Southern Latin America), then spoke on the importance of practicing His message in our lives. The morning program ended with excerpts from Swami’s divine discourse on the *Soham* (“I am He”) principle.

In the evening, talks, a video presentation on Swami, a Carnatic musical offering by accomplished artiste Ms S Sowmya, and bhajans concluded this year’s Guru Purnima Day celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam.

July 23 Devotees from Bali presented a dance program entitled “Krishna & Gopalas,” depicting Lord Krishna’s playful pranks with his cowherd followers (*gopalas*). This was followed by a musical program by a Mexican choir, celebrating 40 years of the Sathya Sai Organization of Mexico. The Mexican devotees offered a medley of Mexican folk songs, followed by a bouquet of devotional songs.

July 24 The next evening, Sai Kulwant Hall reverberated to the voices of the Glendale-Arcadia Sadhana Group, along with the Glendale Balvikas (Sai Spiritual Education) group of Southern California, USA. They presented an assortment of songs and prayers from various religions.

July 27 An international choir named “Sarvadharmā” from Zone 7 (Region 73, Northern European countries, comprised

of Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia), was led by Maria Quoos, central coordinator of Region 73. The choir harmoniously sang songs from various faiths, reflecting the theme that we all are members of the same family, bound by the religion of love.

July 27–Aug 1 It was heartening to see hundreds of devotees from Middle Eastern countries participating in the seminar, “From Theory to Practice,” which took place from July 27–31. Senior devotees shared beautiful and memorable personal experiences with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Devotees from the Middle East also presented a cultural program in Sai Kulwant Hall on July 30, with a mixture of songs, commentary, and narrations on Islamic culture and interactive dialogues explaining the essence of the holy month of Ramadan.

Marking the end of the fortnight-long Guru Purnima festivities, a group of musicians from the UK offered an instrumental medley on August 1, 2013.

Five-Day Medical Camp During the Guru Purnima festival, a group of international doctors and staff held a five-day medical camp at Prasanthi Nilayam. They evaluated 1,618 patients, of which 239 needed acute care treatments.

Plans for 90th Birthday Celebrations and World Youth Festival in 2015

In addition, officers of the International Sathya Sai Organization from all zones participated in several meetings to discuss the plans for Bhagawan Baba’s 90th birthday

celebrations in November 2015 and a world youth festival in July 2015. Many pre-conferences are planned at the zonal and national levels. These meetings will enable all to participate and share Bhagawan’s love. The zonal and national officers will be communicating periodically about these events.

This is but a brief overview of some of the highlights and programs during this year’s Guru Purnima festival. Bhagawan’s grace and presence were felt keenly by all who participated, and the devotees were filled with bliss (*ananda*).

We thank the trustees of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and the ashram staff for providing full support for all of the International Sai Organization activities. We also thank the staff of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) and RadioSai Global Harmony for supporting our programs with wonderful speakers, and the latter for providing coverage through their network all over the world.

Finally, we thank all the devotees of the International Sai Organization who worked hard to make every program a worthy offering at the divine lotus feet of our beloved Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Let us all rededicate our lives to our supreme Guru and pray for the strength to love Him and serve Him till our last breath. *Samasta Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu*: may all the worlds be happy.

With loving regards,
—**Dr Narendranath Reddy**
Chairman, Prasanthi Council



Responding to Recent Natural Disasters, Both Here and Abroad

Immediate and Ongoing Assistance to Those in Need

Oklahoma Tornadoes

ON MAY 20, 2013, a top-of-the scale, EF-5 tornado, reported to be a mile wide with wind speeds exceeding 200 mph, hit the town of Moore, near Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, killing 24 people and injuring hundreds. While the U.S. typically experiences more than 1,200 tornadoes each year, only 60 such ravaging EF-5 tornadoes have been ever recorded in the U.S. since 1950.

Within two weeks, another major storm, accompanied by fatal tornadoes and devastating floods, hit the Oklahoma City metro area on Friday, May 31, killing nine people, including two children, and injuring more than 100 people.

This second fatal storm to strike the region within a few days, toppled cars, destroyed homes, and left commuters trapped on highways during the Friday evening rush hour. The storm also brought heavy rain and hail, with floodwaters topping 4 feet in Oklahoma City on June 1. Power utilities reported that over 200,000 customers were without power in the states of Oklahoma, Missouri, and Illinois.

The Sathya Sai Organization sprang into action by helping to provide food,

basic supplies, and comfort to the needy. Thanks to Swami's infinite grace, 42 local Sathya Sai devotees, from 6-60 years in age, immediately participated in the relief work in Oklahoma City, by helping to receive, organize, and distribute relief supplies, aid in the clean-up efforts, and in other ways assist the disaster victims, who were physically and psychologically drained.

The relief and rebuilding efforts will continue, and if any Sathya Sai devotee wants to volunteer for the relief efforts, we request them to contact the service coordinator of his or her respective Sathya Sai center for further arrangements, to be coordinated through the national and Region 10 service coordinators.

In the future, relief efforts will move from taking care of immediate needs (food, basic supplies, clean-up, etc.) to medium-term needs such as supporting shelters, rebuilding schools and communities, and assisting the disaster victims regain normalcy in their daily lives.

We are happy to note all the wonderful relief efforts that are being provided with love and compassion under the able guidance of the regional president, regional officers, and national officers.

Many Sathya Sai devotees across the country have expressed their desire to participate in this noble humanitarian relief project. The **Sathya Sai Society of America**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable foundation, started in 1968 with the blessings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, has established an Oklahoma Tornado Relief Fund to support the ongoing relief efforts. Those who wish to contribute to the Oklahoma Tornado Relief Fund may send checks payable to *Sathya Sai Society of America*, to the following address:

Sathya Sai Society of America
1849 Knoll Drive
Ventura, CA 93003

Website: sathyasaisocietyofamerica.org

Periodic updates on the progress of the relief work will be communicated. Let us all pray together to Swami to shower his divine blessings on all those afflicted by the ravages of this storm.

Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavantu.

May All the Worlds Be Happy.

Lovingly, in the Service of Sai,

Narendranath Reddy, MD
Chairman, Prasanthi Council

Floods in Northern India

FROM JUNE 14–17, 2013, the states of Uttarkhand and Himachal Pradesh in Northern India suffered devastating rainfall, floods, and landslides. As a result, more than 100,000 people have been rendered homeless and over 1,000 people have died. About 70,000 pilgrims and tourists were stranded.

Although some have been rescued, at the time of this writing, tens of thousands still remain trapped and in need of rescue.

Food and essential supplies must be transported to starving and suffering survivors. Roads, homes, water supply, medicines, transportation channels, and basic infrastructure need to be rebuilt, supplied, and established.

Current Relief Efforts

The Sathya Sai Service Organization (SSSO) in India began delivering relief to the affected areas immediately following the disaster. A two-phase relief operation is currently underway. The first phase provides assistance to pilgrims and villagers who have been evacuated from the affected areas. Generous amounts of food, blankets, clothes, medicines, cell phones, and waterproof tents are being distributed.

In addition, post-disaster counseling is being provided for the victims. Numerous relief centers have been set up; these centers cater not only to the victims but also to the relatives and friends who are trying to locate and find their loved ones.

In the planned second phase, villages will be adopted and infrastructure developed to deliver complete holistic care to fulfill the needs of the local population. A detailed survey of the villages will be conducted and a rehabilitation plan developed, respecting local ecological, safety and environmental compatibility. Orphanages and shelters will be constructed and staffed as needed.

How We Can Help

Many Sathya Sai devotees and officers of the Sathya Sai International Organization have already expressed a desire to help in the ongoing relief efforts and actively participate in the noble work. The Sathya Sai International Organization has vast experience in disaster relief operations, having successfully conducted the same in several countries. Since the time the floods began their destructive rampage, we have been in touch with the All-India President of the Sathya Sai Organization, Mr V Srinivasan, regarding relief efforts.

Mr Srinivasan graciously welcomed the support of the Sathya Sai International Organization. At present, however, the Sathya Sai Trust of UP, India, is not authorized to receive foreign funds directly for the relief projects.

The **Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation** (SSSWF) is a registered, nonprofit charitable organization in the USA that directly supports the work of the Sathya Sai Organization throughout the world, including India. Therefore, the SSSWF, which has established channels to support the work of the Sathya Sai Organization in India, now is ready to help them in their relief efforts.

Those wishing to contribute to the Sathya Sai Organization for the ongoing relief efforts in Uttarkhand, may kindly send their check to Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation. These funds will be directly given to the legal entity of the Sathya Sai Organization in India to help with their continuing relief efforts.

Consult and Advise the Zone Chair

Those Sathya Sai devotees and National Sathya Sai Organizations who participate should do so with the knowledge and guidance of their respective Zone Chair [for the U.S., Phil Gosselin], so that we can ensure proper accountability of receipt and disposition of funds. For wire transfer to Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, the wire instructions are as follows:

Domestic wire transfer instructions:

ABA/Routing#: 026009593

To: Bank of America, N.A.
100 West 33rd Street
New York, NY 10001

Account: 6550113516

Name: Merrill Lynch

Merrill Lynch Account: 6LX04058

International wire transfer instructions:

SWIFT-BIC: BOFAUS3N

Credit to: MERRILL LYNCH
Bank of America N.A.
100 West 33rd Street
New York, NY

Account: 6550113516

Name: Merrill Lynch

Further credit to name of:

Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation
Account#: 6LX04058
225 S. Lake Ave
Pasadena, California 91101
(626) 356-2013

Continued, next page . . .

Kindly also send the detailed name, address, and e-mail address of the donor when sending wire transfers to SSSWF.

Checks to Sri Sathya World Foundation

If one is sending a check, please make the check payable to “Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation” and send to the following address:

Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation
P.O. Box 660995
Arcadia, California 91066-0995, USA

This is a time for support and cooperation with our Indian brethren to bring relief and peace to the large community in Northern India devastated by the floods and landslides.

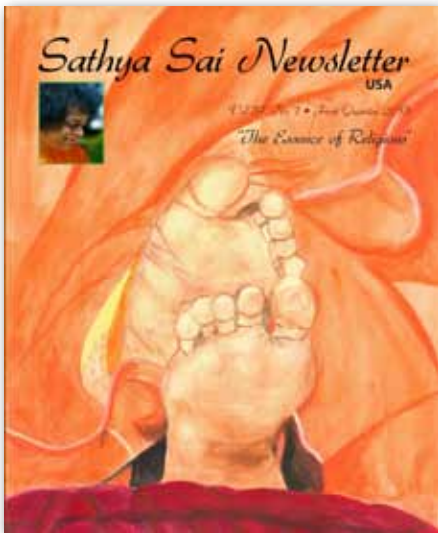
We will continue to keep you informed of the progress of relief efforts. Let us all pray for Bhagawan’s grace to be showered upon all those who are suffering from this natural disaster and to bless us with the wisdom and strength to serve those in need.

Lovingly in the service of Sai,

—Narendranath Reddy MD
Chairman, Prasanthi Council



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

USA Events and Conferences – 2013

Upcoming Events

Sai Youth Conference (Young Adults 18–35), Zone 1 (USA, Canada, West Indies): Aug 23–25, (Fri–Sun) at Camp Green Lane, Philadelphia PA. **Theme: *One for All, All for Sai***. **Now open also to SSE Group 4 students**. For more details, see: <http://zyc2013.saiyoungadultsusa.org/conference.asp>.

Region 5 (North Central): Aug 30–Sept 2 (Fri–Mon, Labor Day weekend), at Camp Henry Horner, Ingleside IL. **Theme: *Living by Example – Path to Spiritual Transformation***. Speakers: Rita and Robert Bruce; Dr Voleti Choudhary, Director, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (SSSIHMS); Balu Karanam; Sanjay Ghandikota. Info/registration: <http://sathyasaicenters.org/p2/r05retreat13/Home.aspx>. Contact: Hari Conjeevaram, hari-conjeevaram@sathyasaicenters.org.

Region 6 (Pacific Northwest) (www.saicenters.info/saiusaregion6): Aug 31–Sept 2 (Sat–Mon, Labor Day weekend), at Silver Falls State Park, Sublimity, Oregon. **Theme: *The End of Wisdom Is Love***. Speakers: Dr Sekhar Boddupalli, Elizabeth J Featherstone. Info/registration: <http://us.sathyasai.org/region6/announce.htm>. Contact: Deepak Vishwanathan, dvishwanathan@gmail.com.

Region 7 (Northern California and Northern Nevada): Aug 31–Sept 2 (Sat–Mon, Labor Day weekend), at Walker Creek Ranch, Marshall CA. **Theme: *Constant Integrated Awareness: Wi-Fi within, Wi-Fi with HIM***. Speakers: Dr Leonardo Pablo Gutter (Prashanthi Council member), Dr Srinivas Raghavan (SSE Camp Speaker), Janet Bock Bicker (rare photos and stories from the early days), Dick Weaver (musical program). Info/registration: www.region7saicenters.org/retreat. Contact: Jerry Pesce, sajfish48@sbcglobal.net.

Region 9 (Southwest) New Mexico Retreat, 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 (music program); Dixie Cooper (“Cutting the Ties That Bind” workshop). Info/registration: <http://us.sathyasai.org/region9/announce.htm>. Contact: Elaine Hausman, 505-660-0283, ehausman@rockridge.biz.

Region 9 (Southwest) Colorado Retreat, Oct 4–6 (Fri–Sun) at Highlands Presbyterian Camp & Retreat Center, Allenspark, CO. **Theme: *One with Spirituality – Going Beyond the Physical Form***. Speakers: Dr Al Levy, Balu Karanam. Info/registration: <http://us.sathyasai.org/region9/announce.htm>. Contact: Mani Venkatesh 303-324-9403, mvenkatesh@comcast.net.

Region 10 (South Central) (www.sairegion10.org/index.php/home), SSE Camp, Sept 28–29, at Camp Arrowhead, Dallas TX. Speakers: Michael McCarthy, Robert and Rita Bruce, Kalika Grana. Contact: Alejandro Grana, grana_alejandro@yahoo.com.

SaiLoveinAction.org – USA Team Gathering, Sept 6–8 (Fri–Sun) at Desert Palms Hotel, Anaheim CA, hosted by Region 8. Speakers/presenters: Dr Venkat Sadanand, Mike Congleton, Harish Naidu, Gene Massey, others. Regional article coordinators, editors, web and media teams.



MEDIA LINKS

from Previous 2013 Events

Audio/Video Offerings:

REGIONS 1, 2, 3, 4, AND 8 held their annual retreats/conferences in May. Please click on the following links to access audio/video recordings of the speakers and other presentations. We hope all may derive joy and inspiration from the many recordings, especially those who may not have been able to attend the retreats. Sincerest thanks to the respective regions for posting and sharing the audio/video links.

REGION 1 (Northeast): Audio links from May 24–26 at Sage College, Troy NY. **Theme: Be Alert Be Aware (B.A.B.A.).** Speakers: Berniece Mead, Prof A Anantharaman. See: <http://nesaicenters.org/retreat-2013-audio-files>.

REGION 2 (Mid-Atlantic): Video recordings from Memorial Day weekend, May 24–26, at Camp Westmont, Poyntelle PA. **Theme: God is Love, Live in Love.** Speakers: Prof Anil Kumar, Drs Soumya and Sethuraman Panchanathan. For videos, see: <http://www.sairegion2usa.org/photo-audio-video/videos>.

REGION 3 (Southeast): Video recordings from May 24–26 at Ramada Gateway, Kissimmee FL. **Theme: Love in Action.** Speakers: Mr Leonardo Gutter, Dr Sunny Anand, Prof Rangarajan (live webcast from India). For videos of the speakers and other presentations, see: <https://vimeo.com/album/2472505>.

REGION 4 (Mid-Central): Audio links from May 24–26 at Camp Wyman, Eureka MO. **Theme: The Inner Voice – Accessing the God Within.** Talks by Dr Phil Gosselin, Dr Raghavendra Prasad, Bhajan and Veda Sessions, Q&A, and YA Program are posted at the Region 4 website stlsai.org, or click [here](#).

REGION 8 (Pacific South): Video Recordings from May 25–26, Norwalk CA. **Theme: Atma to Atma via the Atom.** Visit: www.region8saicenters.org.

- **Dr Narendranath Reddy:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWFUryCXOvk>
- **Prof G Venkataraman:** Watch for Prof GV's 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>
- **Dr Joe Phaneuf on Communicating with Love:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsNRJPFvR5k>

Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Project

A Joint Effort in Breezy Point NY, April 27–28, 2013

When you get a chance to help someone, rejoice at your good fortune. The very eagerness to serve others will endow you with the power and skill necessary for the required service.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 14:7, “Teaching Is a Sadhana,” July 25, 1978, [pdf](#))



The Breezy Point neighborhood bustles with ongoing restoration efforts.

AS HURRICANE SANDY slammed into the coastal enclave of Breezy Point, New York, on Oct 29, 2012, Chris Hyland and his wife, Theresa, opted to ride out the storm.

“We thought it would be like Hurricane Irene, which wasn’t that bad,” said Hyland, whose wife owns Little Tot’s Red Wagon School nursery and preschool in the predominantly Irish-American town of 2,500 residents. “But it quickly became terrifying, with the

sky becoming blacker than black. In front of our house, the ocean quickly swept in and in minutes rose up to my waist.”

According to Hyland, “We thought we would be fine staying put, but we wound up in a church.” As the storm raged, the couple’s home would lose its foundation, and all of their furniture would be destroyed.

“The next morning, when we went to check out the nursery school, it was a complete disaster,” said Hyland. “There was extensive



Jim Halloran of Habitat for Humanity, with Theresa Hyland, owner of the preschool, and a Sai volunteer.



Repainting walls and woodwork

water damage after the water rose two feet up the wall, and when I surveyed the area where 350 homes were either consumed by fire or suffered flood damage, I cried. I thought it was going to take years to rebuild.”

Seven months after Hurricane Sandy made landfall, the superstorm recovery situation remains a work in progress, but residents of Breezy Point have reason for hope. With help from organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization Mid-Atlantic Region, Breezy Point is slowly beginning to bounce back.

Rebuilding Little Tot’s Red Wagon School

Through one of the USA Sai Organization Mid-Atlantic Region’s most ambitious service projects to date, Sathya Sai centers around the country have contributed to the efforts to help restore Breezy Point, a close-knit town left reeling from the monster storm, where even the local volunteer fire department lost its vehicles.

On the weekend of April 27-28, as an offering in honor of Sathya Sai Baba’s life,

members from nine area Sathya Sai centers came together to help rebuild The Little Tot’s Red Wagon School, where more than 90 youngsters and eight employees had been displaced.

Working in conjunction with the Westchester County Habitat for Humanity staff, more than 50 Sai devotees, including 20 young adults, participated from East Coast centers, including Flushing NY, Brooklyn NY, Manhattan NY, East Brunswick NJ, Bridgewater NJ, Washington DC, South Bethesda MD, Loudon VA, and Fairfax VA.

A “Truly Significant” Service Opportunity

According to regional vice president Doug Gaum, “Once in a while, truly significant service opportunities present themselves, where helping can mean all the difference in the world. Examples include Hurricane Katrina, the Haiti earthquake, and now Hurricane Sandy, where the need has been so great.”

Gaum pointed out that many of the town’s residents had not only lost their homes,



Little Tot's Red Wagon School, Breezy Point NY



“but their source of their income and their community. Most did not have flood insurance.”

Prity Bhatt, Mid-Atlantic regional president, noted that the Breezy Point service project is one of the largest undertakings ever by the region, with centers around the country donating not only hundreds of hours but numerous other items, including blankets, baby products, rice, pasta, gift cards, and so on.

“It is mind-boggling how much has been donated,” said Bhatt. “Also, we received the full support of the Prasanthi Council (advisory council of the international Sathya Sai organization), who said, ‘We are praying for you.’

“Swami [Sai Baba] has said that ‘your life is my message,’ and this is what he means. He is giving us an opportunity to be his ambassadors.”

They Looked for Immediate Ways to Help

Bhatt noted that the region became involved in assisting residents of Breezy Point following direct action taken by a Sai volunteer the day after the hurricane touched ground.

Sesh Chari, a Sai devotee who lives 20 minutes from the area, in Richmond NY, was amazed to hear that Breezy Point had been directly hit by the storm and that residents were without power, electricity, and gas:

“I live only 20 minutes away, and I only lost a little flashing on my roof. We did not even get a drop of water. It was unbelievable to look at the news the next morning and to see that people had lost homes and that there were cars and boats floating in the water. People were crying, and my family and I were in shock.”

Chari initially drove to the area but was prevented from going farther due to numerous blocked off streets. Chari went home to get his bike, then returned and went house to house, knocking on doors, asking how he could help.

In a matter of hours, Chari started rallying other Sai devotees, who began preparing food and delivering blankets, batteries, and other supplies to residents. Within three days, Chari quit his job as a translator to devote his full time to assisting the victims of Hurricane Sandy. Later, after Bhatt and Gaum visited



Restoring landscaping



Painting newly-installed drywall

regional centers to appeal to members to help, other Sai devotees quickly joined the effort.

Chari's work led him to connect with the Habitat for Humanity efforts, and that is how the Sai organization received the assignment to work with the Little Tot's Red Wagon School.

To date, devotees have come from as far as Chicago and Boston to assist in restoring the Little Tot's Red Wagon School, including demolition of damaged drywall and flooring; removal of construction debris; relocating sand; cleaning up the school's yard; helping with drywall, flooring, electrical, etc.; preparing and serving food; and providing transportation for volunteers and supplies.

Sharing the *Love All, Serve All* Message

According to Sundar Venugopalan, the regional service coordinator, "Our volunteers also have worked with other organizations," and recalled one group, Bona Responds, a volunteer group from the St Bonaventure Catholic University in Buffalo NY, which has warmly embraced Sai Baba's teachings.

Jim Mahar and his team from Bona Responds have made many visits to serve in the

Storm Sandy-affected areas of Far Rockaway in New York. "During these many visits, they were joined by Sai volunteers who participated in cleanup and rebuilding there," explained Venugopalan. "Thus they heard about Sathya Sai Baba and the Sai organization, and they were very inspired by Swami's universal message of *Love All, Serve All*. We gave them a few bumper stickers with Swami's quote, which Jim put up on his Facebook page and on their service vehicles.

"The Facebook posting received many "Likes," and he requested more bumper stickers with Bhagawan's quote, for other volunteers. We provided the group with a couple hundred more stickers and, recently, many of their volunteers drove 15 hours to serve from May 31 to June 9 in the tornado-ravaged areas of Oklahoma. Apparently, Jim shared the *Love All, Serve All* message with all those he came across in Oklahoma."

For Sai devotees participating in the April 27–28 Breezy Point effort, volunteers from the participating centers began converging on the damaged nursery school at 8 in the morning, with many having carpooled and spent the



Preparing to plant new trees



Installing new flooring

night in local devotees' homes. Signing in at Christ Community Church, a small, white church where volunteers picked up gloves, masks, and bottles of water before heading off to perform the day's tasks, they divided into teams and eagerly went to work.

A sense of spirit and unity seemed to fill the air. Many were greeted by Jim Killoran, the affable head of Habitat for Humanity's Westchester NY office, which is overseeing much of the restoration by volunteers in the area. According to Killoran, a former seminarian who once had studied to be a Catholic priest, "It's been great to see the Sai organization and so many others respond, regardless of faith. It's just been people helping each other, because we all believe that everyone should go to bed at night in a safe, decent bed."

As he spoke, Venugopalan joined with volunteers from various centers to plant 20 new saplings in front of the nursery school, as others fanned out to repaint all the school's rooms or to restore the school's flooring. Spurred on

by spiritual dedication, the volunteers worked diligently, stopping only for lunch, which was lovingly prepared that Saturday by a Sai devotee from Flushing NY.

The devotee said that preparing food for more than 40 people was easy, since "each Saturday since the storm, we've been bringing food to the people here."

Nearby, a physician from Loudon County, Virginia, cleaned leaves from the school's gutter and painted a door that was ready to be rehung. She said the day was special "because it's a service project where I can do something with my hands. In the past, I have donated money to people in India, but my mother and grandmother said we must do something with our hands."

Over the weekend, about 15–20 young adults worked in various capacities, including one from East Brunswick who has been volunteering in Breezy Point since mid-October. "We have worked on several private homes," said the young adult, who noted that all of the paint, flooring, and other items had been donated by various companies. Because

of their efforts and others, a blind man and his disabled wife were able to be moved back into their home on April 27, said Killoran.

For the Hylands and many other Breezy Point residents, the help by volunteers has been a God-send. Killoran noted that “this is a major catastrophic event that will change these families’ lives forever. The blessing of this is that you meet a lot of good people. Because of the help by so many volunteers, we are slowly moving people back into their homes.”

The Volunteers Reflect on the Chance to Put Sai’s Teachings into Practice

For many Sai devotees, the Breezy Point project has been an act of love that has allowed them to physically put Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings into practice. According to one South Bethesda MD Center member, “I would definitely say that we all experienced what unity is, as we all worked with no barriers of center demarcation, which are merely geographic layers of separation. I am sure Swami is proud of us.”

Her thoughts were echoed by another South Bethesda member, who later wrote that, “we were in divine bliss to be a part of this work this weekend. Thanks for organizing the

effort! Looking forward to more such activities to enrich ourselves.”

Others wrote:

“It was an extraordinary trip for us – experiencing the power of the Sai team as a whole . . . just wonderful – so much overwhelmed.”

“This is real representation of excellent team effort. Try to quickly introduce ourselves to others, try to team up dynamically to (find) the need and work the need. We could do all this because all of us have a common goal and interest to do service for the needful people. These ideas (were) created in our minds strongly by Swami’s teachings. So, thanks, Swami, for giving us this nice education. With that spirit, I would really love to work on more such projects with everyone.”

According to Venugopalan, service to the Breezy Point community is ongoing, seven days a week, and devotees can volunteer for service slots. Please RSVP to seshchari@yahoo.com or sundarvenugopalan@yahoo.com.

All accessories, such as gloves and masks, will be provided. Volunteers can register at <http://tinyurl.com/b8zkcw8>, if they have not already done so. This is a one-time registration.

—Edith Billups

Sathya Sai Center of South Bethesda, Maryland



GOD WILL NOT ASK YOU when and where you rendered service. He will ask with what motive you did it. You may boast about the quantity, but God seeks quality, the quality of the heart, the purity of the mind, the nobility of the motive. The Lord is pleased only when you do the things he desires.

—Sathya Sai Baba (“Thought for the Day,” March 19, 2008, Prasanthi Nilayam)

SaiLoveinAction.org

WHAT IS SAILoveinAction.org? It is a website featuring 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 around the world are featured below. Click on the links to access the articles.

- Certain articles may be displayed in either English or another language, according to the locality. If an alternate language is available, look for a small flag icon in the upper right corner of the article page. Click on the small flag to view the alternate language.

—Sai Love in Action Team

RECENT POSTINGS FROM AROUND THE WORLD:



East African Famine Relief KYUSO, KENYA The Sathya Sai Organization in Kenya initiated a National Project, the East Africa Famine Relief, to support the government as a partner in tackling the famine in Kenya. In a full day of service, members traveled for hours to deliver over 25 tons of food to 5,140 people in some of the poorest and most arid areas in Kenya. [Read article...](#)

Dandenon Meal Service MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA Members of the Sai centers in the East region of Victoria, Australia, participate in a weekly meal service project for the homeless at Dandenong Market in Melbourne. [Read article...](#)





Service to Nature LUEBECK, GERMANY
The Luebeck Sai Group in Germany describe several inspiring environmental projects they have undertaken, from building dams, picking up garbage, and planting trees along the river Schwartau, to creating a *prema* (love) garden in which they grow potatoes, carrots, and beet roots for distribution to needy families. [Read article...](#)

Education That Transforms MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY
A group of women have been providing an 18-week-long free course on Education in Human Values since 2005 in Montevideo, Uruguay. Their work was awarded the Merit for Peace prize, the “Merito Oriental a la Paz”, by a nonprofit humanitarian association, for their promotion of human values in an unselfish way in society. [Read article...](#)



A New Roof for the Home of Anna PIRAEUS, GREECE
The Greek Sathya Sai Service team restores the leaky roof of the home of Anna, whom they met through their regular feeding project for needy families at the church. They are, in turn, deeply touched and transformed by her positive example of patience and fortitude. [Read article...](#)

Homeless Feeding in Zone 8

RUSSIAN-SPEAKING COUNTRIES Sathya Sai Centers in Zone 8 serve hot food with love in railway stations, on the street, in homes, and in tent cities – wherever there is a need and the capacity to serve. A powerful 12-minute video shows the homeless feeding service activities and captures the gratitude expressed by the recipients. [Read article...](#)



Showing Light to the Lightless

TAMIL NADU INDIA Members of the Sai Organization in Tamil Nadu assist the blind, reading to them, teaching them Braille, and scribing for them during exams. In turn, some of the blind individuals now help translate books from English to Tamil. [Read article...](#)

NAVIGATING the SaiLoveinAction.org website:

- **Rotate the globe to the desired location. 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! 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.

“One for All, All for Sai”

Zone 1 Sai Youth Conference, Aug 23–25, 2013 – Philadelphia USA



FIRST ZONE 1 YOUTH CONFERENCE

Loving Sai Ram to Zone 1 Sai Youth! With Bhagawan’s blessings, the countdown has begun for the very first Zone 1 Youth Conference - to be held northwest of Philadelphia, USA, on August 23, 24, and 25, 2013.

The conference will be held on the grounds of Camp Green Lane, tucked in the foothills of the Pocono Mountains. An exciting and inspiring program is planned, with special guest speakers, workshops, outdoor activities, cultural program, etc. Learn more about logistics at the [Conference](#) page.

Conference program (provisional): The program committee has done a superb job in putting together a wonderful program based on responses from a pre-registration survey. What we mean is that the ideas/suggestions for an outstanding program line-up, including speakers, workshop topics and other program elements actually came from our young adults! Please visit <http://zyc2013.saiyoungadultsusa.org/conference.asp> for a provisional program and also the guest speakers' bios.

Guest Speakers: We are very fortunate to have Dr Narendranath Reddy, Dr Bill Harvey, Phil Gosselin, Dr Aroon Yusuf, and Wendy Ward Hoffer as our guest speakers.

Registration has been held open till August 15 to accommodate college/work schedules/immigration. We highly encourage the youth to register at the earliest to help the logistics team with planning of transportation, accommodation, food, etc. – all critical elements to ensuring that your stay with us that weekend is comfortable! **Registration link:** http://zyc2013.saiyoungadultsusa.org/ZYC_registration1.asp.

Group 4 SSE Students: Based on strong interest from Group 4 SSE students and recommendations from Regional Presidents/Coordinators, we are excited to announce that the conference is now open to all Group 4 SSE students. For additional information, parents and youth may visit <http://zyc2013.saiyoungadultsusa.org/conference.asp> or reach out to your regional youth/adult leadership.

Preparing for the conference: If a delegate has already registered for the conference and would like information on what to pack, cell phone services, etc, please visit our conference website: <http://zyc2013.saiyoungadultsusa.org/conference.asp>. All delegates will receive a special registration/information packet via email from the registration team, one week prior to the conference.

We are all very excited and looking forward to this first Zone 1 Sai Youth conference. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact your local/regional youth or adult leadership.

CONFERENCE CORE OBJECTIVES are as follows:

- To foster our higher nature through study and practice of Swami's teachings.
- To engage, motivate, and inspire Young Adults to take Swami's mission forward.
- To maximize youth participation through pre- and post-conference initiatives and during the conference.

As with any offering made for our Sai, complete preparation is needed. To prepare for this conference, Zone 1 youth are engaging in pre-conference initiatives at the individual, local, regional, national, and zonal levels. This will greatly aid our spiritual growth and allow us to engage and maximize youth participation.

PRE-CONFERENCE INITIATIVES include:

1. Service
2. Daily Gayatri chanting
3. Ceiling on Desires - Spiritual Discipline (*Sadhana*) Program

Please see the [Pre-conference Initiatives](#) page for additional information.

Our beloved Swami has often said that youth are the future torch bearers and the enablers of the Golden Age. We now begin preparations for this exciting journey ahead. Together, let us be inspired by His love to greater service, devotion, and discipline, so that our lives become His message!

Lovingly, in the service of Sai,

—Aparna Murali

On behalf of Zone 1 Young Adult leadership

SPOTLIGHT on YOUTH LEADERSHIP: To read a transcript of a Radio Sai interview (recorded in December 2010) of Aparna Murali, former student in Swami's college at Anantapur, current Zone 1 Young Adult (YA) Representative, and outgoing USA YA Representative, click [here](#).

The Music Competition

A TALENT SEARCH COMPETITION was being conducted by a music company for young budding singers. Twenty-two entries had been selected from the hundreds of entries received. The contestants had sung in front of three eminent judges who had made a name for themselves in the world of music. The first round was a round of elimination and brought the number of contestants down to ten.



The second round started with bated breaths and pounding hearts. All the young participants put forward their best. It was a rare honor to get a chance to sing on this platform, in front of such a large audience and in the midst of so much talent. At the end of the second round, only five contestants were short-listed. Those who did not make it wept openly; they couldn't hold back their tears of disappointment.

The lucky five sang in the final round. Soon the singing part was over. There was a thunderous applause from the audience. The crowd was out of control with enthusiasm. The singers had excelled. They had the audience literally dancing to their tunes.

It was time for the final verdict. The first judge called one of the contestants, Alexis, center-stage and said to her, "I wonder what prompted you to choose such a difficult composition to sing. You have sung it terribly! I cannot even count the number of mistakes you have made. You youngsters think that by singing a few numbers here and there that you can become singers of repute. Let me tell you, you have to practice day and night. You have to train under the grand maestros." He went on to sing a line from the same song to show this disappointed contestant just how it should have

been sung. Tears streamed down the girl's cheeks. She fought to hold them back, but everyone could clearly see the flood of emotions that besieged her.

The mike was passed on to the second judge. He said, "Well, young lady, you were brave to have chosen that song. But you have a lot to learn yet. You need to train for longer hours. But don't worry; you can make it if you practice consistently. Good luck to you."

It was the turn of the third judge to speak. He said, "First of all young lady, I wish to congratulate you for having reached the final round, having proven your strength in such a sea of talent. You have immense potential in you; you just need to develop it properly. Do you think that people like us, who have made a name in the world of music, are any different from you? No, we are also like you. The only difference is if you continue to persevere. Don't give up. In this field, one is always a learner. Even we are still learning. The road is tough but it's not impossible to conquer. I wish you luck. You have my blessings."

The rest of the contestants went through their turns of listening to the opinions of the judges on their respective performances. But in the end, what struck the audience was not the final result but the attitude of the judges. As the audience walked out of the auditorium, a few were discussing the participants and their results. But do you know what most of them were discussing? They were discussing who the best judge was!

Everyone felt that the first judge was unnecessarily harsh. He left Alexis feeling discouraged and humiliated. He was rude to her and made her feel as though she didn't have any talent. The second judge was a little better. He encouraged Alexis a little bit and also told her to practice. But the third judge was the most admirable. He got his point across clearly but wasn't harsh. Even more important, he encouraged Alexis tremendously. He pointed out that she had talent and just needed to develop it a little more. He spoke softly, encouragingly, and lovingly toward her.

When Alexis was asked at the end what she thought of the judges' comments, she said that the third judge's opinion really meant a lot to her and that she would take to heart what he recommended.

—From "Sunrays for Wednesday," by Priya and Sanjay Tandon, pp. 159-160, Competent Professionals Pvt. Ltd, Chandigarh, India (publisher), 2007



Sai Spiritual Education Lesson Plan

“The Music Competition” (Group 4)

VALUE: Right Action • **SUBVALUE:** Right Speech

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE: Students will reflect on the effect that right speech and “speaking obligingly” has on themselves and others.

QUOTE: *When you converse with others, you should do so with respect. You should not use harsh words. “If you cannot oblige, speak obligingly,” is the golden rule you should follow. When you salute others, it goes to God. When you criticize or abuse another person, that also goes to God.* —Sathya Sai Baba, SSS 31:19, April 26, 1998, [pdf](#). (NOTE to teachers: Do not hand out quote at the beginning of class; wait till after discussion question 3.)

OPENING: 3 Oms, Gayatri Mantra, Silent Sitting

PRAYER/AFFIRMATION: “Dear Lord, please think through me, feel through me, speak through me, act through me, love through me, breathe through me.”

AFFIRMATION: My words are full of love, even when it is best to say “no.”

DEVOTIONAL SINGING: “It’s in Every One of Us,” by David Pomerantz. Click [here](#) to listen and [here](#) for lyrics.

PRE-STORY DISCUSSION: Many children are taught, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never harm me.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain.

READING: “The Music Competition” (See story on pp 57–58.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (These should relate to story, subvalue, and affirmation.)

1. *What were the differences between the three judges?*
2. *How effective were the first judge’s comments?*
3. *How could the first judge have rephrased his comments?* (Bring out that one should “speak obligingly, even if one cannot oblige”) Share and discuss the lesson quote from above.
4. *How would you describe “speaking obligingly” (being kind, considerate, courteous, showing respect) and why is it important?* (doesn’t hurt other people’s feelings, shows respect, shows self-control, helps the other person feel more comfortable with you, keeps your stress level down, helps to maintain your equanimity, etc.)
5. *Can you think of an example from your own life where somebody could not oblige and did not speak obligingly? How did it make you feel? On the contrary, think about an example where somebody could not oblige but spoke obligingly. What was the difference in how it made you feel?*

6. *Think of a time when you did not speak obligingly. How would the outcome have changed if you had? What are the challenges in speaking obligingly?*
7. *How can you always speak obligingly?* (stop and think before speaking; pass everything by your heart before speaking; think of the reaction your words might cause; speak in a soft, respectful, and pleasant voice)
8. Three thousand years ago, the wise man Solomon said, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” Do you think that’s as true today as it was then? Explain.

ACTIVITY: Saying It With Love: When you choose to speak obligingly, you can say things that would create a quarrel had you said them differently. Your tone of voice can also contribute to not speaking obligingly. For example, you can say no to a request in a way that creates resentment or ill will. “You don’t meet my requests when you don’t feel like it, so I’m not going to do what you asked.” But you can say no in a different way: “I would love to meet your request at a different time. But I’m afraid that I can’t say yes right now.”

How would you rephrase the following statements to speak obligingly? (Note: students can do this individually or role-play in pairs.)

1. Rushing somebody by saying “Come on already. What’s taking you so long?” (“You’re worth waiting for. Nevertheless, I would appreciate it if you could hurry.”)
2. “That’s ridiculous.” (“I see some difficulties with that.”)
3. “How could anyone in their right mind think that?” (“I think that another position has its merits.”)
4. “That’s totally stupid.” (“Let’s look at this in another way.”)
5. Saying, in an angry or aggravated tone, “Don’t you understand what I’m saying?” (“I must not have expressed myself clearly. Let me explain what I mean.”)
6. “Can’t you ever do anything right?” (“I see you’re having difficulty. Maybe I can explain it in a different way.”)
7. “Your haircut is atrocious.” (Don’t say anything unless asked; or, if asked, “I have seen you look much better; have you thought about finding a new hair stylist?”)

How would you respond in the following circumstances?

8. You run into somebody you haven’t seen in a while. After briefly chatting, he suggests you must get together, and you agree, even though you have no intention of seeing him. What should you have said?
9. “Do I look fat?” (“The clothes make you look fat,” or “I know you have clothes that are more complimentary.”)

10. A friend asks to borrow your car. He's not a safe driver and has had several accidents.
11. Your boss asks you to work on your day off. You've already committed to doing something that is important.
12. A co-worker wants to switch shifts. In the past, the person hasn't kept up his end of the bargain, and you were forced to work his shift as well as your shift.
13. A friend wants to borrow money. In the past, she's never paid you back.
14. A friend needed a place to live for a few days, which extended into a few weeks, then a few months. He's not contributing to the household, and your patience is wearing thin.

LIFE APPLICATION: POWs (Pearls of Wisdom)

Public Speaking: Students write three “pearls of wisdom” they learned during this lesson. They will share these with the class the following week.

During the Week: Practice speaking obligingly this week and write about the effects on yourself and the other person. Also write about what the potential consequences could have been if you had not spoken obligingly in that same situation.

CLOSING: Repeat Prayer and Silent Sitting



ANNOUNCEMENT:

Launch of Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) Web Platform and Resource-Sharing Drive

IN MID-JULY 2013, Dr Mike Congleton, President, USA Sai Organization Central Council, announced the official launch of the Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) USA Web Platform. The platform includes an SSE website as well as a resource-sharing drive accessible through Sai Spiritual Education Resources on the Internet.

The website and resource drive may be accessed at: www.saispiritualeducation.us.

The SSE USA website is designed to serve as a common, shared baseline for the SSE program in the USA, and a unique aspect of the website is that it is also a portal for resources available for SSE Coordinators, teachers, parents, and children who are involved in the SSE program. In addition, the SSE website features an SSE calendar highlighting special events, and it integrates related activities happening around the USA during the SSE school year.

Dr Congleton thanked the members of the SSE Web Platform team for all their hard work and dedication in creating the SSE USA Web Platform and extended much appreciation.

Ganesha



I was wondering the other day
why in India an Elephant God
was chosen to remove
all of our obstacles.

Now I know.

Your size, Ganesha,
causes most troubles to tremble.
You are so strong and powerful,
the pounding of Your feet
and the sound of Your war cry
scares most troubles away.

If that is not enough,
the force of your huge feet
grinds all troubles into powder.

The air You breathe
blows troubles away.

Whatever is left over
of the powdered troubles,
You wash away into oblivion
with a mere spray of water
from Your flexible trunk.

O, Mighty Lord Ganesha,
thank You for removing all of our
obstacles.

O, bless You, Ganesha, our Lord.

—*Janet Marie Bingham*

San Diego, California

NOTE: This year (2013), the festival day honoring
Ganesha falls on Monday, September 9.

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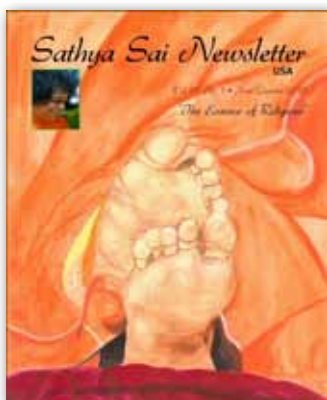
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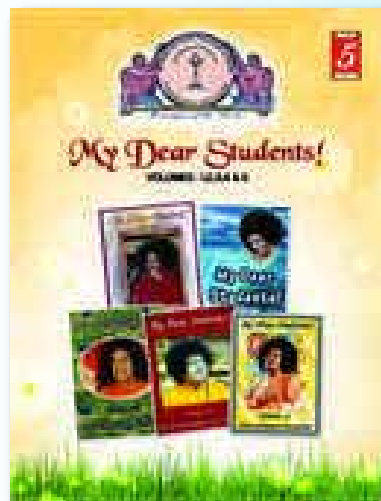
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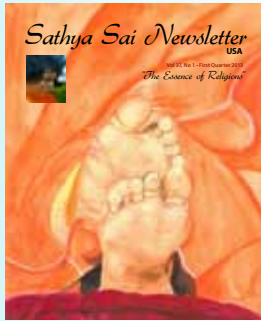
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Sathya Sai Newsletter USA

Sathya Sai Newsletter USA is a free quarterly publication featuring Sri Sathya Sai Baba's teachings, articles, and poetry based on those teachings and on the experiences of devotees from the USA and beyond. It also features information on Sai Organization activities in the USA, International Sai Organization announcements, artwork, poetry, photos, and more, and covers news and inspiration from all wings of the USA Sai organization – devotional, educational, service, young adult activities, and children's programs. It is published online

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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)