

Spiritual Discipline Program



April, 2011

Reading Sai Literature Daily

“ He teaches the sleeping to wake, the waking to rise, the rising to sit, the sitting to stand, the standing to walk, the walking to run, the running to reach and the reaching to merge. ”

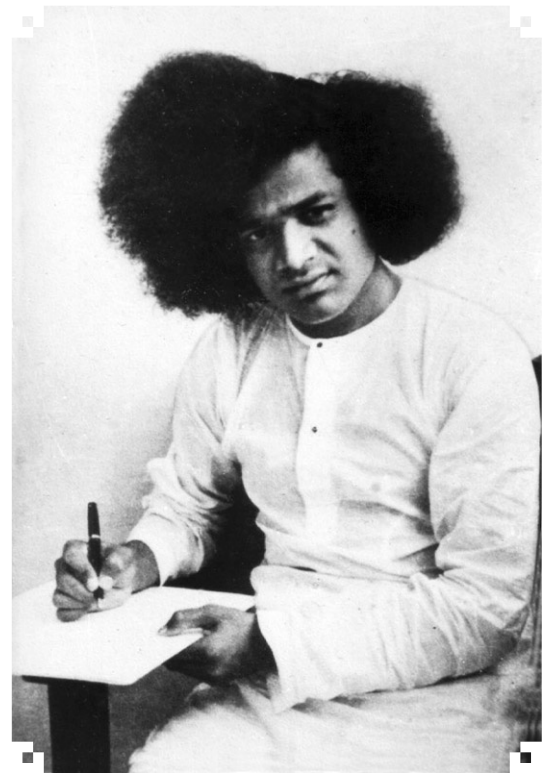
With His grace and love, we began our journey, ‘Living in Sai’ last month with the spiritual practice of ‘Namasmarana-Chanting God’s name’. The value of chanting God’s name has gained added significance these past few weeks, giving us much needed strength, solace and a channel to direct our love and affection to our Beloved Swami.

Swami has often said “Your life is My Message”. And His message is Love. In the thousands of discourses that Swami has given since the declaration of His mission as an Avatar, in countless conversations with devotees, students, and seekers, in His contributions to the monthly spiritual magazine, Sanathana Sarathi which has been published as the “Vahini” series, Swami has provided us with simple, unique and effective tools to understand and practice this message of Love.

Prof. Kasturi, Swami’s biographer once said, “He teaches the sleeping to wake, the waking to rise, the rising to sit, the sitting to stand, the standing to walk, the walking to run, the running to reach and the reaching to merge”.

We hope that this newsletter and study circle guide on **Reading Sai literature daily**, will encourage you to revisit, reflect and ruminate on Swami’s precious words, for there lies the key to inspiration, transformation and realization that we are ‘Living in Sai’.

Jai Sai Ram!



IN THIS ISSUE

A Three Step Process towards Self Transformation, Practice Tips, Testimonials, Special Application Idea

We hope you’re studying and practicing readings from Sandeha Nivarini!

The focus chapters for April are # 3 and 4. More information in the Study Circle Guide



The thirst for God can be cultivated by the reading of scriptures, the cultivation of congenial company, lessons from a kind and considerate Guru and regular practice of Japam.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 6: “Krishna Thrishna”

Dear Young Adults,

Hope the previous newsletter on the topic of Namasmarana provided some useful tools and guidance as we continue our journey towards realizing the divinity within. For the month of April, the SDP discipline of focus is **Read Swami’s Discourses/Books Daily and Conduct Weekly Youth Study Circles.**

The study circle guide contains complete material and tools for conducting the study circle and applying this discipline in our daily life.

Reading Sai Literature – A Three-Step Process towards Self-Transformation

“This is the proper plan of study—reading, reflection, and regular application in life. Study is work. Inquiry into the value and applicability of what is studied is worship. The experience of the validity and value of practice is wisdom.”

-Sathya Sai Baba

(Sathya Sai Speaks Volume 9)

READ

“Study with faith and devotion. Delve into the significance and the meaning of what you read, and always have before you the goal of putting what you read into practice. Unless you do so, the study circle will remain a half-circle forever; it cannot be a full circle.”

-Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks Volume 9

REFLECTION

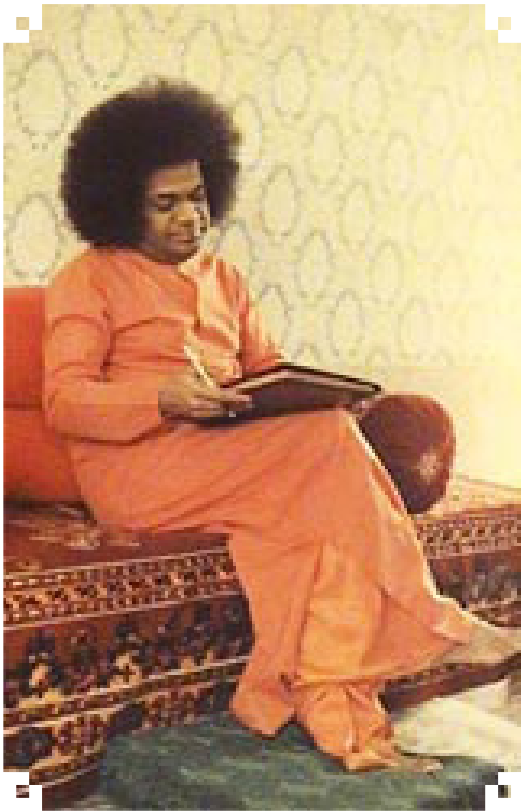
REGULAR APPLICATION

Much reading confuses the mind; it fosters argumentation and intellectual pride. What I insist on is putting the things read into practice—at least a thing or two. Moreover, you must always remember that the book is just a pointer, a guide, a signpost. Reading is not completion of the journey. It is only a first step. Read for the sake of practicing, not for reading’s sake.

- Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks Volume 6





“Not information, but transformation, not instruction but construction should be the aim. Theoretical knowledge is a burden, unless it is practiced, when it can be lightened into wisdom and assimilated into daily life.

Knowledge that does not give harmony and wholeness to the process of living is not worth acquiring. Every activity must be rendered valid and worthwhile by its contribution to the discovery of Truth, both of the Self and of nature.”

-Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks Volume 9

Some ideas of how to practice the 3Rs



- When reading as a group, pick a text or a book that everyone can relate to and covers a broad range of spiritual topics.
- Before reading, ask Swami to keep your heart and mind open to whatever messages that the text has to convey.



- When in a study circle, pause at regular intervals and reflect on what was read. Share any insights or experiences related to the topic.
- When reading individually, pause and reflect on the essence of the reading and how these points can be applied in your daily life.



- What can I do differently starting tomorrow as a result of having read the spiritual text or discourse?
- Give yourself a time line to practice what has been derived out of the discourse/ spiritual text.
- Keep in mind what has been read and at the end of the day assess how much has been practiced.

More practice points are available in the Study Circle Guide!



Young Adult Testimonials

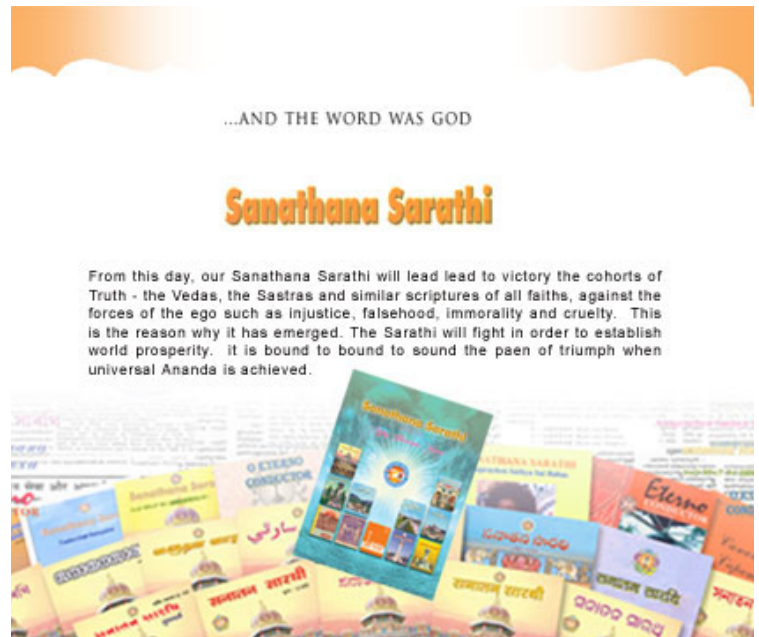
“Ask and it will be given to you;
seek and you will find; knock and
the door will be opened to you.”
-Matthew 7:7”

How true it is for our dear Swami, that when we have a yearning question in our heart, so beautifully does Swami answer it, in His own inimitable way! And one of the ways is surely through his printed words!

It was when I was still in Kolkata, India, that I was having this conversation with a friend of mine about the Rama and Krishna Avatars. A kind of *satsang* (*spiritual discussion*) one might say. In the course of the conversation, we were talking about how Rama and Krishna left their mortal coils. We both knew that the end of Krishna's physical sojourn came when he was hit by a poisonous arrow in a forest by a hunter who mistook his blue feet as some exotic bird. But both of us had no idea about how Rama exited his physical frame. I remember asking a few people who I thought might have the answer, but with no luck.

Roughly a week after this conversation, the Lord's message in the form of Sanathana Sarathi was peeping through my mail-box. I opened it with great interest and read through the very first discourse of the issue! And Lo and behold! In that very discourse Swami tells us that after returning from Lanka, Rama had a long life and established Rama-rajya, and finally when it was time, He merged in the Sarayu river that flowed by Ayodhya.

I was struck with wonder and gratitude at how my dear Swami chose to answer my lurking question in such a short period of time!



Certainly it is such Sai-incidences that makes one's faith in the Lord's omnipresence and boundless Love rock solid!

It is the rarest of rare events when the Lord himself dons a physical form and comes down to instruct Mankind in the eternal message of Love and Truth. How precious and invaluable are His words which carries the authority of the creator Himself!

From my own experiences with Swami's words, I have come to realize that they are not only a message from the Master, but a direct conversation with the Beloved Lord- waiting to answer our every question, and erase our last loitering doubts!

Region 9 YA



Service Spotlight

Swami blessed the young adults of region 7 with an opportunity to help out at the Full Circle Community Farm, Sunnyvale on January 22 2011. Community farms represent fresh, local sustainable food. The farms and the surrounding community sustain each other.

On a bright sunny day about 20 of us sought to help with weeding, uprooting, cleaning, shoveling, mulching, manuring and planting. Some of us were carefully removing the weeds which were eating up the space and resources meant for the veggies while some others were helping with laying mulch on a clear patch to prevent further weed growth. Some others were helping to move an apple tree from one place to another saying Sairam! Sairam!

When a brother asked us to introspect and relate to the Service we had offered, a sister remarked, "Just as we have weeded out a fresh vegetable patch today, we also ought to weed out our bad qualities so that our good qualities might grow" How true!, we felt, our discipline had to be to cut down the bad qualities so that the good might grow. To manure and protect the good so that we may have a good harvest which can sustain the community around us. Each of is a community garden sustaining and being sustained by the community around us. Jai! Sai Ram.

Region 7



Has the discipline of Reading and Practicing Sai Literature transformed your life in any way?

Have creative ways to practice this discipline?

Share your thoughts and experiences in practicing this spiritual discipline!

Please send your testimonials to:

info@saiyausa.net

NEXT ISSUE

Stay tuned for the May Newsletter to learn more about our third spiritual discipline -

Engage in Selfless Service as a Group



Sai Ram Young Adults,
We hope you enjoyed the material on Reading Sai Literature.

Let us also apply the concept of the three R's- reading, reflection and regular application towards Swami's physical health as we continue to pray to Him for Him with love and devotion.

Reading:

"Let Me tell you that nothing evil can affect Me. Nothing can harm Me. I am the Master, the Shakthi (Power) that overpowers everything else."
-Swami's Discourse, July 7, 1963

"My dear! Don't fall a prey to body attachment; Even if there is some pain, your love for Swami will remove that pain. Physical afflictions are temporary just like passing clouds which come and go."
- Swami's Discourse, 5th July 2003, Doctor's Day

"The intense prayers of the devotees are My medicine...It is as a result of such fervent prayers that I am able to stand before you and address you. Neither did I want this suffering nor did I desire its cure. You wanted this body to be cured of the pain, and you achieved it through your prayers. This body is not Mine. It is yours. Hence, it is your responsibility to look after this body. I am not the deha (body); I am the Dehi (Indweller)." - Swami's Discourse, 5th July 2003

"There is no medicine more efficacious than love. Your love is My medicine. That is the most powerful medicine. Equally, My love is a powerful medicine to all of you." -Swami's Valdictory address, Youth Conference, 28 July 2007



Reflection:

The following can be done at an individual level or in a study circle format in a group setting. The examples are provided as a starting point in case you need it.

- 1) Identify a common theme between the quotes above.
- 2) What can we learn from this theme?
- 3) How does the theme relate to what you are feeling about Swami's health now?

Example: A common theme among all the quotes is that Swami's true form is love and He is everywhere; most importantly, Swami is always living in our hearts. From this theme, we learn that when we pray to Swami with sincere devotion we are opening a portal in which we can send/receive love to/from Swami.

Regular Application:

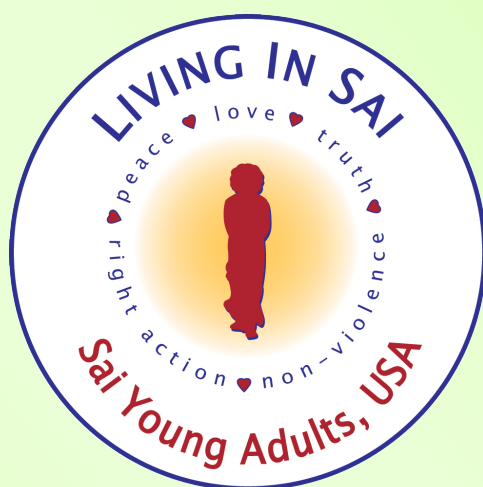
Create an activity where you can practice the theme from His quotes to address your feelings.

Activity Example: We should feel his omnipresence at all times within us and around us regardless of his bodily condition. Intense prayers and love from us are His medicine. Find a method of 'praying'/ transformation (Sai Literature, Meditation, Bhajans: any of the 9 spiritual disciplines for example) that helps you address your feelings the most and connects you to feel his omnipresence and universal love. Everyday, continue your chosen method of 'praying' with utmost devotion AND intensity. Pray to Swami to send his universal love through you; then redirect this love toward your family, friends and back to Swami.



Spiritual Discipline Program

Study Circle Guide & Sandeha Nivarini Discussion Questions



Discipline #2

**Read Swami's Discourses/Books Daily and
Conduct Weekly Youth Study Circles.**

April, 2011

The objective of the study circle is to get a better understanding of:

- 1) The true purpose of reading Sai literature and participating in study circles
- 2) How reading Sai Literature and participating in Study Circles help in our Self-Transformation and in realizing the divinity within.
- 3) Enhancing this spiritual discipline by implementing the three-step process of Reading, Reflection, and Regular Application

Study Circle Activity:

Start the study circle by chanting 3 Oms. Feel Swami's Love and Light in your hearts and visualize the Light fill the entire room engulfing everyone present in the room. Continue on with chanting 3 Gayatris as a group.

Previous Study Circle Review:

Review the last study circle on Namasmarana and discuss any experiences with practicing Namasmarana from last study circle

SDP Discipline of the Month:

Read Swami's Discourses/Books Daily and Conduct Weekly Youth Study Circles

Discuss the following questions as a group:

- 1) What is purpose to reading Swami's discourses/books or listen to Swami's discourses? Isn't devotion and selfless service sufficient?
- 2) Provide examples of reading Sai literature in daily life (Ex. Sai Inspires/Heart2Heart)
- 3) SAI stands for "Spiritual, Awakening and Inspiring." How can does it connect to our discussion today?
- 4) Have you had any burning spiritual questions or doubts you have? Generally, in what ways do you go about finding answers to these questions? (Ex. Talking with family/friends, reading an article or a book, etc)

"It is not just reading books. Study circle means taking a point and each person discussing what is the meaning of the point to them—like a round table conference. Each person gives his point of view, and finally values are derived from this. If there is just reading, there is doubt, but if each one gives his view, doubts will be answered. The topic is viewed; the study circle looks at different facets. It is like a diamond with its different facets, but there is one facet that is flat, the top facet, and from this all can be viewed. To discover the top facet is the task [purpose] of study circle"

- Sathya Sai Baba

Conversation With Sathya Sai Baba, pp.125-126

The Goal of Reading Sai Literature - Self-Transformation

Swami Says, “Not information, but transformation, not instruction but construction should be the aim. Theoretical knowledge is a burden, unless it is practiced, when it can be lightened into wisdom and assimilated into daily life. Knowledge that does not give harmony and wholeness to the process of living is not worth acquiring. Every activity must be rendered valid and worthwhile by its contribution to the discovery of Truth, both of the Self and of nature.” - Sathya Sai Speaks Volume 9

Discussion Points:

- ♦ Swami has said often that “His life is His Message.” How can reading Sai Literature aid in making our lives, His message?

Reading Sai Literature - A Three-Step Process towards Self-Transformation

Swami says that in order to fully benefit from reading Sai Literature and participating in study circles, a proper plan of study needs to be followed:

“This is the proper plan of study—reading, reflection, and regular application in life. Study is work. Inquiry into the value and applicability of what is studied is worship. The experience of the validity and value of practice is wisdom.” -Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks Volume 9

Refer to later pages for an example of how to apply the Three “R’s” of Reading, Reflection, and Regular Application



The Three Rs

Reading

- ♦ When reading as a group, pick a text or a book that everyone can relate to and covers a broad range of spiritual topics.
- ♦ Before reading, ask Swami to keep your heart and mind open to whatever messages that the text has to convey.
- ♦ Appoint one person in the group to take notes from the discussion.
 - ♦ If reading as an individual sadhana, keep a notepad with you and write down any major points that appeal to you so you can remember them later

Reflection

“Study with faith and devotion. Delve into the significance and the meaning of what you read, and always have before you the goal of putting what you read into practice. Unless you do so, the study circle will remain a half-circle forever; it cannot be a full circle.”

- Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks Volume 9

- ♦ When in a study circle, pause at regular intervals and reflect on what was read. Have the moderator provide a brief summary of what was read. Share any insights or experiences related to the topic.
- ♦ When reading individually, pause at regular intervals and reflect on last few passages. What was the essence of the last few passages?
- If taking notes, reflect on some of the key points and ponder over how these points can be applied in your daily life.

Regular Application

“Much reading confuses the mind; it fosters argumentation and intellectual pride. What I insist on is putting the things read into practice—at least a thing or two. Moreover, you must always remember that the book is just a pointer, a guide, a signpost. Reading is not completion of the journey. It is only a first step. Read for the sake of practicing, not for reading’s sake”. - Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks Volume 6

• As you are reading and reflecting contemplate on the following questions:

- What can I do different starting tomorrow as a result of having read the spiritual text or discourse?
- Relate to your life experiences what has been read and analyze what needs to be changed/modified.
- Give yourself a time line to practice what has been derived out of the discourse/spiritual text.
- Keep in mind what has been read and at the end of the day assess how much has been practiced.



Example of the Three Rs:

The following example illustrates how to follow the Three “R’s” of Reading, Reflection, and Regular Application. The YA’s are encouraged to use this example as a guide while reading any Sai literature.

Now that we understand what *Namasmarana* is and the benefits that can come from practicing this spiritual discipline, let us move on to how we can best practice this sacred discipline.

Reading

Excerpt from Chapter 3 of Sandeha Nivarini. Please refer to the text for the entire chapter.

Bhaktha: 'Tis two days since I came. I see here number of people everywhere outside. I hear the incessant confusion of voices. Coming from my place to avoid that confusion, I find here too crowds everywhere. Therefore, I entered inside. There, it is fine, blissful, quiet. That is why I was in the Hall inside. It is as quiet inside as it is restless outside.

Swami: What is special in this? It is natural. Where there is jaggery, there gather the ants—and between outside and inside, this is the distinction! That is the characteristic. That is how it is.

Bhaktha: Swami! I do not understand what You say. If You tell me in detail, I shall listen and be happy.

Swami: You yourself said, didn't you, that there is an outside and an inside. Well. Those are what we call “Bahyaprapancham” and Antharaprapancham,” the external world and the internal world. Now, which is the internal? Give me your idea.

Bhaktha: You want it to come from my mouth itself? It would be so good if You speak.

Swami: Well. Making the questioner himself give out the answers is the Sanathana (Timeless) method of teaching. If those who question, themselves give the answers, they would clearly understand the subject. The lecturing style is different. In olden days, all the Rishis enabled their disciples to understand Vedantha only by this method.

Swami: There must be “internal” also, is it not Well, have you ever seen a cinema?

Bhaktha: Ever seen! Why, Swami, the cinema too is a part of the Prapancham, isn't it? I have seen many.

Swami: What did you see? Tell me.

Bhaktha: I have seen many wonderful “pictures”; I have heard numerous experiences of joy and sorrow.

Swami: “I have seen,” you say. The screen is one; the “picture” is another. Did you see both?

Bhaktha: Yes.

Swami: Did you see the screen and the “picture” both at the same time?

Bhaktha: How is that possible, Swami? When the pictures are seen, the screen is not visible. When the screen is visible, the pictures are not seen.

Swami: Right! The screen, the pictures, do they exist always?

Bhaktha: No. The screen is permanent; the pictures come and go.

Swami: As you say, the screen is permanent and the pictures come and go. I shall ask on another subject: Does the picture fall on the screen or the screen fall on the picture? Which is the basis for what?

Bhaktha: The pictures fall on the screen; so, for the picture, the screen is the basis.

Swami: So too, the external world which is like the picture has no permanence; it changes. The internal world is fixed; it does not change. The external has the internal as its basis, its substratum.



Reflection

- How often do you rely on the “external” versus the “internal” for answers to your questions.
- Contemplate on the statement, "the screen is permanent and the pictures come and go." What significance does this have in your life?
- Have you ever felt desire for Liberation? If so, what are the times in your life in which you felt the most intense desire for Liberation? What meaning does the word “liberation” have to you?

Regular Application

- Contemplate on any key points from the passage which you directly put into practice in your daily life.
- Think of a situation from your life where you generally rely on the external sources for solutions. How can you seek the inner divinity for guidance in those situations
- Swami says, "Placing your burden on Destiny and keeping quiet means diminution of effort. With effort and prayer Destiny can be attained. Without effort and prayer, Destiny and Grace are not gained." From your life experience, what are the areas where it is essential to put this statement into practice? What areas in your life do you feel you need to put more effort in.

Practice Tips

- 1) Make it a point to reading Sai literature or any spiritual text on a regular basis and follow the Three “R’s” - Reading, Reflection and Regular Application.
 - ♦ For example, subscribe to the daily Heart2Heart - Sai Inspires messages from <http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Portal/home.htm?refresh>
- 2) Allocate more time in your daily life for reading Sai literature
 - ♦ Ex: Replace 1 hour of watching TV, with reading Sai literature or spiritual texts.
- 3) Tune in to the Discourse stream offered by RadioSai and apply the Three “R’s” Link - <http://media.radiosai.org/www/Discourse.html>
- 4) Watch spiritual movies/dramas as a group and have informal discussion based on the Three “R’s”
 - ♦ Examples of Spiritual Movies include The Secret, The Matrix, etc

