

*Transformation of the self -
the Grace of Sai*

S A I S A R A T H I

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MESSAGE FROM THE ORGANISATION

An elderly pilgrim was making his way to the Himalayan Mountains in the bitter cold of winter when it began to rain. An innkeeper said to him, “How will you ever get there in this kind of weather, my good man?” The elderly man answered cheerfully, “My heart got there first, so it’s easy for the rest of me to follow.”*

There is an extremely important and powerful lesson in the simple story above: if there is sincerity, if there is genuineness and if there is yearning from the heart, then no matter what the inconveniences – never mind the small sacrifices or the big challenges – we will move forward, there will be progress and, more likely than not, the job will get done. The self-evident truth in this does not require a clever intellect. The stated lesson applies to every sphere of our life and, most of all, to our spiritual life.

The heart’s bond with the Guru, that connection between devotee and Master, is – or should be – the fundamental driver of our spiritual journey. Everything else is secondary and in a philosophical sense ‘false’. When we serve, it is not true service unless we recognise that it is the Divinity in us that motivates and enables us, and it is that same Divinity that resides in those whom we serve. Thus, in serving the Guru, or following His directive to serve others selflessly, we are not merely performing a good act just to feel good about ourselves or to impress anyone; we are seeking out our true Self so as to live in awareness of It.

When there is active remembrance of the Lord or Guru and when there is a genuine desire to love and serve Him, then we are naturally filled with an enthusiasm to offer our very best. Our priorities in life shift to reflect this eagerness to please Him. Our standards become higher. Not only is our everyday life enriched but our spiritual life also deepens. It evolves into a greater appreciation of the Truths that the Guru has given us, and which He Himself embodies. We, too, begin to live by those teachings and we are increasingly transformed into God-centred people. The relationship with the Master is both the starting point and the journey Godward.

Of course, to even have a Guru and to be called on to serve is itself a huge blessing that many are not aware of and so must wait for, in the mean while confusing their associations with Godly men as but one of life’s many desires and relationships.

The Sathya Sai Organization provides a beautiful platform for cultivating a whole-hearted relationship with our Master, through bhajans and other devotional activities, study classes, seva and education projects, workshops and so forth. Swami says, “*None of you are here on your own. You are brought here because of Me, because of My will.*” To keep Swami at the centre of our heart and our actions is the true worship ... with our life itself as His altar.

In this year’s issue of Sai Sarathi, devotees share their stories about their relationship with Swami, the Master, who not only undertook hugely impressive works, such as the Water Project or the Super-Specialty Hospital, as demonstrations of His love for humanity, but also touched and transformed millions of lives, reminding them time and again to look within and to reflect on their true identities as “Embodiments of Love.”

May each and every one of us find ever-expanding space for Swami in our heart, and may this blessed bond take us from falsehood to Truth, from darkness to Light, life after life.

Poonam Saritani

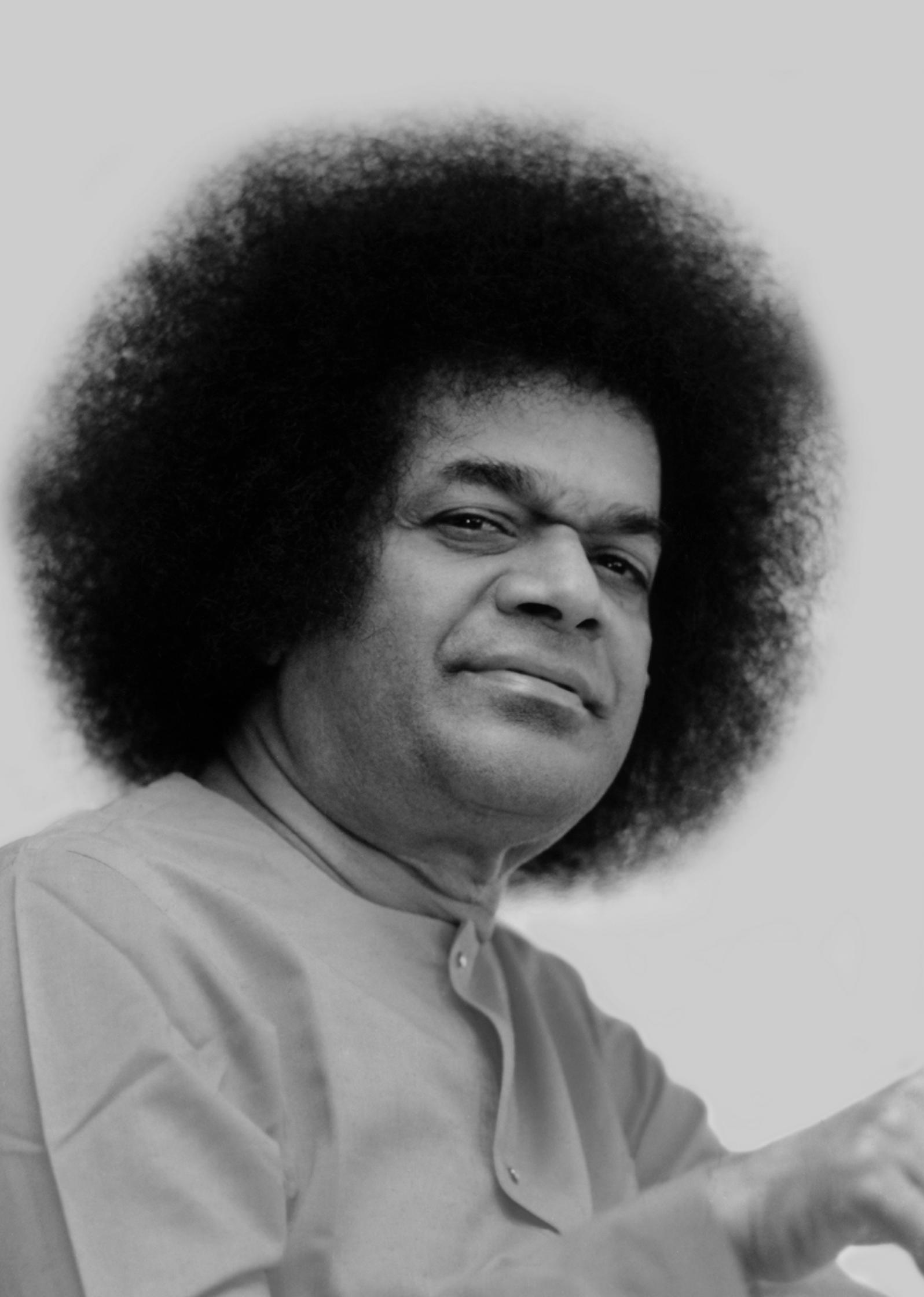
National Council President

* extracted from *Taking Flight*, by Anthony de Mello, SJ

Dedicated with Love and Reverence at the Divine Lotus Feet of
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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DIVINE DISCOURSE

SANCTIFY YOUR LIFE WITH LOVE

When man comes out of the mother's womb, he does not bring any money with him.

Money does not follow him either when he departs from the world.

Even a millionaire has to partake of salt and rice.

He cannot swallow gold to satiate his hunger.

One may feel proud of his wealth, but he cannot take even a single pie
with him when he leaves the world.

Just as man enjoys the honey collected by the bees, the wealth one amasses
may ultimately fall in the hands of either donga (thief) or dora (king).

(Telugu Poem)

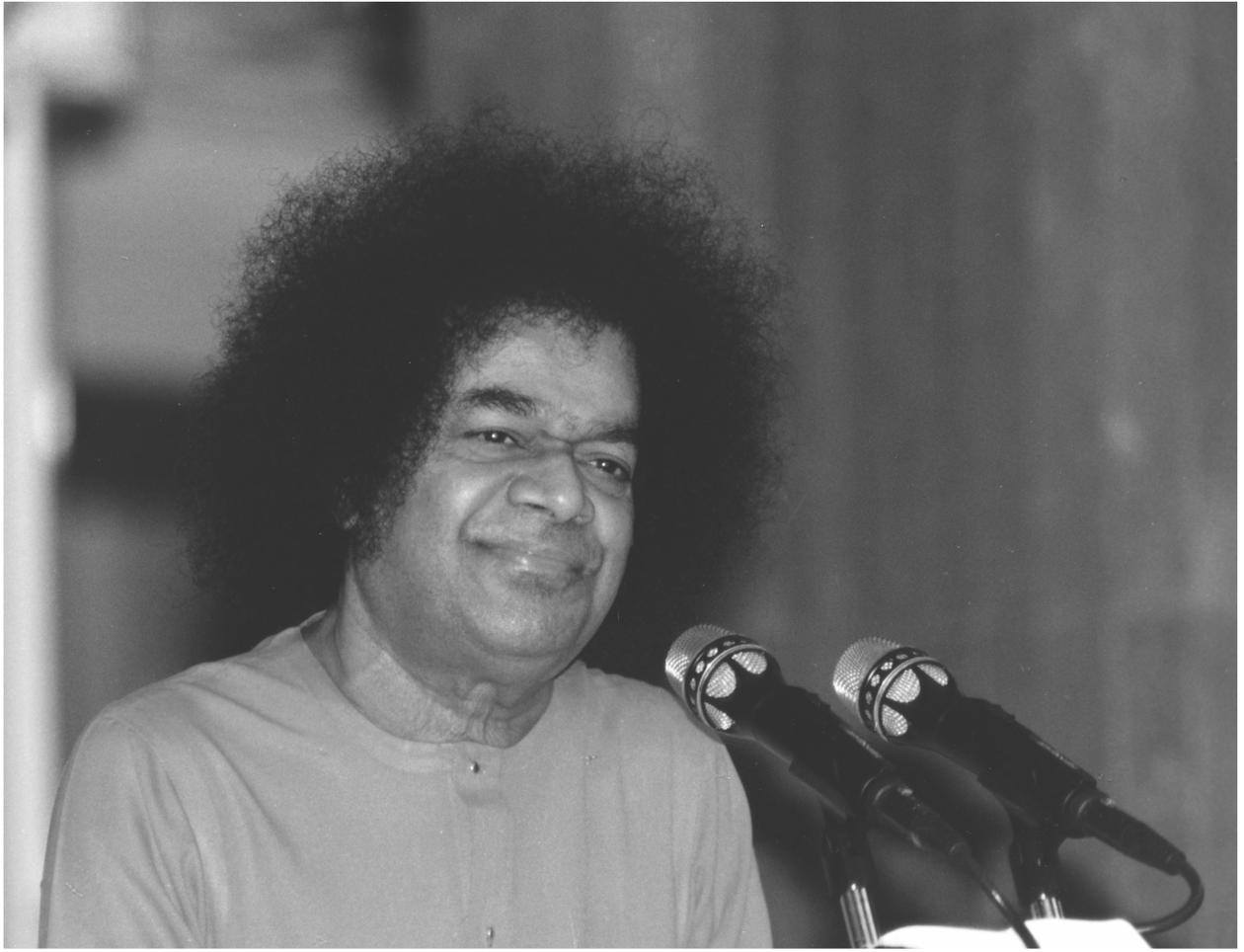
It is said: *Deho devalaya proktho jeevo devah sanathanah* (the body is a temple and the indweller in the body is God). In every temple, we find a bell. But, the bell present in the temple of a human body is not visible outside. This bell is known as anahati. It is not a bell that one can ring. However, it rings continuously on its own, day in and day out as long as life remains in the human body. This is nothing but the human heart. When the bell stops ringing, the body becomes lifeless. Then, we call the body a savam (corpse). When the bell is ringing, the body is considered to be sivam (auspicious).

The entire universe is the temple of God. In this temple of the universe, one can continuously hear the sound of the bell, Om. That is why God is described as *Sabda Brahmamayi, Characharamayi, Jyotirmayi, Vangmayi, Nityanandamayi, Paratparamayi, Mayamayi and Sreemayi* (the embodiment of sound, movable and immovable, light, speech, eternal bliss, transcendental, delusion and wealth). Today, instead of attuning ourselves to that sacred sound of Om, we are lending our ears to worldly talk and vain gossip. We are unable to listen to the divine voice of *Akhandamayi Satchidananda Swarupa* (God, the embodiment of existence, consciousness and bliss).

Once upon a time in the temple of Visweswara in Kasi, the pujari was offering arati to the deity. Suddenly, a big gold plate fell from above. The pujari was surprised and happily picked it up to have a closer look at it. There was an inscription on the plate, which read as follows: "It should be given to the greatest devotee. One who does not chant the Divine Name is not qualified to get it." Then the pujari thought to himself, "Everyday, I am performing Sahasra Lingarchana and Abhishekam to the Lord. I am sanctifying my time by chanting the sacred mantras from the four Vedas. Can there be a greater devotee than me?" When such ego and pride clouded his mind, the gold plate turned into an earthen one.

From that day onward, whoever visited the temple was asked to touch the plate to find out if he deserved to receive the gold plate. But it so happened that the plate would turn into an earthen one whenever somebody touched it. This continued for a few days.

There was a devotee who always chanted the Name of God, but did not perform any other sadhana (spiritual exercises), like japa (soft repetition of the name), thapa, dhyana (meditation), etc. He had no desires. He had achieved dama (sense



control). One day he visited the temple. On being requested by the pujari to touch the plate, he said, "Sir, I don't have any desires. Hence, I don't want to touch it."

The pujari requested him to touch the plate at least for his satisfaction. The devotee did not want to displease the pujari and, therefore, he touched the plate. No sooner did he touch it then it started shining with added brilliance. People who were witness to this event surrounded him and started asking, "Oh noble soul! What is the method of worship you follow, what is the sadhana you perform?" Then he replied, "I have not performed any japa, thapa, yajna or yaga (sacrifices or rituals). I only serve the poor. They are very dear to God."

**Neither by penance nor by pilgrimage
nor by study of scriptures nor by japa can
one cross the ocean of life. One can achieve it only
by serving the pious.**

(Sanskrit Verse)

From then onward, many rich people started visiting Kasi to see this devotee. Wherever there are rich people, it is but natural that the poor also gather, begging for alms from the rich. This devotee was moved on seeing their pathetic condition and resolved to himself, "God loves the poor very much. That is why He has drawn so many of them to His abode. God will be pleased only when they are looked after well. That is what I love to do. I will be happy only when I am able to alleviate the suffering of these poor people and make them happy."

From then on, he continued to serve the poor and the needy with greater devotion and enthusiasm. This was an eye-opener for the rich who had gathered there.

Even a millionaire has to partake of salt and rice. He cannot swallow gold to satiate his hunger. One may feel proud of his wealth, but he cannot take even a single paise with him when he leaves the world. Such being the case, why should one struggle to amass wealth? Instead, it is better

that one strives to attain divine grace. When you contemplate on God all the time, continuously with single-minded devotion, He will take care of all your needs. This was what the devotee taught to all those who had assembled there.

The money we accumulate will not follow us. To whom will it go ultimately? Nobody knows. It is not possible to take even a paisa with us. You have to undertake righteous deeds and earn merit so as to deserve divine grace. When you are born out of your mother's womb, you do not find any garland round your neck. But there is one garland surely. Brahma strings together the consequences of all your past deeds, be they good or bad, into a heavy garland and puts it round your neck.

Nobody can come into the world without that garland of karma. But man forgets this truth and always craves for pleasures and comforts. How long can the worldly pleasures last?

***Ma Kuru Dhana Jana Yauvana Garvam,
Harathi Nimesbath Kalah Sarvam***

(Do not be proud of your wealth, progeny and youth; the tide of time may destroy them in a moment.)

People feel proud of their youth and wealth, but these are momentary. Realising this truth, we have to accumulate the wealth of divine grace.

After imparting such sacred teaching to the people around him, the devotee started coming out of the temple. As he stepped out, the gold plate also followed him. Along with the plate, all the coins started rolling behind him. Then the beggars started going behind him, asking for the money. The devotee said, "My dear ones, what is the use of asking me, God is the guardian of all. He is the richest of all. Hence, pray to Him." As he was moving away, many coins started falling from the gold plate. The beggars collected those coins.

The devotee went into a state of bliss and closed his eyes. He had the vision of Lord Visweswara. He prayed, "Oh Lord Visweswara, You are the master of the whole universe. Can't You take care of these poor people? Please shower Your grace on them." To pray for the welfare of all with selfless love is the noblest prayer.

The devotee had no trace of selfishness in him. He prayed for others with selfless love. Hence, God was pleased with him. You should always pray in a selfless manner. Only such a prayer will melt God's heart. There is no point in praying to God with worldly objectives. God, who is the embodiment of love, resides in our hridaya (heart). Hridaya is known as anahati. It is the bell that rings continuously. God residing in our heart keeps it ringing. We should listen to the sound of that bell.

Our scriptures have prescribed nine paths of devotion:

Sravanam (listening),
Kirtanam (singing),
Vishnusmaranam (contemplating on Vishnu),
Padasevanam (serving His Lotus Feet),
Vandanam (salutation),
Archanam (worship),
Dasyam (servitude),
Sneham (friendship),
Atmanivedanam (self-surrender).

Self-surrender is the true offering that you have to make to God. He is not interested in the worldly offerings you make. What you have to offer to God is the same heart that He has given you.

**O God, I offer the heart
that You have given me.**

**What else can I offer at Your Lotus Feet?
Please accept my salutations.**

(Telugu Poem)

God is not interested in the wealth you have earned or accumulated. He has no dearth of wealth. He is Vishnu Swarupa. When Goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, herself resides on His chest, what is it that you can offer Him? The Pakshi Vahana (Lord Vishnu who has Garuda as His vehicle) has Goddess Lakshmi on His chest. Why should He ask for bhiksha (alms) from others? Hence, you don't need to give anything to God. The sacred heart that He has given you should be given back to Him.

Due to the effect of the Kali Age, people are not prepared to offer their heart to God, that which He has given them. They are offering the wealth they have accumulated. How can you make such a low and mean offering? You should offer your heart to

God. That is called Anahata Dharma. This is the true treasure that we have to safeguard always.

Due to the effect of Kali Age, devotion and detachment have also become artificial. People are trying to please others, but not God. You have to undertake activities that are pleasing to God. If you go by your own likes and dislikes, how can God be pleased with you? What God likes the most is Anahata Prema. Your hridaya (heart) should overflow with love, sacrifice and bliss. You may make any number of offerings but if you do not offer your hridaya to God, He will not accept them. He may pretend to have accepted those offerings, but He will throw them away.

You should offer Him that which pleases Him. That is hridaya, which is called Anahati. It is the centre of love and bliss. In fact, it is the basis of everything. If you do not offer such a sacred heart to God, what is the use of other offerings? God is not interested in such artificial offerings. If you come across poor people, give them what they require. If they are shivering in the cold, give them a blanket. You should give them what they need, but not what you would like to give them.

One day, Mother Easwaramma told Me, "Sathya! Your name and fame have spread far and wide. The whole world is coming to You. Please bestow peace on the world with Your Sankalpa (Will)." I told her, "*It is not that I have to make a Sankalpa for world peace. Each one has to attain peace by himself, because man by nature is the embodiment of peace. He*

is the embodiment of truth. He is the embodiment of love."

You have to manifest your love. You have to experience peace within. You have to follow the path of truth. *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara* (speak truth and practise righteousness). You can achieve anything when you follow this principle.

We should not criticise others. We should not hurt others or make fun of them. We should love all. Do your duty sincerely, then, you will certainly progress in life. Whoever he may be, follow the sacred teachings of our elders. People attribute certain teachings to Rama, Krishna, and so on and so forth. It does not matter whether it is Rama or Krishna; enquire what, why, when, where and under what circumstances they had given those teachings. You should remember the context in which those teachings were imparted and act accordingly. When you obey the command of elders and divine personalities, you will certainly attain exalted position in life.

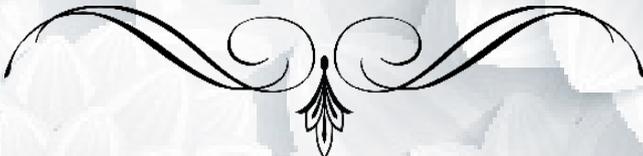
You are bound to face the consequences of your actions. If you talk to others in a harsh manner, it will come back to you as resound. If you hit others, it will come back to you as reflection. Hence, do not hurt others. Do good, be good, see good and speak good. Then, you will be blessed with rich rewards.

6 May 2003, Easwaramma Day



The money we accumulate will not follow us. To whom will it go ultimately? Nobody knows. It is not possible to take even a paisa with us. You have to undertake righteous deeds and earn merit so as to deserve divine grace.

- Sathya Sai Baba



FIRST CAME THE ANSWERS, THEN CAME THE QUESTIONS

DAKSHU S. MANSUKHANI

The bed I lay on was soft, if somewhat lumpy; the sheet below me smelt of fresh grass and the tree above gave out a sweet fragrance of newly opened buds bursting with life. The leaves whispered unheard secrets into the cool breeze that sprang out of nowhere, while the singing birds were matched only by the happy gurgle of the small river to my right. Far away, a spiral of black smoke rose lazily upwards and, still further, clouds with ever-changing shapes raced across the soft blueness of the vast expanse of a brilliant sky, while bright plumed birds flew overhead leaving no footprints.

Spellbound by the peaceful atmosphere, I fell into a dreamless sleep until, suddenly, I felt something cold and slithery fall on my chest. Filled with fear and loathing, I grabbed at the snake that I was too scared to look at; it was lying across my chest and not moving. My skin seemed to crawl with repulsion. And no matter how hard I pulled at it, the snake stuck to me until ... I woke up with a rapidly beating heart and sweating forehead! It took a few minutes but I was able to smile, and a bit later laughingly brush away the experience with "Forget it, that was just a dream!"

The question is: Where did the dream come from and where did it go? After all, obviously I had been fast asleep on my own bed on the 8th floor and, yet, I had felt a 'real' snake was on my chest. Yes, my body was inert but obviously there was one aspect of me which was awake ... the mind. So, the dream had to have come from the mind and on my waking up the dream went back into the mind (the snake was not lurking somewhere in my bedroom, I can assure you!)

So the question really is: What is the mind and what are its functions? If looked at closely, it is the interaction of the mind with the world outside that makes up all my experiences. For example, I have always been so frightened of snakes that I could not even look at a picture of one; I had to turn the page quickly from the corner so as not to come into contact with it!

But, if I can laughingly dismiss the dream, can I just as easily laughingly dismiss the world? Unfortunately, it does not seem as easy to dismiss the mind as it was to dismiss the dream, but Sai gave me a lesson, which is still on-going. It started and ended with three answers of eight words, which I know came directly from Him – there was no forethought about them and no human intervention to attribute them to. Moreover, the answers came before the questions were consciously known or even considered.

I can remember the exact day and duration of the extraordinary euphoria that I experienced minutes after the birth of my second child, a much longed for and beautiful girl. Just 48 hours from 7 p.m. on 15th February 1971, the depression hit, and hit hard, when I returned to a well ordered home that was ready, nanny and all, for the new born child.

I did not realise it immediately but the depression was the result of a tremendous fear that was caused by a few questions that dominated my mind: What have I done? How could I have brought yet another child into this cruel, unfair and harsh world where death can come at any time? Where will I get the strength required to protect her from all the evil that exists in this world?

Thanks to a loving mother who had an abiding faith in Someone I had not even heard of, I was persuaded to attend Sai bhajans at a home close to ours. Was it before or after listening to unfamiliar songs that I stood before a large photograph of a strange looking man, dressed in a long, orange robe and topped with a crown of bushy hair, standing with one hand facing outward, at shoulder level, and with feet that were barely visible? I don't remember.

Not aware of my surroundings, including the people that must have been around me, all I remember is three sentences, given out by a soundless voice in a still mind: "I have reached. I am safe. It's okay". The sound of these three thoughts was crystal clear, as I felt a wave of peace enter me from the very top of my head and travel through my body at lightning speed, leaving me in absolute peace.

This inexplicable joy lasted just until the next morning and then ... it was back to the usual business of crying and being depressed. But this state wore itself out and I began to enjoy the new baby who was now about 6 weeks old. And the strange thing is that I completely forgot these three sentences in the excitement of shifting home from New Delhi to Bombay, attending a family wedding and then settling down in a comfortable two bedroom apartment. I forgot for the next 10 years!

But, unknown to me, the 'journey' of change – if not transformation – had begun. Once again introduced to Sai Baba, I kept busy with Bal Vikas work, actively participating in activities of the Ladies Wing of the Sai Organisation and attending study groups, trying all the while to read Sai literature, which at that time I felt was the best sleeping tablet!

It was not until I moved to HK ten years later that it suddenly hit me: Sai gave answers (the three sentences) but what are the questions? 10 years after the answers were given, the questions became clear to me in Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. I got a shock, almost physical in nature, when I was confronted with an empty plot of land at the place where a huge, perfectly sound building had stood just a few months ago. Contrast that with India,

where I had spent my entire life, where 'eternity' lay ahead for everybody and nobody was ever in a hurry! In India, even the busy paanwala (beetle leaf seller) at the corner of the street did not change his paraphernalia for years on end. Here, within the space of the time it took me to finish a packet of spices a whole building had just vanished!

Was there no permanence anywhere? Where were the enduring things that did not change over the long-term? Where was the permanence that I was looking for? It certainly was not in my external surroundings, nor in the family where the children were growing up faster than I liked and certainly not in my mind, which was constantly chasing even newer fancies. Apparently, I had to find that permanent abode elsewhere, perhaps in myself, since it was not even enough visiting Prashanti Nilayam, Puttaparthi, yearly and praying to Sai daily.

And that is when the true meaning of the three answers began to be revealed. How? Not through frequent trips to Parthi for darshan, but through a deep and intense study of the Vedas, of which the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads are the most revealing, and on which all Sai's discourses are based.

It came after the purification of the mind when it was better understood that karma meant that all actions, not just volunteer work, from cooking for the family, visiting old age homes and prisoners, as well as attending social functions, could be converted into Karma Yoga through the simple but effective means of dedicating all to God, without a sense of doership (ego), and by not expecting any rewards for one's actions. It meant surrendering good and bad, like and dislike, to our Beloved Sai. Bhakti, devotion, of course underpinned all the karma and shraavan and mananan (listening to Masters and contemplating on what they said as they explained the scriptures) made up the essential triad.

Please forgive a small digression here but I need to explain the difference between the capital "I" and the small "i", which actually indicates "me", whom I am going to call "D". "I" is the Universal Self, Atma, unborn, undying, Eternal (Amritam), unconditioned by time, space, objects

and circumstances, and identical in nature to Brahman, the pure consciousness. Note that Swami refers to Himself as “I”, just as we all do in our ignorant day-to-day prattle. The difference is that when Swami refers to “I” He includes you, D, all animals, plants, minerals, elements, et al, i.e. He means the Universal Self. But when D uses the “I”, she indicates her limited, selfish individuality.

The capital “I” needs no transformation as it is perfection Itself; it is the mind of “D” that, with right effort, can be made to reduce the Tamas (ignorance, darkness, inertia, laziness) by the introduction of the activity of Rajas, influenced and dominated by Sathwa, the quality of light and knowledge, for any change to take place.

The first answer D heard was “I have reached”. As already mentioned “I” is universal, pure consciousness and is the beginning, middle and end of the universe, and does not need a goal. Therefore, the individual D has to find the goal, the purpose of life. Is there a goal? Yes, there is and it is called moksha, or freedom. “To be free is your birth right,” He emphatically and unequivocally proclaims.

And how would D get what is rightly hers to attain? Sai goes onto say *“When you guide your steps along the path illumined by the universal unbound dharma (Sanathana Dharma) you will be really free; if you stray away from the light, you will get bound.”*

So, first, through study and contemplation, D has to understand what Sanathana Dharma is, and then only can the goal be reached. What is the Sanathana Dharma? In a nutshell, as explained by Shri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, “See Me in all and see all in Me” is a simple but most satisfying Bhakti way, and Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman) is the more complicated, yet just as satisfying way, through mediation.

The second answer was: “I am safe”. So the question is what is it that D fears, from which D seeks safety? Death of the body, or at least its corollary, and pain and suffering are the most immediate fear. Loss of loved ones or relationships and loss of wealth, name and fame are some of the others. Again an understanding of the Truth through the scriptures will lead D to realise that D is not the

body, mind, intellect complex, but that D is whole, complete. That what she considers herself to be, the Jiva, is just a figment of imagination, delusion (moha), and the only Reality is the Self. D will see that just as D was able to laugh away the snake in the dream, D will discover the balance to see things as they are and not as D wants them to be, and laugh away any and all misfortunes and fears.

The third answer: “It’s okay”. Question: What’s okay? Answer: Everything is okay because Sat is the basis of the Universe, of which D is functioning as a part. Ananda (bliss) is D’s essential nature. Everything else which involves the body (used in and for all activities), mind (senses and emotions) and the intellect (all thoughts and ideas) is illusory, passing moments, or like impressions which are written on sand and easily washed away with dedication to and love for Bhagwan Baba.

It is okay for heart disease to cut short D’s husband’s successful career, for wealth to be gained and lost, for there to be changes in our circumstances and for misfortune to sometimes overcome the children, just as it is okay for there to be sudden spurts of happiness for no apparent reason – because D is, in truth, not the BMI (body, mind, intellect complex). “I am The Self/Atma, Eternal and Immortal”.

It is okay that there has been no transformation and that only a small but constantly moving change has taken place in the mind, for, after all, D is the Atma (Sai cannot be wrong in calling D and everyone else who listens to Him keenly “*Divya Atma Swarupa*”, Embodiment of the Divine Atma).

It is okay to occasionally feel fear because, as time goes by, the thought that “I am not alone” arises and changes to I am All-One.

Om Sai Ram

Dakshu S. Mansrekhani

HIS WILL, MY WAY

RAJASHEKAR BADAM

Contemplating on the theme of this article, “My Transformation”, I started reviewing the pages of my life that have for long periods been untouched and unread. With this long overdue review, I am able to see a thread behind many incidents in my life. I am unsure where to start and so I will look at the relevant chapters of my life chronologically.

Where there is the “WILL”, there is a way

It is said that true life starts when attachment ends but, for me, my true life started only after the “Sai Student” tag was attached to me. Yes, this is how others often identify me, but I pray for the time (in whichever of my lives to come) when He identifies me as a Sai Student.

Let me come straight to the point. When I was in my late teens, I did not know of Sathya Sai Baba, except for His name. I was not a very good boy: I neither knew the meaning of devotion or even what Love meant.

After my high school, as I was considering universities for my higher studies, I came to know of Swami’s university at Puttaparthi. Without any real interest in studying there, I applied to the university only for the sake of having a fun-filled journey there and back for the entrance examination with friends who had also applied there.

After a jovial trip to Puttaparthi, I completed the examination on the second day of my journey. In the second round of screening, students who had successfully completed the entrance exam had each

to undergo a personal interview. I was sure that I would not get through the entrance examination and so I started planning for the return trip home.

My friends and I slept in the shed during that visit. Since I was the only person who was not from the Sai fold, whilst the others prayed for good results the following morning (I remember they were to be published at 4 a.m. on the third day) I slept without any prayers. Actually, I may even have wished I would not gain an interview, as it was never my intention to get admitted when I started this journey to Puttaparthi.

That night I had a dream in which I saw my name among the list of students who had got selected for the interview. I woke with a jolt to the heart and I quickly woke up a friend who was sleeping on the next bed to tell him about the dream. If the dream was a jolt then his reply was like the shock of my life. He said: “It’s not just a dream but in reality your name is there in the list of students who got selected for the next round of interview.”

After this unexpected event, I went to the university in the early morning to check if my friend’s words which were indeed true. They were, but I was utterly unprepared for the interview and I returned home after that. I confess that even before the interview, I had told my parents that I was not interested in joining this university even if I qualified for admission.

One fine day, about 2 weeks after the interview, I got a letter of admission from the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. To be honest, I was reluctant to even look at the letter, and after I did, I literally threw the letter aside. I told my parents

that I did not want to join and so I started hunting for expensive engineering courses.

I did gain admission to another university and I just about fixed my mind on going there. About one month after I received the letter from SSIHL, I remember it was 30th May 2006, the day before the final day to join SSSIHL, my grandfather suggested I seek advice from one of my school teachers regarding the decision which I had made. I did so out of respect for my grandfather but I half-heartedly briefed my teacher about my thoughts on my higher education.

The teacher was completely aware of the financial condition of my family and he advised me to consider the financial pressure that my family would be under once my younger brother completed his high school. He reminded me of my younger brother's need for financial assistance for his studies the very next year. He, therefore, advised me to join the SSSIHL on a short trial basis without any commitment to the system of education there, and he said that depending on how I liked it there I could either continue or quit, and join the other engineering university to which I had been admitted.

The idea was good and, together with my father, I immediately travelled to Bangalore and the Brindavan campus, with just enough things for 3 days, which was the maximum time I thought I could bear that place.

Swami was in Brindavan on the day I joined SSSIHL. That day, my father suddenly felt that it was a life long opportunity for him to have Swami's darshan. As my father was telling me of his wish to have Swami's darshan, he heard the darshan music and immediately decided to make his way to the Sai Ramesh Hall. He paused to ask me to join him for darshan but I expressed disinterest. Little did I know that after that evening, I would run for each and every of His darshans for the next seven years.

From this episode I learnt that when He WILLS it even a person without any devotion and love will be pulled in to commence the journey of self-transformation. Hence, where there is the "Will" (His will) there is a way, whether you seek it or not.

Coming back to the story, over the three days a wonderful realisation dawned on me: that education is not merely for living but for life. I understood this from the various activities and teachings that were vibrant in the atmosphere of Brindavan. And, yes, I started running along with other students for Trayee sessions (a gathering of students and staff in Swami's residence for His divine discourse) after regular bhajans, although in the beginning it was not very willingly but more because of the rituals of university students.

Swami soon left for Puttaparthi as He had a lot of work in Puttaparthi. Days passed and slowly I started loving the place and the discipline.

Ninu sparshinchina rayi Ahalyaga maarunanta

(Your touch can transform
even rock into Ahalya)

It is said that in the Ram Avatar, a stone that was Ahalya was transformed when it was touched by Rama's feet. (Ahalya was the wife of the sage Guatama Maharishi and after she was deceived into adultery by Indra, the king of the heavens, in the guise of Gautam, she was turned into a stone by her husband's curse. From that condition she was delivered by the touch of Rama's foot).

Actually, the transformation is not because of the greatness of the devotee who is transformed but rather it is the power of Divine Grace when it touches the devotee. Swami says that "*If you take 1 step towards Me I will take 100 steps towards you,*" but in my case I hesitated to even take that single step. He was benevolent to pour His divine grace even when I did not ask for it.

Just as in the case of Ahalya, when I was touched with that same divinity, I changed. Though not transformed completely, for sure I am a much better human being now.

Service is the first step in Spiritual Sadhana

The first quote of Swami that attracted me was "*Hands that Serve are Holier than the Lips that Pray*". I was highly motivated to do some service activity and this led me to join a self-reliance group (which is mandatory for all students) and to take work

at a shopping centre run by the Institute. I saw a lot of scope for service, not only for students but also for devotees who visit the Brindavan ashram during Swami's stay in Brindavan. I started liking the work and used to look forward for any spare time to work there outside my normal schedule. I carried out those duties more as a hobby rather than a duty.

Gradually, I learnt about Swami's multi-dimensional welfare activities around the world and a sense of respect and love for Him slowly grew in me, but I still saw Him more as a great person than as the Almighty Himself.

Apart from serving at the shopping centre, I loved taking part in the local village welfare activity, or "Grama seva", during the Dussehra festival – this was when Swami sent His grace in abundance to all the nearby villages in the form of food and clothes.

Whenever I look back and see the changes that these activities brought in me, I see my metamorphosis from an insensitive, disinterested, heartless lad to a human being with the power of discrimination. These activities softened my heart and made me love everyone in the same way I love myself.

More than anything, Swami practically taught me the Truth of what He once said *"On the spiritual path, the first step is selfless service. Through selfless service, one can realize the Divinity that is all this creation,"* SSS 10.32: November 20, 1970.

The years passed and I started believing in Swami, but breaking a few bad habits was a tough task for me. I obtained my Bachelor's Degree and I then joined SSSIHL Puttaparthi to read for my Masters in Chemistry.

As I said earlier, joining a self-reliance group is mandatory for all students. As I had enjoyed the happiness that came from seva, I was looking for similar opportunities in other areas. Swami guided me to join the "Hostel Maintenance" group, which was a large group dedicated to activities like carpentry, electrical, plumbing and making sets for all the cultural activities in the Mandir.

This group always worked back stage and did not expect any appreciation from anyone. The sole

motto of the group was: *"Bear all and do nothing; hear all and say nothing; give all and take nothing; serve all and be nothing."* The only purpose of our activity was to see a smile on His face. Sometimes we even used to miss Swami's darshan because of our hectic work schedules in managing our studies and the maintenance work. But then, Swami used to set aside occasions where we would get special darshan.

During Shivaratri celebrations in 2010, due to the huge number of devotees, Swami sent word to the group to install projectors and screens at various places in the ashram so that everyone could enjoy His divine darshan. We all worked overnight so that by the morning we could finish. After a small nap, we went back at darshan time to the various places where the projectors had been set up to ensure the transmission was successful.

Surprisingly, Swami came directly to the Poornachandra Auditorium before going to the Sai Kulwant Hall. He saw the arrangements and was visibly happy with the way we had installed the equipment. He enquired whether all the events in the Sai Kulwant Hall could be seen from where He stood and our teacher in-charge nodded affirmatively with great enthusiasm. Then Swami made a statement that made tears of joy roll down from my eyes. He said: *"I am very happy as My boys give happiness to thousands gathered here."*

I realized that though we had been working day and night to make Swami happy, He had been working through us to keep us happy. Later, I understood that Swami gives a lot not because we are worthy of it but to make us worthy.

Swami sows in our lives the seeds of transformation and the change is a continuous process. Now, I unquestioningly believe in Swami's omnipresence and omnipotence; my transformation is the proof that He is the creator. I have discovered that in each life we have something good to learn until we are worthy of merging in Him. Let us make the most of this and every life.

Jai Sai Ram

Rajashekar Badar

FAITH IN MY FAITH

MARGARET TAPLIN

Writing this article is, in itself, an example of one of the greatest impacts Sai Baba has had on my life – which is slowly and gradually beginning to teach me to have faith in my faith. Today is 1st September and the deadline for submission is 7th September; usually I have my articles well-and-truly written and proofread this close to the deadline. But this is the first time I have been “stuck” with less than a week to go.

I have a rough idea of the message I want to convey, but even as I start to write I do not have a clue of how it is going to develop. I have found some quotations about ‘Faith’ but I have no idea how they will be used. I have been asking Him for several weeks for ideas but they have not come as yet. From my previous experiences, I know – or think I know – that as long as I make the effort to do my best, He will step in at the last moment and the article will be written.

However, at the back of my mind, I still have a slightly nagging doubt. “Yes, I know You have always stepped in to solve my problems in the past, but could this just be that one time when You are going to leave me in the lurch?” Time after time He has done this to me – He has pushed me right up to the line or left it until the very last minute, and only after He has been satisfied that I had invested my maximum effort has He stepped in to resolve the issue in a way that I could never have anticipated.

When I made my first visit to Puttaparthi in 1991, I wrote my first letter to Baba, listing several aspects of myself that I wanted His help on. I carried it with me to darshans but He did not come anywhere near me. After a few days, He went to Mumbai for a week and so our group decided to wait in Bangalore for His return. I had a clear message that during that week my “homework” was to work

on the issues I had described in the letter, meditate on them and do my best to resolve them myself.

One of my requests was to experience Divine Love. I worked hard at meditating on this for the whole week and I really felt that I had made some progress. In the first darshan after His return, He took the letter and, in an instant, I felt a massive blow to my solar plexus that turned into the most incredible, encompassing feeling of Love. This was the first indication that He was not going to fix my problems for me instantly whenever I asked, but rather that He would facilitate me and empower me to try to first fix them for myself, and only then would He step in with a miracle.

Not once has He let me down or left me without a solution to the problem I have presented to Him. The pattern is always the same: I ask for help, He shows me what I need to do to work on the problem for myself and then, when I have done my utmost, He adds the icing to the cake with truly miraculous outcomes. There must be a lesson for me implicit in this last-minute pattern!

I have to admit that – even though He has always stepped in with a solution at the end – even to this day, whenever I ask for His help with something that I think is important, I still have a question in my mind whether, this time, maybe He just might not help. It is an interesting game that we have been playing for years. Yes, I definitely do have faith in Him but this game is telling me that I am still learning to have ‘Faith in my Faith’, to have faith that when I put my faith in Him, He will guide me in such a way that I will learn and grow in the process, not just go straight to the outcome.

One dictionary defines Faith as “strong or unshakeable belief in something, especially without

proof or evidence”. However, the second part of this definition does not seem to be applicable to me, because He seems to be helping me to develop a faith that is evidence-based. About the development of faith, Baba says: “*First the mind, and then the heart will follow*”. It is only because I have had experiences of His help that I have slowly come to believe and expect that He will be there for me.

I like to hear of other people’s experiences of the miracles He has performed for them, but it is from my own experiences, things happening to ME, that my faith has grown. And my faith has been strengthened the most at the times when I have really wondered if He is going to step in and, if so, when – and then He has.

Recently, I was in the Indian Himalayas and a friend was flying from Delhi to join me – on Air India, which is notorious for cancelling flights in the mountains during monsoon weather. I really did not want my friend to have to make the uncomfortable 12-hour road journey, so I had been reminding Baba all week about keeping the weather clear. He assured me all would be well. Sure enough, the morning of the flight was clear and cloudless, and I could even see the airstrip in the valley clearly from my room. “Phew,” I thought, “Thank you Baba for taking care of this.”

However, later in the morning when boarding should have started in Delhi my friend sent a text: “The plane is here but there seems to be a delay. We seem to be waiting for some kind of a signal.” At that moment the clouds started to roll in until I could barely see out of the window. I phoned the local airport only to be told that they would have to wait an hour before deciding whether to let the flight come, or cancel it. Well, you can imagine what I had to say to Baba, after He had promised me for a whole week that the weather would be clear. How dare He do this to me after I had asked Him so nicely and so many times?

For the whole hour I nagged Him. Suddenly, another text came from my friend: “Boarding now”. At the same moment, the clouds lifted as if they had never been there. They stayed away just long enough for the flight to land, they then rolled in again for the rest of the day. This was a very worldly event but it gave me a clear reminder that once again He had created a situation that caused me to have some doubt in my faith – and once again He

had come good at the eleventh hour! It does seem that He is giving me these experiences in order to win over my mind first.

Baba also says that “*One should not give way to doubts which undermine faith*”. Certainly, as my mind’s faith in my faith grows, I am becoming less and less inclined to give way to the doubts that undermine it.

Baba also says: “*Man has lost faith in himself, so there is no wonder that he has lost faith in God also.*” Is this the reason why He always expects me to invest my best effort before He steps in? Clearly, there is a reason why He always forces me to make the maximum effort first, so this must be an important part of my growth. I suspect this is to test and develop my persistence as He says, “*By persistence even an ant can cover miles of ground. But without making the effort, even an eagle cannot move one inch. Through earnest and diligent effort, anything can be accomplished, however difficult it may be.*” Certainly I am learning this through His game.

Well, it seems that I have come to the end of the article; it has gradually fallen into place and, once again, after I had collected the preliminary information and started to make my own effort, He has helped me to form the ideas! This is yet another step in the process of guiding me to develop faith in my faith further!

Baba defines three types of people who experience faith in different ways: “*The ‘sick’ who call upon the Lord when some calamity befalls them or when they feel temporarily deserted by the usual sources of succor; the ‘dull’ who know that God is an Eternal companion and watchman, but who remember it only off and on when the idea is potent and powerful; and, lastly, the ‘healthy’ who have steady faith in the Lord and who live in His comforting, creative presence always.*”

I hope that the game Baba is playing with me – His leela of pushing me right to the very last moment before He steps in with the solution – is helping me to strengthen my faith to a different level, to the “healthy” category, by pushing and cajoling me to have faith in my faith, not only faith in the Divine but also in my faith, that I will get the grace in the end if I put in the effort.

Om Sai Ram

Margaret Taplin

SURFING THE WAVES OF AWARENESS

ANJU DASWANI

“Embodiments of Love”; “Atma Swaroopa”; “Divya Swaroopa”. These divine appellations touched my heart and stirred strong emotions within me when I first heard them. How can I possibly be that? I am Anju. So why is Baba addressing me as *“Atma Swaroopa”*? Confusion took hold of me temporarily. Thankfully, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s captivatingly sweet words put into motion the wheels of enquiry. There is nothing purer and more perfect than the life and word of my Divine Guru.

At one time, to me life was only about putting in a lot of energy and effort in the material world so as to enjoy the best comforts and to have a ‘good’ time. Socializing and entertainment of any kind were the highlights of my life, and I thought these made life beautiful! Yes, I was happy. But I soon realised that although socialising was fun, the feeling of happiness did not remain for long and soon evaporated to leave a void.

I was not satisfied with this feeling of being happy one day, and experiencing emptiness the next. I began to wonder if I would ever manage to have a fun-filled evening out on the town before sinking peacefully into a luxurious bed at night. I had always done all my homely duties and so I wondered why was I not able to maintain that so-called ‘good’ feeling all the time.

Then I heard Baba say *“First, I will give you what you ask for, later I make you ask for what I have come to give you!”* I was curious to find out what it was that He had really come to give me. So, I decided to put this to the test, thinking it would be very simple to do. I decided I would ask Him for something and I expected He would give it to me,

as He had promised, and then I supposed I would know what He had come to give me. I wondered if He could give more meaning to my life or if my life was always going to be just about socializing and entertainment.

I must have prayed to Swami really hard to clear my doubts because, true to the sayings *‘Ask and you shall receive’* or *‘Knock and the door shall open,’* the Master of Masters answered my prayer. He not only gave me what I had asked for, He gave me much more than I can express in words; He transformed me. He engaged me in a new entertainment – I call it *‘Surfing on the Waves of Awareness’*.

The first opportunity of surfing upon the waves of awareness came through the Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Hong Kong. Swami, in the form of His devotee, Mrs. Dakshu Mansukhani, inspired me to hold Bal Vikas classes and to participate in a selfless service activity at the Mother Teresa’s Home of Love. I am very grateful for both these wonderful opportunities. Let me explain why.

Conducting a Bal Vikas class was an eye opener – I began to see how very important it was for me to first practice the 5 human values (Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence) before I could teach others to practice them. In truth, I was the student.

I always loved my father and would always do whatever he told me to. So when I say I love Baba and look upon Him as my Divine Father, I must follow and practice His teachings. Swami once said that even if one works on any single value, one would be successful in mastering all the other values.

As children, we were always told not to lie, so I thought that the value of 'Truth' is the easiest to work on. I made a commitment to myself and to my Lord Bhagawan that I would practice not telling lies and adhere to the truth.

Consciously, I kept watching and reminding myself to speak the truth. In the beginning, it was a struggle but I took it as a challenge. There were times when I forgot this promise. But luckily, I also felt someone within reminding me of my promise. I continued practicing this value. As days and years passed by, I found myself speaking the truth more easily, and if an untruth had to be told I preferred to be quiet.

I so much appreciated the benefit of remaining quiet that slowly I stopped myself from speaking when there was no need to open my mouth. Because of this, it was easy to take up another *sadhana* – observing *maunam* (silence). This too gave me a sense of calmness. In actual fact, I was doing two things: I remained quiet by not speaking, and by choosing not to speak I was slowly stopping the continuous chatter in the mind. I understood that if the mind does not stop its chatter how could I hear or feel the presence of The Lord?

In this way, I was connecting to the Divine Father, and when I heard and sang "*In the silence of nothing, came this beautiful sound Om, Om, Om, Hari Om*" every word held truth. In silence, I connected to the voice within, just as the saying goes, '*It is only in the depths of silence can the voice of God be heard.*' This *sadhana* has given me immense insight to the world and myself.

Naturally, my faith and love for Baba began to grow each day. I got more exposed to Baba's teachings and I soon learnt that nothing is more important than embarking on a spiritual journey. The journey to God is the ultimate reason for being born as a human being.

From Bal Vikas, I went on to take study classes. Gradually, a change was taking place in my outlook on life. It was not just speaking the truth; I discovered the revelation that this simple, commonly used, word 'Truth' had so much depth and meaning in it. It was the ultimate Truth of who "I" really am. This realisation was a direct

result of my study classes, where I had to express my thoughts aloud as I facilitated the discussions.

Preparing for the study classes encouraged me to go deeper into the study of the scriptures so as to understand the real meaning of 'Truth'. What a blessing! What a change! Such is the transformative power of the Master's love and teachings. I fail to find the appropriate words to express my gratitude.

On the next wave of awareness I was took up Seva. Previously, whenever I did any action I was always expecting results that had to be to my satisfaction. I even expected words of appreciation, like "Thank you", "Wow! You are so great", "You have done a super duper job", "How did you manage to do it?" and so on. So, when such recognition did not come, I would be upset and annoyed, not only with myself but also with the people around me. This made my life miserable.

I had heard from many Masters and from the scriptures to surrender the fruit of my actions to the Lord. I thought to myself that if I have to offer the fruit, why should I bother to work? It was better not to do anything. So I stopped doing anything. But I could not be quiet for long because it is impossible for anyone to live in the world without doing any action. I was faced with a dilemma: if I worked, my expectations were not fulfilled; and if I did not take any action, I was miserable.

That is when I decided to see what would happen if I acted without expecting any results in return. I adopted the attitude of "*Do your best and leave the rest.*" It was only when I was given the wonderful opportunity to do selfless service, first at Mother Teresa's Home of Love and then at the Sai Baba Centre that I understood the right attitude one needs to have towards any action.

Some of the seva activities were not pleasant at all! Washing the soiled clothes in the homes, cleaning the Centre's toilets and emptying the garbage bins, etc., were things I never had to do in my own home! I asked myself: "Is this the only way to bring me closer to God?" I hoped there were better ways! But with patience and faith in Baba's teachings I continued serving. In this way, tolerance and acceptance became a part of my life. My regular

participation made me feel good because by sharing my time and talent I gained more than I gave.

Doing seva had some very pleasant moments too. I was chosen to be a Treasurer for the Mahila Wing and I enjoyed it because not only did I have a knack for keeping a tally of the money but also I had always felt important when handling money! In my younger days, I thoroughly enjoyed being 'in-charge' and would be elated when chosen to oversee, lead or supervise events.

Bhagawan has recently given me ample opportunities to be 'in-charge'. The most significant ones are being in charge of starting the hot meals cooking seva and supervising the knitting seva. It is clear that Bhagawan continues to give me what I want (to later make me ask for what He has come to give).

Going back to the earlier days, I was responsible for making fresh flower garlands for Swami's birthday and other events. I was chosen to offer prasad and even light lamps at the altar. Once while hanging the garland, my saree caught fire from the diya on the altar. Devotees around me were concerned about my safety, but how can any harm come to me when I am in the Lord's home? Except for a burnt saree there was no harm whatsoever. For the first time, I was totally unconcerned that a brand new expensive saree was totally ruined! A few days later, uncle Martin presented me with a beautiful package. On opening it, I saw that it was a volunteer saree that was only given to a privileged few in those days. Swami made up for the saree by giving me a precious gift that indeed made me feel blessed.

Doing seva has also helped to lessen my strong likes and dislikes. Working hard, especially when hand washing bed sheets and putting them out to dry in the sun, kept me fit and healthy. But I saw myself benefiting in many other ways. I felt my time was being spent in more meaningful ways and, at the same time, I was free from agitation, as I did not expect anything in return.

Although there were no immediate results or rewards, in the form of appreciation or thanks, the inner feeling of joy and happiness was my real

reward. So much so that when I got back to my household chores that joy pervaded all my activities at home. After a seva, I learnt to continue my day with that same inner joy. Gradually, my routine daily activities were done without expectation, so the feeling of joy and happiness multiplied as each day went by.

It was absolutely fulfilling. I appreciated this golden opportunity to serve others without being selfish. My love gradually increased for my fellow beings as I moved away from my personal desires (likes) to doing what I was supposed to do. I understood 'Sharing is Caring', as I shared my time and efforts.

The experiences have been very, very overwhelming. Looking back, truly speaking, He gave me what I needed! I see that Baba's Hand took me from Bal Vikas and Seva to study classes, and in this way I was able to channel my daily monotonous routines into more meaningful events in my life. I am convinced that it is impossible for me to have done this on my own. It clearly proves that Baba is the doer and no person can continue on the spiritual journey as a mere individual. Consequently, I have also learnt to appreciate the value of time and to spend it more wisely.

It has even become easy for me to deal with different types of people unconditionally, for actually there is no difference between the Creator and His creation. I want to learn to express my love to Him in every form I see, hear, and touch, and thereby blossom into a 'seeker'. Only with love and humility can I claim maturity and transformation within me. That is the ultimate goal of my life. To this end my journey continues in gratitude to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

I am blessed and very grateful for His guiding hand on the surf that took me to Awareness. I confess I do not know how to swim but this surf on the wave of Awareness with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has been the most enjoyable entertainment of my life!

Om Sai Ram

Anjura Dasivani

DIVINE DISCOURSE

DO CONSTANT NAMASMARANA FOR MENTAL PEACE

Oh man! You struggle hard in life merely for the sake of filling your belly.
You acquire myriad types of knowledge from various fields.
Examine and enquire for yourself what great happiness you have achieved by
spending all the time from dawn to dusk in acquiring worldly knowledge
and earning wealth, while forgetting God.

(Telugu Poem)

Whether a pauper or a millionaire, one has to eat. But, having attained the sacred human birth, it is unseemly of man to spend his entire life merely for the sake of filling his belly. Why do you not spend a few minutes in the contemplation of God, instead of spending your entire life just to earn a living?

There are, of course, a few people in this land of Bharat (India) who are sanctifying their time and their environment in the contemplation of God, but the vast majority are wasting their births in vain pursuits.

Not only in Srikakulam District but also in many other places all over India there are people who are struggling and straining to eke out their livelihood. In spite of all the effort, they are unable to attain peace, happiness and comfort. Only those who are spending their time in the contemplation of God are able to experience peace and happiness. Those who forget God and spend all their time and energy in mundane pursuits are bound to suffer. Up until this day, nobody has been able to enjoy mental peace and physical comfort in full measure.

The body is like a water bubble; it is nothing but a bag full of bones. Mind is like a mad monkey. It

is a mistake to strive for the happiness of such a physical body and wavering mind. As long as one is alive one should make efforts to keep the body healthy, so that one may not cause inconvenience to others. Many spend their entire life for the sake of physical comforts and pleasures. It is only a few who are not concerned with their mind and body but are centred on eternal peace and happiness.

Human birth is meant to experience divinity and not to crave for fleeting pleasures. Human body is a divine gift that is being put to improper use instead of its proper purpose of adoring God. Do not be under the mistaken notion that body is meant only for eating and enjoying physical pleasures. Certain duties have been assigned to man; by performing them he will be able to experience happiness at the level of the body, mind, senses and spirit.

One should enquire what the purpose of human birth is. The goal of human birth is to work for release from the cycle of birth and death. This body is a den of dirt and is prone to diseases; it is subject to change from time to time and it cannot cross the ocean of Samsara. The body should be used as an instrument to rise from the level of humanness to divinity. Human life is sanctified only when we experience divinity.

There are many people who are making efforts in this direction. But only a few are able to realise the truth and achieve the goal. One may undertake any type of activities but one should always aspire to attain peace of mind. Without peace of mind, whatever enterprise that man undertakes will only add to his restlessness.

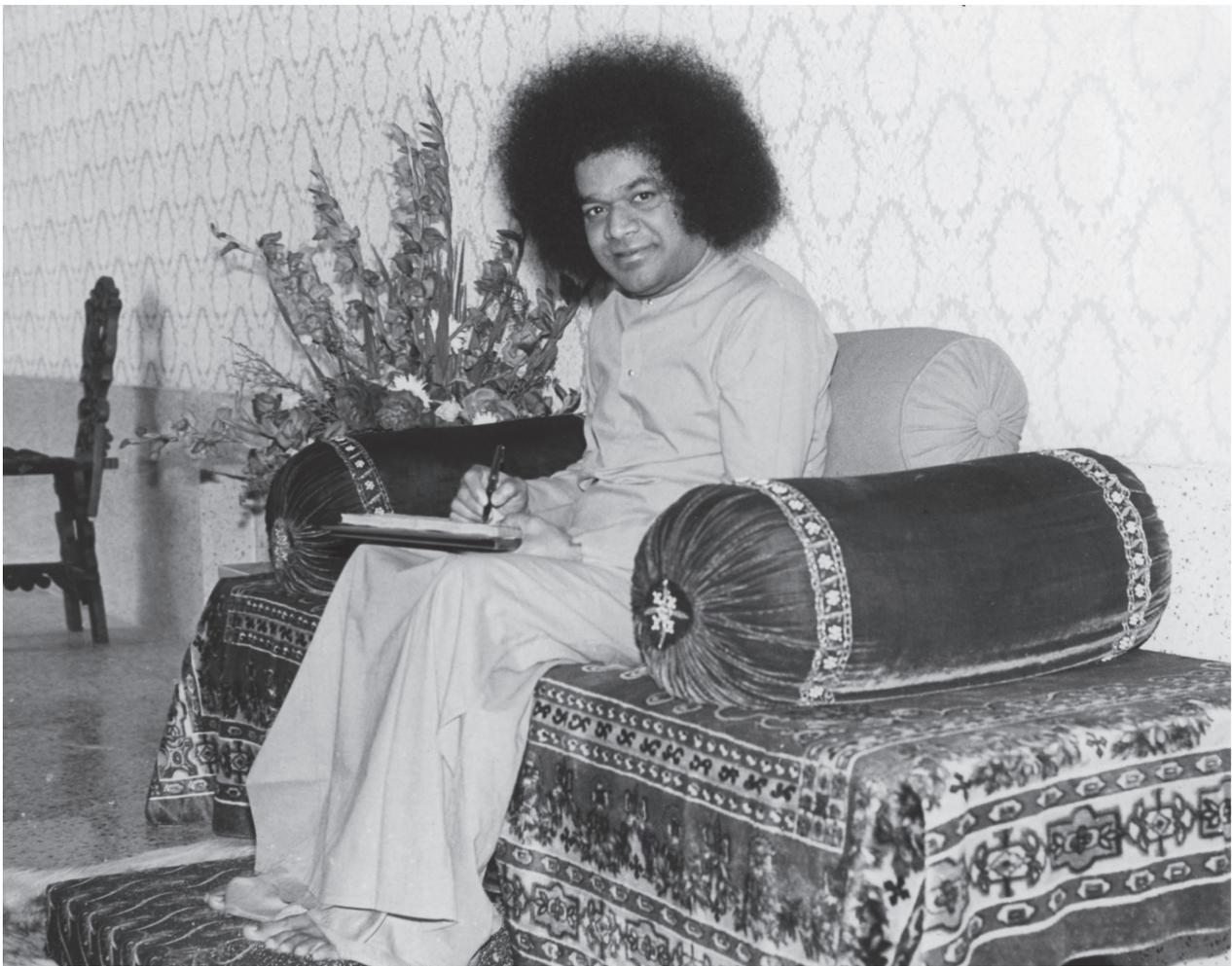
Do not give room to worry and anxiety. God is not stonehearted, He will certainly take care of your needs. His heart is filled with compassion. Swami's concern for you is hundred times more intense than the concern you have for yourselves. You need not be worried at all. Develop the feeling that difficulties and suffering are for your own good. Even insurmountable difficulties will vanish like thin mist when you have firm conviction.

Hence, do not be unduly perturbed about your problems. Difficulties come and go. Not only the poor, even a millionaire cannot escape from difficulties. Swami confers His blessings on you so that you will be relieved of your suffering soon.

You may consult the elders of your villages and take the help of those who are willing to cooperate with you. I will see to it that there is plenty of water available in your mountainous area. Do not be depressed or bogged down by difficulties. Having put on the vesture of the human body, one cannot escape from difficulties.

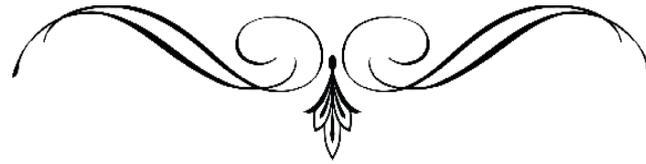
The physical body may undergo suffering but you should make efforts to attain peace of mind. Mind is the basis for happiness for everyone. All physical comforts will be of little use without peace of mind. Only through contemplation of God can you attain peace of mind and not by any other means. Hence, chant the Name of God, incessantly unmindful of the difficulties that come in your way.

It is because of your contemplation on God's Name that you have been able to experience peace in spite of the innumerable difficulties you faced. God is the refuge for the poor and the forlorn. He is always with them through all the vicissitudes of life. Do not think that God is in some distant land,





God is by your side always. In fact, He is present in the inner recesses of your heart. Never think that God is away from you at any point of time. Neither friends nor relatives can come to your rescue. God is your sole refuge; He will protect you under all circumstances.



God is by your side always. In fact, He is present in the inner recesses of your heart. Never think that God is away from you at any point of time. Neither friends nor relatives can come to your rescue. God is your sole refuge; He will protect you under all circumstances.

In spite of numerous difficulties, Bharatiyas (Indians) never swerved from the Godward path. If Bharat occupies a pivotal position among all nations, it is only because of Bharatiyas' one-pointed devotion to God. There are many affluent countries where people lead a luxurious life but they are unable to attain peace of mind. It is the good fortune of Bharatiyas' that they are able to enjoy peace of mind. Their devotion to God is responsible for this. Since ancient times, the culture of Bharat has been protecting the Bharatiyas' in all respects. Its glory and grandeur defy all description.

One who has peace of mind will have moral strength. Hence, chant the Divine Name constantly. Yesterday, you went round the entire village singing the glory of God and entered the portals of Prasanthi Nilayam; you experienced peace of mind. It is not possible to experience peace by any other means. Hence, never forget God. Sanctify your time by chanting His Name. Contemplation of God should be man's constant endeavour.

There may be some jealous people who will try to dissuade you from chanting God's Name. They

say, "What is the use of chanting God's Name? It will not help us to eke out our livelihood. We have to work hard for our survival. So, stop chanting God's Name." Do not pay heed to such narrow-minded people. Never forget God's Name.

You may not be aware that people all over the world in all villages are facing hardships. They are suffering from physical ailments and mental agitations. Only Bharatiyas' are able to enjoy peace of mind because of their devotion to God. There is no happiness greater than experiencing peace of mind.

Mental peace can be obtained only by constant contemplation of God.

This cannot be purchased from the market. It is only by constant contemplation of God that mental worries can be overcome.

This is the experience of people all over the world.

Contemplation of God alone can bring about mental peace and happiness.

No other means can achieve this.

**To be born is a worry,
to be on the earth is a worry;
World is a cause of worry and death too;
Entire childhood is a worry and
so is the old age;**

**Life is a worry, failure is a worry;
All actions and difficulties cause worry;
Even happiness too is a mysterious worry.**

(Telugu Poem)

Contemplation on God is the right royal path that will remove all types of worries. Therefore, do not try other means for achieving mental peace and get into trouble and worry. March on along the divine and glorious path. All the karmas (actions) in the spiritual field are meant to bring peace and happiness to us. They are not intended to trouble us. Mental peace can be achieved only by performing one's own duty, not by any other means.

Karma brings about a result and that result brings happiness and peace. Even when you are undergoing difficulties, always think that they are meant to bring you happiness. Every human being undergoes difficulties, only to enjoy happiness later. However, he does not realise this during the period of suffering. But, in course of time, when suffering ends and happy days arrive, he would realise the truth. Hence, always remember the truth that sorrows and difficulties are a prelude to happy days ahead. In fact, real happiness comes out of suffering only.

Love is the only property that always grows – the more you expend, the more it grows; it never diminishes. Suppose you go up a hill and sing the glory of God, the Divine vibrations will reach a large area and the people hearing the namasmarana, even from a distance, will feel very happy. Divine music can confer solace even to children and animals. By hearing namasankirtan even the heart of a stonehearted person will melt. We have heard of several instances in Indian history where great devotees of God could bring about complete transformation in die-hard criminals by their namasankirtan.

Love is the only wealth that can never diminish. That is the property of God. Therefore, cultivate pure and selfless love. God's love will always follow you wherever you are and will protect you at all times. Do not ever consider that money alone is your property. In fact, love is your real wealth. The wealth of Love always grows (expands) it never diminishes. Those who realise the Paramatma will be able to understand this truth better.

My heart is overflowing with love and joy on account of the namasankirtan you have done yesterday in the streets of Puttaparthi. Continue this namasankirtan wherever you are throughout your life. Especially when your spirits are down with

sorrow, sing the glory of God full-throated. Never feel diffident to sing the glory of God, thinking that others may make fun of you. Irrespective of what others may think or say against you, continue this sacred activity of namasankirtan. Only then will you be charged with Divine power.

I am very happy that you are all gathered here. I always wish joy, happiness, comfort, and peace for all of you. Today, 8,000 devotees from your place have come here to share the happiness of Swami's Divine Presence. All of you please go to the canteen and partake of Swami's prasadam happily. Swami's prasadam will become akshaya (never diminishing) and will remove all your sorrows and difficulties.

Everything that is granted by Swami is suffused with love. Whatever Bhagawan grants is always free. God will never succumb to monetary considerations. Wherever any service activity is associated with money, it is tainted. The entire property of Swami consists of Love only. Such Divine love must become your very life-breath. All your past karmas will become extinct if only you cultivate that pure love.

Whenever you take food, do namasmarana before partaking of the food. By doing so, the food will be sanctified and will become prasadam (gift) of God. Your heart also will be purified. That is why our ancestors prayed thus before partaking of food:

*Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir
Brahmagnou Brahmanahutam
Brahmaiva Thena Ganthavyam
Brahma Karma Samadhina.*

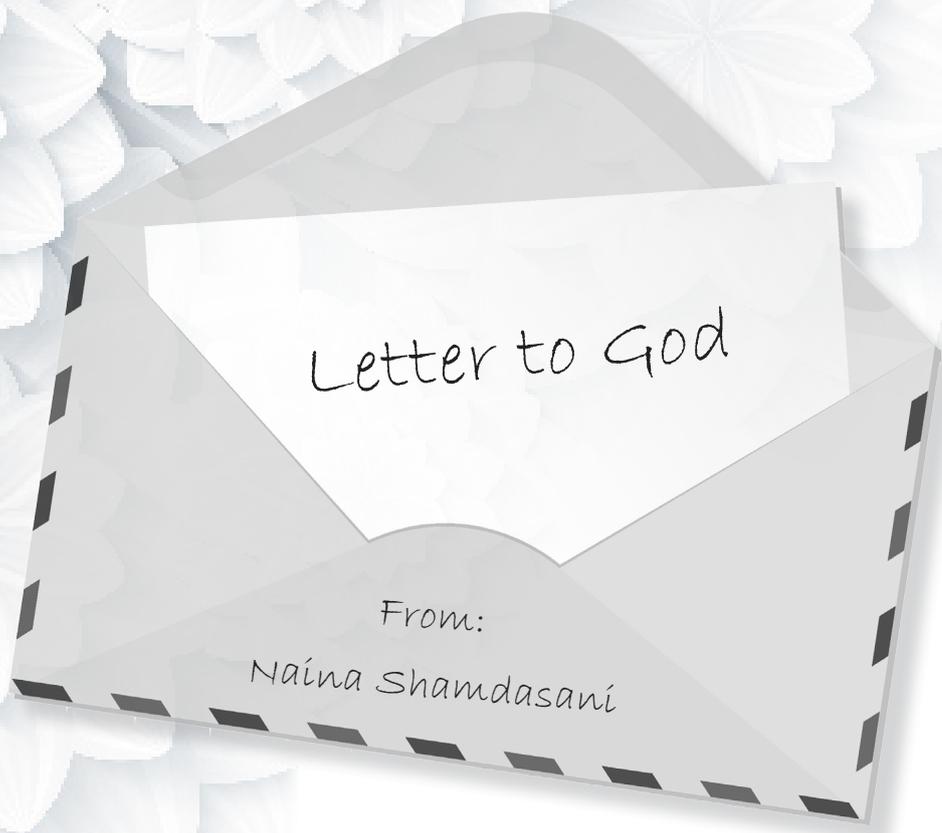
When you pray in this manner before you partake of your food, God immediately responds thus:

*Aham Vaishvanaro Bhutva
Praninam Dehamasrita
Pranapana Samayukta
Pachamyannam Chaturvidham.*

(My dear! I am present in you in the form of Vaishvanara, digesting the food that you partake of.)

The prayer thus made invokes an immediate response from God. That is reaction, reflection and resound. Therefore, constantly engage yourself in namasmarana, which will confer Bliss on you.

23rd August 2004, Sai Kulwant Hall



My Dearly Beloved Lord,

Please accept my humble *Pranaams* as I prostrate at Your Divine Lotus Feet with this offering.

It has taken me 35 years to write my first love letter to You! I can imagine Your beautiful smile as You chuckle at the fact that there was a time when I repeatedly scoffed at the idea of a letter to You! Yet, today, I am actually writing one! This is not just a letter; it is an opportunity to retrospect and self-audit, and to connect the dots to complete the picture You made of me. It is also the perfect occasion to express my gratitude for Your abundant grace upon me and my family.

How seamlessly You made Your entry into our life: First, my three-year old daughter came home from a play date and would not stop singing "*Why Fear when I am Here?*" I wondered if this was a sequel to Engelbert Humperdinck's 'Please release me' or if was it one of the Beatles' hit songs. When I found out it was a bhajan, I was indeed one proud mother - can You blame me?

Those were the days when the enormity of Your divinity had not quite sunk in yet. Today I still cherish the words of that bhajan for they always

reveal Your omnipotence and omnipresence to me. Only You know that "*Why Fear when I am Here?*" has enabled me to endure the uncertainties and fears in life with the knowledge and belief that You are always there for me. Thank You for being my saving grace.

Then when I got broody that I could not have quartet of the kids that I wanted, You astutely attracted me to teach Bal Vikas, and so channeled my maternal instincts to accept 14 kids as 'my' children! Ingenious, Dear Lord! I see now that it was not about the kids anyway and that it was to teach me acceptance and not to fight for things that are not meant for me. It was also about changing my stubborn ways. And, finally, it was about me learning to seek spirituality at a time in my life when I was naïve and needed adjustments to my own *slightly* wayward ways.

By preparing lessons and practicing the teachings before classes, I began to understand that I could not make distinctions between my worldly life, spiritual life and professional life.

It is no secret that I was always against the rigid patterns of religious rituals. How beautifully You made me appreciate the true significance

of my religion beyond the rituals, by embracing spirituality as an art of living – all You needed were the *Chinna Katha* stories. How could anyone like me, who had never before then thought beyond the wellbeing my own family, take on the mammoth task of translating a whole Sathyanarayana Pooja so as to benefit the young ones! Bhagawan, only Your infinite grace made it possible.

You taught me to see beyond the gross manifestations, which the physical eye can see, and to be aware of the reality and my true purpose of life. I am indebted to You for showing me how to embrace You in my life, so that I would not run to You only when my life got a little crazy! Welcome into my life Bhagawan, and I humbly thank You for staying.

How skillfully You showed me to watch my thoughts! Yes, when I had second row seating at darshan but You stopped to address a bunch of foreigners a few rows away, I was skeptical. I doubted they could understand Telugu. No sooner had I entertained that thought, You turned, stared right through me, and at the same time You addressed them in English! I had goose bumps as I realized You had read my thoughts! I warned myself to watch my thoughts better because there was no further doubt about Your omniscience! As You mapped my spiritual journey, this was my first lesson in Constant Integrated Awareness.

My next lesson on CIA was even more spectacular! I had thought that to meet God would be a piece of cake! But You made me run the amazing race to chase You from Bangalore to Coimbatore, and from there to Mysore and finally to Ooty! I promised my 8-year old child that I would be back in 5-days. Did You let me keep my promise? Sure You did, but not without all the minor adversities I had to face to get to You: losing three precious days just to reach You, daring to share a car with total strangers, eating and sleeping in places that a Hong Kong-er could never imagine, and leaving my belongings with a suspicious looking janitor for 'safe' keeping as we had no room when we finally got to Ooty! All that for a brief 10-minute darshan!

What a trip, Bhagawan! You forced me to come to terms with the fact that if I wanted to meet God I would need to exercise patience and perseverance,

but You knew I had none! You were also driving home the point that You are within me and the journey must begin from inside.

This was also Your way of nudging me to realize that the omnipresent God is my only friend, even if I sometimes felt He had abandoned me. That awareness has stayed with me. You made me embrace You deeper into my life so that I would be able to lean on You when I later came to be confronted with adversity.

Little did I know that that trip was also my training to gain courage and strength, and to break out of old patterns that I had become so accustomed to. Every obstacle on the way to reach You was to strengthen my faith in '*Why fear when Swami is here?*' You were showing me how to depend on the real Swami within me – my inner Self – the voice that is You, my conscience. You freed me from the notion that I had to look for You somewhere outside; I realized that I had to look no further than within me if I wanted to see You.

You kept me on my toes so I would learn to be sensitive to the minutest details, because You knew the day would come when that ability would make me the pillar of support to my near and dear ones. 'Be aware,' was Your lesson.

"Take one step towards me and I will take a hundred towards You" rings loud with the assurance that with faith in You there is freedom from anxiety and imagined worry. It is because of the many instances when You graced me to witness Your omnipresence that I have developed self-confidence – everything I do is possible only because of You.

What profound lessons You have given me. The adversities, though painful at the time, brought me closer to You. Only when I understood Your mysterious hand was orchestrating the events of my life did I develop faith and begin to accept that the things which were happening to me were for my own good. But that does not mean that I did not need to put in my own effort.

In fact, the essence of Karma Yoga in the Bhagawad Gita is exactly this. It is what You said, "*Do your best; leave the rest.*" I understand this is all I have to do. It is my responsibility to put in the effort;

victory or defeat is in Your hands. Thank You for those initial lessons on surrender.

I claim I am Your ardent devotee. With Your gracious endorsement, may I attempt a checklist to see how far along the road I have traversed?

“The one who is always content, self-controlled with firm conviction; the one who has dedicated his mind and intellect to me; he who is such a devotee of mine is indeed dear to me.”

Krishna (Bhagawad Gita 12:14)

I need no convincing that You are God and that You reside in all. I consciously push this thought to the forefront of my daily interactions, and more so when I am upset or angry. The dedication to be a true devotee reveals itself as I offer comfort, solace and a helping hand to whosoever wants one. Unknowingly, I have become the confidante of many and this compassionate listening is the biggest *Seva* I can do. I can only do this with the inner conviction that I am but Your instrument to help spread love in whatever way You wish to.

If I wish to experience You, Swami, the capacity to be useful is extremely important. The desire to make others happy and be happy myself is the key to emulate ‘*My life is your message*’.

You have given me the insight that leading a meaningful life is not about living for myself. It requires me to perform noble acts to give happiness wherever and whenever I can. The seed of *seva* that You, my dear Baba, sowed in my mind has also led to a spirit of ‘Can-Do’, because my perspective on all actions is that I am doing it *for* Swami, *with* Swami and *to* Swami. Never say ‘No’, I think to myself, as Swami makes it possible. This attitude has helped me be cognizant of the many unique qualities and talents You have sown in me. To what better use can these be put if they are not for Sai work? ‘*Work is Worship*.’

By this one defining thought – all is Swami – everything has changed. In as much as You are seated in my heart I know You are seated in everyone else’s heart. With this understanding, I am serving Swami only, and therefore I do not look for appreciation from anyone. If criticism is sent my way, I accept it as a way of better pleasing You.

I am content because I am happy with Your gifts – I no longer compare myself to others. Happiness and contentment is a choice I have made by being positive and accepting with utmost joy what You give. This positive attitude has no room for ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’, which only betrays doubts in You. Instead, You have opened more doors stamped with ‘Can-Do’.

One technique that has worked wonders for me is gratitude. So, I begin the day remembering You and counting my blessings for being alive and having yet another day to be Your instrument. As I move through the day, from task to task, I imagine Your presence so that every action is done with the awareness that You are right next to me. Before I retire at night I think about how many things happened during the day when You stepped in and took care of them.

Exercising self-control, on the other hand, is a different story, I must confess. Although I constantly try, I do slip now and again. But time and again, I am blessed that You break my fall and knock sense into me so that I am able to retrace my mis-steps.

In Your benevolence You drew me further into the Sai family and I became an active member of the Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Hong Kong. You made me speak on topics that thrust my spiritual growth forward. I realize You put me in places and positions because You have customized a path for me! It has been the best place to learn to adopt certain *sadhana*s that have only broadened my spiritual perspective.

One *sadhana* that has helped immensely is Silence. When I was asked to make a presentation on ‘Silence’ I did not really know what I was getting into. However, as is the proverb ‘Practice before you preach’, I had to set aside a ‘silent time’ to experience what silence is, and what it reveals. I must confess that practicing Silence, I am aware of my thoughts and, thankfully, I am often able to ignore those that are not conducive to my spiritual journey. The bonus in this *sadhana* is that where previously the chatterbox in me would retort vehemently, the path I now adopt is silent endurance with maturity. What a shift!

With Your grace, one day, I will cross that milestone to become a *Satata*m Yogi – a full time devotee,

rightfully earning Your grace to become the one dearest to You.

Looking back, I am able to identify the dots in my life for what they really were. Each dot was a circumstance, a situation, an event – everything always had a hidden purpose. You were coaxing me to introspect so that You could step in discreetly with one purpose: that I should recognize the real purpose of my life and correct my actions to be worthy of calling myself Your devotee. My greatest anchor by far has been to remember the golden words *‘This too shall pass.’*

I have been blind for so long, my dear Lord! Why could I not see that the first qualification to be chosen to be Your instrument is the 3P’s: Purity, Patience and Perseverance? That is what You have been doing all these years, haven’t You? From *‘Why fear when I am here’* to *‘Do your best, leave the rest’*, there have been far too many coincidences in my life to simply brush aside.

I laughed out loud when in a discourse recently You said *‘Coincidence is a miracle where I hide myself!’* Now that I have found You, You can no longer hide unnoticed, so I pray please continue to work behind the scenes of my life.

All my challenges required enormous mind control, where previously there had only been one reaction – to shout and cry *‘Why me?’* But how can I ever forget that You made it possible for me to raise myself every time I fell, and You made me understand why there was only one set of footprints in the sand at those times of my life when situations were testing my limits. I have been coping, and will cope, only because of Your grace. I am blessed.

Thank You for patiently chiseling away at the impurities. I have emerged much more accommodating, tolerant and patient, and I continue on the journey of life comforted by Your constant presence. I feel like a snake shedding its skin to allow for the growth of a new Sai-skin. You always said that the 3P’s have the power to confer Divine proximity and grace. Your words need no justification; I am living proof of that.

This letter to You would be incomplete without narrating a big deal in my life. Call it transformation,

if You will. Quite recently, I realized that I had something else that I needed to discard. It was the only way I could pave the path to live up to the title You conferred on me, *‘Premaswaroopa’*. Knowing You were holding me, I took the plunge and followed You as You showed me how to drop the anger about a situation I had carried for over a decade. It was my first step towards understanding and accepting that You are in all.

Come to think of it, it was not as difficult as I thought it would be. That is Your grace at work again! I realized that if I walk on the journey of life with You, then everything I do must be an offering to You. If I have offered my actions to You, then it goes without saying that I have offered You my thoughts too. Dropping the anger was a load off my heart! For the first time in ten years, I experienced the joy of Your lesson that *‘less luggage gives more comfort and makes travel a pleasure.’*

Not a single day goes by when I do not feel Your presence in my life. *‘Take one step towards me and I will take a hundred toward You’* is the injunction that I have followed, and continue to. I offer everything to You. I wake up each morning and before my feet touches the ground, my uppermost thought is *‘Thy will be done.’* Do what You will, Bhagawan - and You will do it perfectly, of that I am certain.

I am eternally grateful that You showed me how to change by offering me Your lifeline: *‘Bring me the depths of Your minds. No matter how grotesque, no matter how ravaged by doubts or disappointments, I will not reject You. I am Your mother.’*

So, my Sai-mother, I am sorry that You have had to work so hard on me, but I hope it has been worth it to You? How else would I have worked on my imperfections so You could love me the way I deserve to be loved? You said: *‘I separated myself to love myself.’*

Love me always Baba, because I will always love You, Bhagawan.

Only at Your Lotus Feet,

Maima Shardaasani

A QUEST FOR REALITY

ALLEN YAO

The late Jesuit priest and writer Father Anthony de Mello described spirituality as waking up. He said that most people, even though they do not know it, are asleep. They are born asleep, they live asleep, they marry in their sleep, they breed children in their sleep and they die in their sleep without ever waking up.

This is the sleep of ignorance, and I was one of those people who were asleep without even knowing it. Kabir, the 15th century mystic poet and saint of India, teased us, “You have slept for millions and millions of years. Why not wake up this morning?”

Anthony de Mello would say, “Waking up is unpleasant, you know. You are nice and comfortable in bed. It’s irritating to be woken up.” We would rather sleep our way through life than wake up to live and enjoy the challenges of this beautiful human existence.

I first came across “The Embodiment of Love” by Peggy Mason and Ron Laing in a bookshop at the Star Ferry in Hong Kong at the beginning of 1985. I browsed through the book but did not buy it. I came across the same book again, three times! On the third occasion, it fell off the bookrack as I walked past, and I had to pick it up. I could not resist browsing again but still did not buy it.

A week or so later, I came across “The Vortex: Key to Future Science” by two British scientists. I was surprised to encounter in the book a chapter wholly devoted to the “Modern Miracle Man”, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. This was about the several visits of Dr Erlandur Haraldson and Dr Karlis Osis to Sai Baba in Puttaparthi. They focused their attention on Swami’s materialisations to determine whether

there was fraud involved. The two scientists jointly published a report of their findings in the Journal of the American Society for Psychic Research in 1977, where they expressed their conviction that the phenomena they had observed were genuine. After I read this, I bought “The Embodiment of Love” and began my journey to Sai Baba.

This was my awakening to the quest for reality. Who am I? Where do I come from? What is the purpose of life? I had not previously given thought to these and other related questions. The mantra I grew up with was to be good, to be honest in all my dealings, to study hard and work hard, and try to make my life a success. Beyond assuming that success would bring happiness (which was, of course, an incredibly stupid assumption), I did not give further thought to matters of this nature.

The American Trappist monk and mystic of the 20th century, Thomas Merton, tells us that it is not we who choose to awaken ourselves, but that it is God who chooses to awaken us. This is a great blessing for the spiritual aspirant who would otherwise waste his life pursuing the wrong goals. It is because of his great love for us that God awakens us to the spiritual path.

I thank Baba for His compassion for bringing me back on track, and lighting a path for me to emerge from the darkness of my ignorance. Change came about gradually. There was a period of learning – studying Swami’s discourses and teachings, and that of other spiritual masters – and a time for reflection and assimilation. When change came, its impact was profound as it brought about a fundamental shift in the way I saw things, my values and understanding of life and its purpose.

GOD IS LOVE. No one loves us more than God: neither parent, nor spouse, nor lover nor children. God loves each of us as if there were only one of us. Why does God love us so much? The great German mystic Meister Eckhart said, "God loves my soul so much that his very life and being depend upon his loving me, whether he would or not. To stop God loving me would be to rob him of his Godhood, for God is love no less than he is truth."

St. Francis of Assisi expressed this beautifully in his poem *God Would Kneel Down*:

"I think God might be a little prejudiced.
For once He asked me to join Him on a walk
through this world,
and we gazed into every heart on this earth,
and I noticed He lingered a bit longer
before any face that was weeping,
and before any eyes that were laughing.
And sometimes when we passed
a soul in worship
God too would kneel down.
I have come to learn:
God adores His creation."

GOD IS ONE. There is no other besides him. There is only God, who is in everyone and in everything. For instance, the Dao is understood as the beginning of heaven and earth and the source of the universe. It is the underlying reality and the mother of all things. Daode Jing states:

"There was something formless and perfect before the universe was born. It is serene. Empty. Solitary. Unchanging. Infinite. Eternally present. It is the mother of the universe. For lack of a better name, I call it the Dao. It flows through all things, inside and outside, and returns to the origin of all things... The Dao is called the Great Mother: empty yet inexhaustible, it gives birth to infinite worlds. It is always present within you..."

The Vedas teach that there is only Brahman, the Absolute or Ultimate Reality, eternal, inexhaustible, both transcendent and immanent, without beginning and without end. The Chandogya Upanishad declares:

"In the beginning was only Being,
One without a second.
Out of himself he brought forth the cosmos

And entered into everything in it.
There is nothing that does not come from him.
Of everything he is the inmost Self.
He is the truth; he is the Self-supreme.
You are that, Shvetaketu;
you are that (TAT TVAM ASI)."

GOD IS LIFE. We are all phenomena of life. All living forms, whether it be animals, birds, sea creatures, trees, plants, bacteria or microorganisms are phenomena of life. The phenomenon of life is merely a manifestation of the One Absolute Life, or God.

LIFE IS ONE. As there is nothing but God, we are all transient expressions of God. He is the life force that dwells in us and functions through us. The illustrious poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote, "The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures..."

Sai Baba said, "*All the beings in the universe are the creation of God. There is nothing in this world that is not divine. People observe differences between one another. This is a great mistake. All are one... There is none in this world in whom God is not present. Everything is permeated by Divinity.*"

It is our identification with body and mind that creates division and separation from other beings and things. This sense of separateness is an illusion, or *maya*.

The Katha Upanishad states:

"What is here is also there;
what is there is also here.
Who sees multiplicity
but not the one indivisible Self
Must wander on and on from death to death."

Quantum Theory and the Nature of Reality

What does science say about the nature of reality? The Danish physicist Niels Bohr, who made foundational contributions to the understanding of the atomic structure and quantum theory, for which he received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1922, said, "Everything we call real is made of things that cannot be regarded as real."

Quantum physicists are aware of the essential unity of all things. Quantum theory reveals a basic oneness of the universe. They recognize that the concept of matter is an illusion. Albert Einstein said, “Concerning matter, we have been all wrong. What we have called matter is energy, whose vibration has been so lowered as to be perceptible to the senses. There is no matter.”

Dr. Bruce H. Lipton, renowned cell biologist, explained in *The Biology of Belief*:

“Quantum physicists discovered that physical atoms are made up of vortices of energy that are constantly spinning and vibrating; each atom is like a wobbly spinning top that radiates energy... If it were theoretically possible to observe the composition of an actual atom with a microscope, what would we see? Imagine a swirling dust devil cutting across the desert’s floor. Now remove the sand and dirt from the funnel cloud. What you have left is an invisible, tornado-like vortex. A number of infinitesimally small, dust devil – like energy vortices called quarks and photons collectively make up the structure of the atom. From far away, the atom would likely appear as a blurry sphere. As its structure came nearer to focus, the atom would become less clear and less distinct. As the surface of the atom drew near, it would disappear. You would see nothing. In fact, as you focused through the entire structure of the atom, all you would observe is a physical void. The atom has no physical structure – the emperor has no clothes!”

Spiritual masters and mystics speak of the void or emptiness not as nothingness, but as the underlying reality of all forms and phenomena, and the source of all life. The void or emptiness is just another name for the formless God or Divine Consciousness, which is beyond all description.

Sir James Jeans, the distinguished English astronomer, physicist and mathematician wrote:

“Today there is a wide measure of agreement, which on the physical side of science approaches almost to unanimity, that the stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. Mind no longer appears to be

an accidental intruder into the realm of matter, we ought rather hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter – not of course our individual minds, but the mind in which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown exist as thoughts.”

This is the Supreme or Divine Consciousness, which is also referred to as the Universal Mind or Buddha Mind or Dao. Erwin Schrödinger, Nobel laureate in Physics and known as the father of quantum mechanics, said, “Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular.”

Schrödinger, who was a student of Vedanta, also said, “All of us living beings belong together in as much as we are all in reality sides or aspects of one single being, which may perhaps in Western terminology be called God, while in the Upanishads its name is Brahman.”

The supreme goal of life is to realize the Self. This is the inward journey, a going within to discover our true reality. The Indian monk Bodhidharma, who transmitted Ch’an Buddhism to China, emphasized the importance of knowing one’s true Self:

“To find Buddha, you have to see your nature. Whoever sees his nature is a Buddha. If you don’t see your nature, invoking Buddha, reciting sutras, making offerings and keeping precepts are all useless. Invoking Buddha results in good karma, reciting sutras results in a good memory, keeping precepts results in good rebirth and making offerings results in future blessings—but no Buddha.”

The Sufi poet and mystic Ibn Arabi said, “When you know yourself, your ‘I-ness’ vanishes and you know that you and God are one and the same.”

The journey to God is no walk in the park. There are real demands on our faith, courage and perseverance. Using the analogy of magnet and iron, Swami once said:

“If the iron is dusty and covered with layers of dirt, the magnet is unable to attract. Remove the impediment; that is all you have to do. Shine forth in your real nature and the Lord will draw you to his bosom. Trials and tribulations are the means by which this cleansing is done. Just as cane does

not yield sugar juice unless it is crushed, as the sandalwood does not give the fragrant paste unless it is rubbed on the stone, the goodness of people do not come out unless they go through difficulties, experience the buffetings of the world... Love God, though tribulations may be your lot, love him though you are refused and rebuked, for it is only in the crucible of travail that the metal is purified and cleared of blemish."

We will encounter difficulties in order to learn the lessons we need to learn for spiritual advancement. It will gradually lead us to renunciation of our worldly attachments and ephemeral sense pleasures of the material life, and ultimately to purification of the heart. There will be disappointments along the way but we must not be discouraged. There are endless opportunities for growth by learning from our mistakes and those of others.

St. Augustine exhorts us, "Keep on adding, keep on walking, keep on progressing: do not delay on the road, do not go back, do not deviate."

Swami has given us the five human values and the path of selfless service to live by, and He alerted us to the six enemies of man, namely, anger, greed, attachment, lust, pride and jealousy. There are many obstacles to overcome, even for those who have dedicated their entire lives to God.

An Eastern Orthodox monk on a Greek island said, "Do you know what is the most difficult challenge for us monks to overcome?" he asked and proceeded to answer his own question. "It is not sex or gluttony or money, but ambition for spiritual development. That's where the devil finds entrance into our hearts. The greatest danger for a monk is jealousy. Why him and not me?"

This is our *real* journey in life. It is a daring adventure. We reach the end of our journey when we come to the realization of who we are.

Swami Vivekananda told us:

"When I am bound by nature, by name and form, by time, space and causality, I do not know what I truly am. But even in this bondage my real Self is not completely lost. I strain against the bonds; one by one they break, and I become conscious of my innate grandeur. Then comes liberation. I attain to the clearest and the fullest consciousness of myself: I know that I am the infinite spirit, the master of nature, not its slave. Beyond all differentiation and combination, beyond space, time, and causation, I Am That I Am."

Sai Ram

Allen Yao



Though external objects appear to bring pleasure, they bring grief as well. The scriptures clarify the truth that YOU are the very embodiment of bliss.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



LOVE IS MY FORM

KALPANA L. BHOJWANI

“Love is My Form; Truth is My Breath; Bliss is My Food.
My life is My Message; Expansion is My life.
No Reason for Love, No Season for Love

This has been my favorite song ever since I taught it to Bal Vikas children many years ago. The words have been imprinted deep in my heart forever. The song touches each nerve and every cell within me, for it carries in its words all that Swami is, all that He came to teach us, all that we need to learn from Him and all that we need to practice.

“Love is My Form ...” Each time I listen to these words they bring to mind the all-embracing nature of Swami’s love, which is abundant, complete, pure and unconditional. The words consume me and assure me of the love of a Father for His children.

From the very young age of 14, when He left home to answer the call of His devotees, His life has been a message of Love and Selfless Sacrifice. He lived an extremely simple life, keeping nothing for Himself but acting always for His creation, in the only way He could, with love.

Swami says, “*The power of love alone confers true strength. All other powers are of no avail. Hence, the only strength we should seek from God is the strength of love. With that strength, all other powers can be acquired.*”

It was only the power of Swami’s love that miraculously enabled the Super-Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi to be designed and constructed in just one year – it should have taken years to finish! It is also the power of His love that motivates so

many devotees in over 120 countries round the world to engage in selfless service activities as a *sadhana*.

I have been blessed to experience Swami’s love in my life. It has been truly overwhelming because He has kept the promise He gave in two verses in the Bhagawad Gita.

The first one is from Chapter 18, verse 66, where He declared:

*Sarva dharmaan parityajya
mamekam sharanam vraja
Aham tva sarva paapebhyo
mokshayishyami maa shuchaha.*

(Abandoning all Dharmas (of body, mind and intellect), take refuge in Me alone.

I will liberate thee from all sins; grieve not.)

And the second was from Chapter 9, verse 22, where He promised:

*Ananyaash chintayanto maam,
ye jana pariupaasate
Tesdaam nityaabhiyukta naam
yogakshemam vahaamyaham.*

(To those men who worship Me alone, thinking of no other, I bring for them what they lack, Yoga, and preserve for them what they already possess (kshema). In other words, I take care of their worldly as well as spiritual needs.)

Ever since I accepted Swami as my Krishna (my dearly adored God form from childhood), Swami,

as He promised, has been showering me with the loving care of a parent, taking care of my worldly and spiritual needs. I have been extremely blessed to have His protection and guidance at all times. With Him, one need not even think what life might have been like not knowing Him, because this relationship with Him is as natural and easy as breathing itself. There could have been no better life for me.

I know in my heart and in all that has happened that Baba has been guiding me at each step of my life, guarding me, as He said, *"As the eyelid guards the eye"*. From a young age, and most noticeably when I moved to Hong Kong from Canada with my family some 40 years ago, Swami planned out my life. He filled it with His Love and Grace, even if many times I could not see it. But, now I recognize His presence was so obvious. It matters not that I could not see it then because I always had faith He would take care of everything.

When we moved from Canada, He took care of all our material needs. He gave us a beautiful house of 'our' choice (there is a story connected to this which leads me to know for sure that it was only He who had obtained it for us), the children got admission into a school they were happy in and my husband was well set in his business. Looking back, it is clear He arranged things so perfectly that I could serve Him without a second thought. Who could have prepared me better?

After settling us well, He created the opportunity for me to get involved in the Sai Centre in Hong Kong. I was given the chance to teach, and later coordinate, Bal Vikas classes. This was my classroom, my university of life, for learning many lessons in practical spirituality. It was a platform not to teach but to learn how to practice Swami's teachings. I realize now that teaching the children was just the opportunity and divine blessing for me to learn all that I needed to for the later years of my life and for my spiritual growth.

At the same time, it revealed many qualities within me that I was not aware I had. My unfulfilled passions found expression in Bal Vikas. When we were in Canada, both my children were very young and so my husband and I had decided that I would not find a job but would be a full time

mother. Though the decision was made willingly, I always felt deep within me that my education had not been put to proper use and I had not found expression in my life. I felt this even more so when I would return to my mother's home to find my classmates had thriving careers.

But Swami knew my inner yearnings, as well as my abilities. So, He not only provided a platform for me to fulfill my dreams but He provided the means to focus my energies in the right direction; He gave me a cause for which I have been rewarded a thousand times over. I could never have found such fulfillment in any job outside. I would not trade the deep contentment and satisfaction that I feel today for anything in the world!

Swami's teachings are simple, yet profound. He tells us to *"Love all, Serve all"* and to *"Help Ever, Hurt never"*. These apparently simple teachings have a lot of depth. We all speak about love and of Swami's teachings about love with great enthusiasm, but being in Swami's fold taught me how to love.

Swami says, *"If anybody is angry with anybody, he wounds me too. If anybody abuses another, I feel pain. If anybody bravely endures the abuse, I feel highly pleased."*

Being conscious of one's thoughts, words and deeds so as not to cause hurt or pain to others in our interactions with them is an important aspect of divine love, which we tend to overlook in our zeal while working on a project or striving to achieve a certain result at work. Swami's teachings made me aware of this pitfall. Interacting with members of different backgrounds and ages in the Sai Organisation provided many challenges to practicing His teachings.

I learnt during those years that the success of a project or presentation is important, yet what is more important is HOW we work at it. Also, that we must see that we do not cause hurt to others. Swami advises us to speak softly and lovingly to all. It is important to remember all the time that Swami is watching over us.

If we work with an awareness of Swami's presence and with love, Swami is always there to guide us

and protect us. He knows all our thoughts and intentions, and He guides us according to our own individual needs.

When I used to teach Bal Vikas children, a thought once came to my mind that I should speak to children about Swami's miracles (which was a topic of discussion – and criticism – in the media at that time). I wanted to explain to the children about His miracles but I thought I had better read about it first and prepare the lesson properly for another day. The following week, as usual I arrived in the Sai Centre before the class time to wait for the children to arrive. Before they did, I went into the office to look for something and as I came out to the hall, I saw a lot of vibhuti on Swami's picture. While I was still looking at His Leela with awe, the children started walking in, asking about the appearance of the vibhuti. So it was that we had a spontaneous session on Swami's miracles! That's how He orchestrates events.

On another occasion, I had planned to have Swami's bhajans at home. Two days before the bhajans, I went to the Sai Centre for my Bal Vikas class. Shortly before the class started, I received a telephone call from my domestic helper to tell me that while she was cleaning, the big chandelier on top of the dining table suddenly and without warning fell from the ceiling. There was a glass top on the dining table at home and I feared the impact of a chandelier crashing onto the tabletop; I knew that glass pieces would be all over the place. So, I cautioned her to stay away from it and told her I would take care of it later when I got home.

I thanked God that both the kids were in school and my helper was not hurt. My only concern was about the bhajans that were to take place in two days. The chandelier provided the main light in that room.

While on my way home after the class, I was mentally prepared for some hours of cleaning up the small broken pieces, and I was thinking about how I would manage the bhajans. As I entered my home, I just could not believe my eyes! I was happily surprised to see that the chandelier was nicely sitting on the table, as if it had been carefully placed over it. Only a few small pieces were broken but these could easily be replaced, and even if they

were not replaced it would still be fine. There was no damage to the glass top on the table! I just stood overwhelmed by Swami's grace! I was actually quite astonished and emotional. I did not even know what to say to Him or how to thank Him!

Today, I know there was no need to say anything, as He was probably watching and smiling, even if I could not see by my physical eyes. Such is the love of our Dear Swami!

He has helped, guided and protected me so many times. At least three times, once recently, He protected me from what could have been a major road accident. Each time He intervened so quietly and, yet, I do not have the slightest doubt in my mind of His presence in my life. I know that He is always there. He is truly omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent.

While serving in the Sai Organisation, my notions changed over time, albeit in subtle ways that I was not aware of at the time. Gradually, I began to see some of the shifts; there was a slow and careful chisel, a bit here and a bit there, just like a master sculptor working at his art. I eventually realised that Swami had been working on me and I had full trust that He would continue to do so. Sudden overnight transformations may or may not last, but I knew I was being remade into the person I needed to be.

I had always loved God from childhood and now Swami was helping me to see God in every aspect of daily life, whether it was during the breakfast sevas when we distribute food to the narayanas sleeping on the streets, or it was in seeing the Divine sparkle in children, or even when interacting with adults.

The child concept of God as Lord Vishnu in Vaikuntha or my dear Lord Krishna in Brindavan was broadened by Swami's loving exhortation to see and serve that Lord resident in every heart. I learnt from Him that "*Service to Man is worship of God.*" From a young age, we prayed, performed pujas, did charity, etc., but Swami expanded my vision and He broadened my mind so that I learnt to offer charity with more love, care and understanding. I learnt to step out of my family circle and expand my love, following Swami's example. He is truly the Divine Mentor.

Swami says, *“God is present in all beings as Love. Wherever love is evident, take it that it is God’s own love. God is the greatest lover of mankind. Therefore, when anyone decides to serve man whom He loves, God showers Grace in plenty. When the human heart melts at the suffering of others, and expands as a result of that sympathy, believe that God is present there. That is the sign of the validity of the path of devotion, the Bhakti Yoga.”*

Besides expansion of love, Swami also emphasizes the importance of acceptance and surrender to God. He says, *“To the person who has completely surrendered, everything that they experience, good or bad, is a gift from God.”* It is not so easy to experience this as the thought of ‘I and mine’ (the ego) always creeps in; desiring to take the credit for all that is good. Yet, the moment the ego comes in, the flow of true love is blocked in our heart.

The ego creeps in so quietly, especially when we are successful in worldly matters, that we are not even aware of it. When the ego is uncontrolled in our heart, God cannot stay there. Saint Kabir puts it beautifully when he said:

“The street of Love is so narrow;
there is no room for two to exist.
When ‘I’ lived there, God was not there.
Now God is there and ‘I’ does not exist.”

I do know that when we dedicate all actions to God, He takes over. I noticed in my earlier days that when I took up any project or presentation, I would always be worried about it: how it would sound, what would be the response of the audience, etc. I would not be at peace and often the presentation would not be up to my expectations. One day, I read the following quote of Swami, which appealed to me and showed me the way:

“The play is His, the role is His gift. The lines are written by Him; He directs; He decides the dress and decoration, the gesture and the tone, the entrance and the exit. You have to act well your part and receive His approbation when the curtain falls.”

This taught me the way of dedicated action and helped me to understand the true meaning of surrender. After that time, I prayed and mentally offered every act to the Lord before starting any activity. Whenever I truly dedicated my action to

Swami, and put my best into it, I would often be surprised with the results.

Over the years, many of my dear ones have left the physical world, and many objects and situations that I was fond of do not exist or do not belong to me any more. At the time of the loss it was painful, but on reflection I realise that my Dear Sai has taught me detachment. I know now that love is more about letting go than being attached to a person, an object or a project.

Faith in God is to be expressed in acceptance of the Divine Will, knowing that what the Divine wills always happens for the good, whether we realise it or not. Swami has taught me *“Bliss is not to be found in persons and material objects. Bliss comes only from **within you**. You yourself are the source of peace and bliss.”*

It is said that the spiritual journey begins with faith and ends in bliss. That is exactly how I feel today, after finishing all my duties. It is not possible to express how blessed I am! I would like to quote Martin Luther King Jr. who once said, “Occasionally in life there are those moments of unutterable fulfillment which cannot be completely explained by those symbols called words. Their meanings can only be articulated by the inaudible language of the heart.”

How do I feel at this stage of my life? Am I ready to give up the world and merge with the Divine? I do not know. I only live in the joy of having His Divine hand on me. I live in the feeling of love and protection of my Father. I know that:

“The Light of God surrounds me.
The Love of God enfolds me.
The power of God protects me.
The presence of God watches over me.
Wherever I am, God Is.”

I am blessed to have had Swami in my life and to live in His love. I would like to end with the words of Ravindranath Tagore:

“Let alone that little be left of my will whereby I may feel Thee on every side, and come to Thee in everything, and offer to Thee my Love every moment.”

Jai Sai Ram

Kalpana L. Bhojwani

PRE-WORLD CONFERENCE ZONE 5
in January Hong Kong was privileged to host the Pre-World Conference



Dr. Narendranath Reddy,
Chairman, Prasanthi Council



Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai,
Member, Prasanthi Council



Mr. Alvin Leo, Int'l Youth Representative



Mr. Nari Chugani, Chair of Zone 5





EASWARAMMA DAY CELEBRATIONS



Group 1 Bal Vikas engaged in Bhoomi (earth) Seva at Kowloon Park



Group 2 Bal Vikas engaged in Guru Seva at the Gurudwara



Group 3 Bal Vikas engaged in Go Mata (Cow) Seva

INSPIRATIONAL AFTERNOON HOSTED BY THE MAHILAS
on 23rd May entitled “Do you REALLY Believe ...?”



INTER-FAITH GROUP STUDY CLASS
on Swami’s words: “There is only one Religion - the Religion of Love”



SEVA WORKSHOP
on 20th June entitled "A Gift of Grace"



Devotees sharing experiences ...

HUMAN VALUES APP
includes value-based stories, posters,
quotes, songs and more launched on
Avatarhood Day, 20th October

APP NAME: 5HV



SADHANA CAMP on 13th September entitled "Fill your cup with Amrit"



SATHYA SAI: MY ETERNAL GUARDIAN AND GUIDE

ASHOK K. SAKHRANI

The title I have chosen represents the irresistible and joyful conclusion I have been driven to from one quote of our beloved Bhagawan and the stirring it has created in the heart. Because I cannot see my past lives and the future has yet to unfold, it is sometimes difficult to grasp, even intellectually, the significance of this title. Yet, with unquestioning faith in the Master, I know the conclusion I have reached is true for me, as it must be for millions around the world.

In His messages read out at both the World Conferences in 1985 and 1990, Bhagawan spoke of His mission and He said the time had arrived when each person whom He had chosen has work to do. He pointed out that only those whom He calls can serve Him. Then, He added the following declaration: *"I have prepared you for this work over many incarnations."* How can one even fathom the enormity of this? Yet, I have always been in awe of these words; they have inspired and motivated me to serve in His mission.

As much as one cannot fully understand the true nature of the relationship of disciple and Master, particularly when the Master declares that He is God – and so beyond the constraints of time and space around which our limited minds operate – one fact is unmistakable: that our connection to Him is not limited by time.

Indeed, nothing in this birth alone appears to account for my connection to the incarnation known as Sai Baba; there was no sudden revelation of His Divinity, no conscious decision to follow Him and no dramatic biblical moment when He entered my life. Yet, I know I was always meant to have this relationship with Him, and that He willed it. This conviction is etched in my being, as I am sure it must be for millions of Sai devotees. The conviction does not require proof and nor does it require explanation, just as no proof is required that if I stop breathing this body will perish.

The proclamation of Lord Krishna in the Holy Bhagawad Gita in Chapter 2, verse 12¹ applies equally to Sai and each one of us, and so it should be understood that our relationship with Him is not constructed in the limited precincts of our present beings. It is better to acknowledge this and strive to overcome it by the following the Guru and studying the scriptures. This study, if properly assimilated, will enable us to untie the knots of ignorance that we are unknowingly caught in, thus enabling us to transcend, with equanimity, any limited notions of being.

The dawn of awakening will transform our faith and prepare us for the bright afternoon sun when we experience the timeless wisdom that we are not the body and mind, and that our only reality is

¹ "It is not that at any time (in the past), indeed was I not, nor were you, nor these rulers of men. Nor verily, shall we all ever cease to be hereafter."

that we are one with God. By then, the pleasures of the material world will have long disappeared into insignificance and we will be bliss.

So, in this journey from one physical experience to another, one may ask: For what purpose was this relationship with God in this human form established? Swami once said the destiny of every one is to achieve self-realisation, so this cannot be the reason. Non-Sai devotees will achieve this supreme goal with the guiding hand of other Divine Masters. So there must be something else.

Swami once explained:

“You have entered onto this path only by virtue of the cumulative stock of good fortune and punya acquired over several previous lives. There are crores of people in India. How many of time are able to come here. Many people have the desire come; yet they are unable to fulfil their desire. It is a matter of divine blessing that you have been able to come to this holy place.”

Clearly, it is a great blessing to be amongst those whom the Lord chose to personally guide towards this destiny of self-realisation. Whilst we cannot know what merits of the past brought us to the Feet of our beloved Guru and God, we know (a) He called us because of these merits and He prepared us for our lives during His incarnation as Sathya Sai; (b) that since He prepared us for our work in this life, He must therefore be with us, guiding us, just as any loving Mother and Father would; (c) to fulfil this purpose and to be worthy emissaries of His work we must endeavour to become pristine instruments of His love (to achieve this, His grace is always on us); and (d) from being pristine instruments we become Divine Love itself, at which stage we have reached our destination.

Not everyone will serve in the organisations or institutions that bear His name, but their contributions in the form of love and selfless service may be equally significant. The important thing is that we reach our ultimate destination of self-realisation by surrendering ourselves and becoming worthy instruments of the Living God²,

so that His Divine Love flows through us and transforms us. We just need to escape from the clutches of the ignorance that deludes us.

To most of us, this is where the supreme challenge is: how do we prepare ourselves and how do we become pristine instruments of His Divine Love? Much has been spoken by Bhagawan Himself and written by Him in His letters to students or in the Vahini books, so even attempting to explain will achieve little. Swami always wants us to *Be Good, See Good and Do Good*. Explaining this is itself worthy of many articles but it may suffice to state that one can approach this goal from the space of our pure and devoted hearts rather than the hyperactivity of our untrained minds and our dull intellects, and the endless desires that drive us each day.

But can it really be this simple? It is said there is beauty in simplicity and there is goodness in innocence. If this is so, why should our purpose as (self-proclaimed devotees) be a more elaborate statement than this? I believe we all actually understand this path of goodness.

Yet, the common refrain of many to this simple injunction to *Be Good, See Good and Do Good* is that it is easy to speak of but too difficult to do in the ‘real’ world. There is a suggestion that somehow one cannot survive in a demanding and potentially overbearing world if one follows this rather simple teaching.

Perhaps there are two replies to this: (a) of course it is difficult when the effects of one’s vasanas and the conditioning of our minds and intellects in this life have to be reversed, but let us not forget that the Master is there to take responsibility for our lives when we open ourselves to Him and obey Him; and (b) the teaching is simple, but that does not mean one must be simplistic – at more subtle levels, it takes clarity of purpose, courage and conviction borne of faith, a dedication to our spiritual practices, a disciplined mind, a sharp intellect, a proper perspective and understanding of events with spiritual maturity, etc. to *Be Good*,

² It would be naïve to think that because Bhagawan withdrew from His body, that He somehow left us, if this is even possible. There is ample evidence in the lives of devotees the world over that He is the Living God. We just need eyes that see.

See Good and Do Good. These qualities need time to be nurtured but this is no reason not to start now and slowly chip away at the demons within that keep us from our true selves. These demons will vanish when our false notions of self disappear.

If the Lord Himself wants us to *Be Good, See Good and Do Good*, should we not assume that He knows the challenges we will face and that He wants us to achieve this goal notwithstanding! Should we not have faith and confidence that He will keep His promise to take a hundred steps towards us if we take one step towards Him? Let us not be timid and instead be warriors for dharma.

Of all those things that have been worthy of achievement, what has not been difficult? Walking was difficult when we could only crawl, our university degrees were beyond our intellectual grasp when we were just entering primary school, and the gradual refinement of our character was not expected when we first entered the portals of the Sai Organisation, eager just to sing bhajans or to serve. The point is this: with every difficulty, we are just steps away from success when we give up our reliance on the ego and make space for the Lord within us.

The greatest difficulty arises not from the circumstances but from the falsehood we peddle to our selves: that we are limited and can only find happiness in our material pursuits. Have we not been frustrated enough to feel compelled to strive harder to throw off those hopeless pursuits that deny us real happiness and fulfilment? Transcending these limitations will allow us to fulfil ourselves.

If the truth were told, worldly life is a path riddled with difficulty, but more than that it is a sheer tragedy of how we use this gift of life. It is the spiritual path that is easier, because we walk the path of Truth and we never walk alone.

One only needs self-confidence built upon the firm faith that the Lord not only resides in us, but that it is because of Him that we take every breath, that we speak because He enables us to and that we act because He empowers us to. We exist because of Him, and so how can we fail in these circumstances?

Swami Vivekananda beautifully said: "All power is within you; you can do anything and everything. Believe in that; do not believe that you are weak. Stand up and express the divinity within you."

We are Him, so how can we fail?

My journey thus far has been possible only because of my Eternal Guardian and Guide. The path has been riddled with potholes I had created for myself and missteps I took. Any regret is mitigated by the realisation that perhaps these were precisely what I needed to enable me to see the road a bit more clearly.

My journey hereafter is only possible because of My Eternal Guardian and Guide. He will point the way and provide the illumination that will make the potholes lying ahead of me visible, so that I take fewer missteps. With every step forward, the Truth will reveal itself to me more and more.

This blessed opportunity has been gifted to us in this lifetime. Let us use it and not allow anything, particularly our egocentric selves, distract us. We are beyond that.

I am so grateful to my beloved Bhagawan, my Eternal Guardian and Guide, for everything.

Jai Sai Ram

Ashok K. Sakthirani


The minimum qualification for Grace is surrender of ego.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



DIVINE DISCOURSE

THE FORM OF GOD IS LOVE

**Forbearance is the real beauty in this sacred land of Bharat.
Of all the rituals, adherence to truth is the greatest penance.
The most nectarous feeling in this country
is the feeling of love toward one's mother.**

(Telugu Poem)

In this sacred land of Bharat (India), forbearance is the real beauty. The modern man has no idea of what forbearance is. He is not able to realise that forbearance is the real beauty in this sacred land. One bereft of forbearance is no human being at all. We should have sympathy and forbearance toward the poor and the physically challenged. But modern man shows disgust toward such unfortunate people. In fact, sahana (tolerance) is the most valuable and sacred mantra of the Bharatiyas (Indians). But man, out of his ignorance, has given up such a sacred mantra and is carried away by yantra and tantra.

The foremost quality expected of a devotee is forbearance. What is bhakti (devotion)? Several people are under the mistaken notion that worshipping some idols, observing certain vows and performing some rituals is bhakti. It is not as simple as that. The foremost duty of a devotee, especially of the Bharatiya, is observing the quality of forbearance in practice.

Adherence to truth is the real tapas (penance). Man, today, has forgotten this principle. Forbearance is a quality that inspires people to undertake noble deeds. This noble quality is to be taught to others as well, to enable them to imbibe it.

The nectarine feeling in this country is the feeling of love toward one's mother. Today, people overlook the most important duty to look upon

every woman as one's own mother. There is nothing greater and sweeter than this motherly love in the world. One who has cultivated such noble feeling is most fortunate. It is not a quality that can be purchased or hired. This motherly feeling flows from the natural love that one has for one's own mother.

The people of Bharat are forsaking such noble qualities and are trying to imitate and cultivate alien cultures and traditions today. In fact, they are running after alien culture with excessive enthusiasm, treating it as their very life breath.

You cannot find anything more sacred than love in the world. Today, you will find worldly and physical love everywhere. But, it is very difficult to find love suffused with Atmic bliss.

Love is not merely that which exists between two individuals at the physical level. True love is that which exists between two hearts. Bharatiyas today are neglecting such sacred and noble love. It is only the love toward God that has sustained and protected the people in this sacred land of Bharat since ancient times, just as the eyelid protects the eye.

This divine love permeates the entire universe. Wherever you look, it is present. There is nothing in the world, except divine love. All other types of love are only mere passing infatuation. Real love

emerges from the depth of one's heart. Cultivating such divine love and sharing it with others is most pleasing to Me. Today, you find worldly and physical love for achieving selfish ends everywhere. But, you cannot call it real love. Real love, which is sacred, divine, and selfless has to spring from one's heart.

Cultivate and strengthen such divine love. When you cultivate such love, you will not be lacking in anything. It is only when you cultivate such noble love that you will be entitled to be called "Embodiments of love". God is omnipresent. Who is God? In fact, you are verily God. You must strive to attain that state. Though God is present everywhere, you should not forget the divinity immanent in you. Some people think that God exists separately in some distant place.

Prahlada, the child devotee of Lord Vishnu declared:

"Never doubt that God is here and not there.

Wherever you search for Him, He is there."

(Telugu Poem)

This is the real culture of Bharat, which we are not able to perceive today. Everyone chants the name of God. But, where is God? In fact, you yourself are God. You and God are not separate. Man forgets the divinity latent in him and runs after trivial and mundane things.

Under all circumstances, do not give up love. Love is your greatest treasure. One who forgets this treasure is not a human being at all!

We love our father, mother, brothers, sisters, etc. All these relationships are but mere roles in the Divine Drama. You must try to apprehend true love. In fact, it is always in us. You need not search for it outside.

Unfortunately, today we are going after things that are not real and permanent. (Showing a flower) What is this? This is a flower. Everybody says so. But, the truth is, it is a manifestation of Divinity. There are several petals in it, which represent Divinity. If the petals are taken out one by one, it cannot be called a flower. Similarly, if there is no love in a human being, the human being cannot be called an "Embodiment of love".

The source and sustenance for the entire universe is love. This quality of love takes different shapes in different individuals, say between father, mother, brothers and sisters, but you refer to it all as love. All these individuals together constitute a family. It is not enough if you limit your love to the family members. The entire universe must live like a family. Whomever you see, offer your pranams (salutations). Say "Om Namaskar! Namaskar!" Can you come across a nobler feeling than this?

All the forms you come across in this world are embodiments of Divinity. There is nothing in this universe that is not divine. You consider the different objects in the universe as mere objects. No! No! Consider them as "Embodiments of Divinity". Unfortunately, today we have become foolish and are searching for God in some distant corner. Wherever you see, there is God. Therefore, it is the noblest feeling to consider everything in the universe as "Embodiments of Divinity".

The universe is but a form of God! God is manifest in all forms. Consider such an omnipresent divinity as God. Do not give credence to the outward form of any object, but firmly believe in the divine power that is immanent in that object. We are not experiencing anything other than Divinity in our day-to-day activities. For example, we are thirsty. Thirst is a fire manifest as divinity. We quench our thirst by drinking water, which is another manifestation of the divine.

Thus, all five elements in the universe, the five senses, five sheaths and the five vital breaths in the body are all manifestations of divinity. Today, we are misusing our senses. This is an act of grave sin. All the senses are pure, sacred and selfless. The senses have no distinction of caste, creed, religion, nationality, etc. Keeping such noble qualities in our own self, we are searching for Divinity in the outside world. What a great pity! What do you think the human values are? They are nothing but divine qualities. God has no attributes separately. Divinity itself is the sole attribute. We are deluded to see the attributeless Divinity as God with attributes.

Whatever I speak, it is only love. I do not know any other word. There is no other quality greater than love. Hence, we have to love that quality of love, which is God.

The different ways by which we describe God, such as Nirgunam, Niranjanam, Sanathana Niketanam, Nitya, Shuddha, Buddha, Mukta, Nirmala Swarupinam (God is attributeless, pure, final abode, eternal, unsullied, enlightened free and embodiment of sacredness) are only for our satisfaction. They cannot, however, describe God in full. In fact, God is beyond description. The only word by which we can describe God is “love”. Nothing better can describe Him.

You are all the “Embodiments of love”. Your form is love. God’s form is also love.

I am very much distressed to see those physically challenged children seated on the tricycles. They are, in fact, “Embodiments of Divinity”. To look down upon those divine children with contempt is a great sin. In fact, there are no lowly people in the world at all! That low thinking is in us only. It cannot be attributed to God. God has only one attribute, which is love. That is His form.

When someone converses with Me lovingly, My joy knows no bounds. If people employ empty rhetoric without love to describe My qualities, I am not at all pleased or impressed. Talk to Me with a loving heart. Pray to Me with a love-filled heart. Whatever you pray for with a loving heart, I will readily respond. You call Me “Sai” with love; I will readily respond saying “Oyi”. Any amount of prayer devoid of love cannot move Me. If you call Me with love, I will respond immediately, wherever I am. There is nothing greater than love.

Therefore, if you wish to have the darshan of God and experience Him, pray to Him lovingly. You may have any amount of wealth and virtues but they are no match to the quality of love. The sweetness inherent in the word prema (Divine Love) is not to be found anywhere else in the world. The more you cultivate and practise it, the sweeter will be your personality. Therefore, cultivate love as the foremost quality in you.

*“Love is your sole refuge wherever you may be,
in a forest, in the sky, in a city or a village,
on the top of a mountain or
in the middle of deep sea.”*

(Telugu Poem)

Love is not confined to any particular place or residence; it is universal. Therefore, cultivate such universal love. Such a universal love cannot be purchased with any amount of money. It can only be attained with a heart filled with intense love. Man has, therefore, to cultivate such pure and selfless love.

In order to cultivate such pure love, bhakti (devotion) is prescribed as a means. Bhakti is not somewhere in some distant corner. Prema (love) is bhakti (devotion). Devotion without love is a deep ocean. And how is that ocean? It is full of salt water, whereas devotion with love is like sweet water. Love is a nectarous feeling. Love is verily bliss. Love is a wonderful feeling. It is unfathomable. Therefore, such a nectarous, sweet, blissful and unfathomable love, you should never give up.

Instead of making hollow claims of bhakti, keep prema as your goal to be attained. There is nothing greater than this sadhana (spiritual practice). There is nothing that can liberate you more easily than pure and selfless love. There are four words: mukti (liberation), bhakti (devotion), rakti (attachment) and anurakti (attachment or love toward God). But, love is the undercurrent in all these things.

On this auspicious occasion of Guru Poornima, love is the most valuable gift I hand over to you. This is my most precious gift to you. Devoid of love, whatever other gifts I may give, they will be of no use. My love is pure, sacred and most precious. You also cultivate such love.

2nd July 2004, Guru Poornima

SURRENDER TO THE SADGURU

SEETHA SUBRAMANIAN

*If you want Me to be the Sarathi (Charioteer) of your body-chariot
with its mind-horse, then learn to surrender the reins to me.*

*If you want me to be the Sanathana Sarathi (Eternal Charioteer) for you,
then your surrender should also be Sanathana Sharanagathi (Eternal Surrender)!*

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Surrender is one of the most misunderstood concepts in spirituality, and yet probably mentioned most casually by many devotees after they have exhausted their further efforts in frustration and have lost all hope for their desired results.

Surrender is the willful acceptance of a higher force and it's will. In short, it is to accept, to let go and to let God. This basic understanding is with all of us. But why is there still much misunderstanding about the act of surrendering?

It will be very interesting to question: *When* do we surrender, *Why* do we surrender, *How* do we surrender and *What* do we surrender, in order to be aware of how we have misunderstood the spiritual act of surrender.

When do we surrender and when should we surrender?

Normally we say, "I surrender" when we think we do not have any more options left. We conveniently quote sayings like "Do your best and leave the rest to God". Here, we are actually 'giving up' and just casually calling it surrender. Surrender is not giving up action but it is giving up the fruits of action.

When we have put in our best efforts with our thoughts, words and deeds and are still not able to achieve the goal we worked for, then accepting the result as the best solution rather than a failure is surrender. We should *surrender to the result* when we have given our best attitude and effort.

Swami says, "*The path of self-surrender is not one of inertia or laziness. Although the ego and the sense of doership are weakened, action is not abandoned. A person truly resigned will be intensely active and yet feel equally strongly that he is not the doer.*"

Why do we surrender and why should we surrender?

We surrender usually when we have lost all hope of achieving something and we are resigned to the fact that we are no more in control of what's going to happen. This is not a willful act. Here, we are not surrendering our desire. We *should* surrender because we perform the action as our duty and the act is dedicated to God, in this way, the result to us is God's grace.

Swami says, "*When you welcome God into your heart, you must cleanse your heart thoroughly. Only when you purify your heart, will God be pleased to enter it. To obey His command is the characteristic of a person who surrenders himself.*"

How do we surrender and how should we surrender?

We surrender to God expecting Him to give His grace as the final blessing to make impossible things become possible. We bow down at His lotus feet and prostrate before Him as expressions of our surrender and we talk to Him about all the things that we are leaving Him to finish, including all desires (good and bad). Here we are not surrendering to His will but rather we are surrendering to Him to fulfill our will.

Swami says, *“The total dependence on God is considered to be surrender. What you seek to surrender is your mind, but when it is itself turbulent and beyond your control, then how can you surrender it? Mind can only be surrendered when it is serene. In that stillness of mind one apprehends the all-pervasive aspect of God.”*

What do we surrender and what should we surrender?

As spiritual aspirants, we say: “I surrender my thoughts, my actions, my desires, my vices and my ego, and I accept your Will”. As long as we have the feeling of “I and Mine”, surrender is not possible. At the stage of surrender, which is the ninth stage of the Nine Forms of Devotion, there is no offering by the devotee but the devotee is the offering itself. Complete self-surrender (Atma Nivedanam) is the offering. True surrender makes one accept all of life’s challenges without any conditions, expectations, preferences or fear.

Swami says, *“At the stage of Atma Nivedanam, the devotee treats grief and sorrow, pleasure and pain as gifts sent by God and does not attach himself to them. He considers himself as a puppet and an instrument in the hands of God. He has no ego left in him, having surrendered it at the altar of God. This self-surrender is absolute love for God. There is nothing but God-consciousness in the devotee.”*

Swami identifies three types of surrender

The first affirms “I am Yours”, the second asserts “You are mine”, and the third declares “You and I are One and the Same”. Each is a step in the rising series and the last is the highest of them all. In the

first stage, the Lord is fully free and the devotee is fully bound. It is like the cat and the kitten; the cat shifts the kitten about as it wills; the kitten just mews and accepts whatever happens. This attitude is very gentle and within easy reach of all.

In the second, the devotee binds the Lord, who is to that extent ‘unfree’! The third stage is one of inseparable devotion. The devotee offers all to the Lord, including himself, for he feels that he cannot withhold himself. That completes his surrender.

Complete surrender really means the realisation that all is God, that there is nobody who surrenders, that there is nothing to be surrendered, nor is there anyone to accept a surrender. All is God. There is only God. Of course, it is hard to affect this full surrender. But if man makes but the slightest effort towards it, the Lord Himself will confer the courage to pursue it to the end. He will walk with him and help him as a friend, He will lead him as a guide, He will guard him from evil and temptation and He will be his staff and support.

All religions advocate surrender

In Christianity, the first main principle of surrender is ‘Dying to Self’, or the ‘emptying of the self’ to allow Christ to live through the believer. One of the meanings of the word Islam is surrender. Islam means surrendering or submitting your will to God. The Sri Sai Satcharita, the biography of Sai Baba of Shirdi, says that surrender to the guru is the only sadhana. The Sikh Ardas (prayer) demands a complete surrender to Divine Will. In the Bhagawad Gita, it is said: “Whoever surrenders himself unto me and takes refuge in me, I will redeem him of all sins and grant him liberation.”

Swami says, *“The basic lesson that each religion teaches is to surrender to the sovereign will of God and leave the consequences of deeds well done to the Lord Himself. It is His will and your duty is only to shape yourself into a fit instrument.”*

Complete surrender is a sacrifice and the reward is freedom. Hence, it is priceless. Realisation borne of the act of surrender is that God is in you, with you, behind you, before you and all around you, and He can be seen and felt everywhere.

Surrender to God brings an incredible benefit, which Swami explains with a simple analogy:

“Take the example of wanting some light in your house. You may light a candle or switch on an electric lamp. But at dawn when the sun rises, the whole city will be flooded with the sun’s light. The light of your little lamp is very weak compared to the splendor of the Sun, shining magnificently everywhere. This is the unlimited power of God compared to the limited power of man. How can you reach this unlimited power of God? How can the limited capacity of a human being be transformed in the unlimited capacity of God? The means is surrender.”

*Karmany evadhikaras te ma phalesu kadacana
ma karma-phala-hetur bhurma te sango
’stv akarmani*

(You certainly have the right for prescribed activities but never in their results.

Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities and never be attached to not doing your duty)

Bhagawad Gita, Chapter 2 verse 47

An aspirant of the highest knowledge must know that to yearn for reward for one’s actions is the cause of bondage in material existence. But, it may be said that all actions produce results, just as eating satisfies the urge of hunger. Anticipating this, the supreme Lord states that one should not let the anticipated results of actions be the cause of motivation – see Sridhara Swamy’s commentary on the above verse.

We eat to live and not live to eat. It is our duty to eat to maintain our body in a good condition to serve the purpose for which the body is given. Even the desire for heavenly enjoyments is to be shunned

as they have the taint of fruitfulness as well. So one who is spiritually inclined performs actions unattached to the rewards. Neither by accepting desires nor by rejecting desires is wisdom gained – see Madhvacharya’s commentary on this verse.

All actions have to be done without the thought of doership in the fulfillment of one’s duty, without the ego (I and Mine) and with the understanding that all is God. Then the actions by themselves will be the rewards.

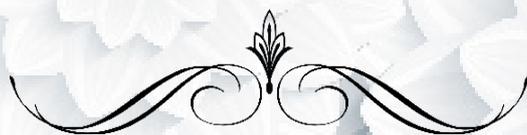
Surrender is complete when the identification of the self and the self-will is knowingly merged into God and God’s Will, and life is just being in the awareness of our innate Divinity. It is living in eternal Bliss.

We often say, “I am just an instrument in God’s Hands”. But if I say this while submitting this article and then wait for positive comments on this article, or check with anyone about how the article is, or if I do not wait nor ask but react with happiness or sadness or self-defense while getting criticisms about the article, then surrendering is a lip service. If there is surrender then it is not my article, it is a gift from the grace of God. I should try to accept but not try to understand or analyze His will.

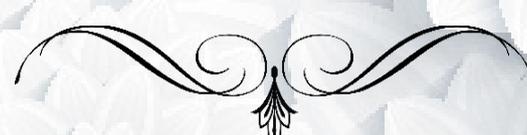
Where there is surrender, there is no worry. Where there is worry, there is no surrender.

Offered at the Lotus Feet of
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Jai Sai Ram

Seetha Subramanian


If one has surrendered his life to God, the Lord takes care.
Have faith that Swami is with you, at all times.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



PRAYER OF *Surrender*

Why get agitated? Let Me take care of all your business. I shall be the one who will think about them. I am waiting for nothing else than your surrender to Me, and then you do not have to worry any more about anything. Say farewell to all fears and discouragement. You demonstrate that you do not trust Me. On the contrary, you must rely blindly on Me.

To surrender means: To turn your thoughts away from troubles, to turn them away from difficulties you encounter and from all your problems. Leave everything into My hands saying “Lord, Thy will be done. Thou think of it.” That is to say: “Lord I thank you for you have taken everything in your hands, and you will resolve this for my highest good.”

Remember that thinking of the consequences of a thing is contrary to surrender. That is to say, when you worry that a situation has not had the desired outcome, you thus demonstrate that you do not believe in My love for you. You will prove that you do not consider your life to be under My control and that nothing escapes Me.

Never think: How is this going to end? What is going to happen? If you give into this temptation, you demonstrate that you do not trust Me. Do you want Me to deal with it? Yes or no? Then you must stop being anxious about it! I shall guide you only if you completely surrender to Me and when I must lead you into a different path than the one that you expect, I carry you in My arms.

What seriously upsets you is your reasoning, your worrying, your obsession and your will to provide for yourselves at any price. I can do so many things when the being, as much in his material necessities as in his spiritual ones, turns to Me saying: “You think of it.” Then he closes his eyes and rests quietly. You will receive a lot but only when your prayer will rely fully upon Me. You pray to Me when in pain so that I will intervene, but in the way you desire it. You do not rely on Me, but you want Me to adjust to your requests.

Don't behave like sick ones who ask the doctor to treat, all the time suggesting the treatment to him. Do not do that; but rather, even in sad circumstances, say: “Lord I praise and thank You for this problem, for this necessity. I pray to You to arrange things as You please for this terrestrial and temporal life. You know very well what is best for me.”

Sometimes you feel that disasters increase instead of diminishing! Do not get agitated. Close your eyes and tell me with faith: “Thy will be done. Thou think of it.” And when you speak thus, I even accomplish a miracle when necessary. I only think of it when you trust me totally. I always think of you, but I can only help you completely when you rely fully on Me.

*(This prayer is written on the wall near the entrance
to the Western Canteen in Prashanthi Nilayam)*

A JOURNEY WITH 'DIVINE FOOTPRINTS AND DIVINE HANDS'

MOGI & SONNY NAYAGAR

Footprints in the Sand by Mary Stevenson

*One night I dreamed I was walking
along the beach with the Lord...*

*Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.
In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.
Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,
other times there was one set of footprints.*

*This bothered me because I noticed
that during the low periods of my life,
when I was suffering from
anguish, sorrow or defeat,
I could see only one set of footprints.*

*So I said to the Lord,
"You promised me Lord,
that if I followed you,
you would walk with me always.*

*But I have noticed that during
the most trying periods of my life
there have only been one
set of footprints in the sand.*

*Why, when I needed you most,
you have not been there for me?"*

*The Lord replied,
"The times when you have
seen only one set of footprints,
is when I carried you."*

The Footprints in the Sand poem succinctly describes how the Divine Footprints and Divine Hands shape and guide each one of us. Swami assures us: *"Do you want me to take care of you I Myself will carry you in My arms."* Many of us have beautiful memories of Swami carrying us in His arms. Experiences that reveal the Master's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence, and Him as a fascinating role model and personality of unprecedented greatness from the beginning of the Sai era. He leaves us breathless.

The following experiences are undeniable proof that the Master carries us in His Divine Hands and that He has given us many opportunities to mentally and spiritually conquer material obstacles, by using and further developing our inner strength. Our shared experiences are not to be treated as 'stories', they should be revered as revelations of the Divine presence and intense human accounts of devotion and surrender, even if sometimes these have been less than perfect. This way we can understand our experiences and ourselves better.

We return to the land of the mighty lions, South Africa, where Swami literally carried us in His arms. It taught us firsthand about Swami's miraculous power in His Divine Footprints and Divine Hands. This lesson began in 1978 when I was in a 'family way', awaiting our second child. The gynaecologist could not hear a heartbeat and naturally this was a major concern for all of us.

That night Swami told me in a dream: “*You called urgently! Don’t worry all will be well!*” This not only comforted us but it was a turning point in our faith in Swami. Carrying us at the time of a near tragedy, He cemented our faith from ‘scattered pebbles to solid granite’.

What did we take away from this experience of the Divine Footprints and Divine Hands overseeing the safe delivery of a healthy baby and my wellbeing in the hospital? This divine intervention was a faith pointer, a faith compass that served to remind us and to strengthen us for our spiritual journey ahead. It renewed our devotion (Bhakthi) and gratitude to the Divine Hands for guiding and protecting us.

Swami’s omnipresence is no longer bookish intellectual knowledge, the experience left an everlasting fragrance of Swami’s presence in our lives, one that still fills our lives today with beauty and bliss.

We share this especially with young couples who are about to start and raise a family. Embrace this shared experience and strengthen the family foundation, the building blocks of your life, and ignite your faith, knowing that Swami is with you all the way. Undoubtedly, with our rock solid faith we will feel Swami’s compassion comforting us and His lessons guiding us, particularly in our urgent moments. He speaks directly to us in His own Divine way – through dreams, silence, prayer, someone chatting with us or inspirational articles and podcasts. Swami uses His “Ati Sookshma Shareera”, the omnipresent subtle body to enter our dreams, meditation, or inner conversations to guide us.

Our experiences with Swami should lead us to be more aware of His love and compassion for us and to make this visible in our thoughts, words and actions. Swami’s words below guides us in this calling:

“Life is like a vessel. The more the world gets in, the lesser the place for God. The more God gets in, the less will be the place for the world. Your watch is not for checking your time. It is to remind you that every moment you have to watch your words, actions, thoughts, character and heart.”

Let us exude the faith and confidence of having Swam in our lives, as we live righteously and put effort into serving Him and all others as our daily sadhana.

Swami reminds us to be jnaanis and to know that the Lord resident within us is our true Self and that His compassion and love must manifest through us. The experience mentioned earlier reminds us to just enjoy Swami’s Divinity and to ask for nothing else in our prayer and inner conversations with Him. Only then can we experience Divine “sannidhi”, or proximity.

The next part of our journey is in the distant land of New Zealand. The essential question from the following narrative is: “How does Swami speak to each one of us? How does He gather the human resources for carrying out His Divine will?”

Some fifteen years ago, we were returning home after a Sai Centre meeting when suddenly I had this deep urge to go to the home of a friend who was at the meeting too! Much against the logic of going home, I followed this urge. On our arrival, we found the husband had accidentally locked himself out and was washing his car. The inner urge compelled me to look up to the second floor of our friend’s home. To my utter shock, I could see flames in their kitchen. The husband had forgotten that he had left the stove on with a frying pan with oil. The glass front door had to be broken and the flames were doused in time, avoiding a catastrophic situation. “*If you look to Me, I shall look to you and take care of all your needs.*” These assuring words of the Master became a reality for us, as we literally witnessed His Divine Footprints.

To analyse this experience we need to better understand the phenomenon of personal inner conversations that Swami has with us, and vice versa. These inner conversations can be likened to a radio. The radio has to be tuned to a specific frequency to play a particular station. Similarly, the mind is the radio and Swami is the song. If you wish to experience inner conversations, like the urge we got to visit our friends, then your mind must be tuned into Him. Moreover, you must tune in with calmness and humility. It is only in silence that we can be in tune with Swami’s Para Sookshma Shareera (Swami’s Omnipotence and

Omniscience) and experience Swami as being present in every atom.

The mind must be trained consciously by calling on Swami for help. When we call from the heart with real surrender, with the steady practice of reducing the constant chatter of the mind, grace will surely descend on us.

Our spiritual experiences must awaken our passion and keep us charged so that we may be His human resources of service and uphold the Sai legacy. Swami's legacy must be our mission, our time and our space. Our inner grit must light the lamp of love, follow this duty to love and this obligation to love.

Recently during our trips to United States and Australia, Swami manifested vibuthi and wrote the Pranava sound 'OM' in the homes of families we were staying with. The Pranava manifestation is a reminder for us to have Constant Integration Awareness (CIA) of our Beloved Swami. Props and people may change, however our CIA is our means to feel the presence of Swami and to develop our inner vision. This vibuthi manifestation recreated the darshan experiences of seeing the Divine Footprints and the Divine Hand in Prashanti Nilayam, and reaffirmed the inner awareness and alignment with Sai needed to develop CIA.

As we get closer to Swami's 90th Birthday let us remember Swami's words that His birthday is the day when He is born in our hearts. Let Swami inspire us through his Divine Footprints and Divine Hands to make our homes our abode

of peace, filled with a holy atmosphere and His presence.

As each of us sits in silence in places of prayer, let us hold steadfastly to the Divine Feet and see the Divine Footprints and Hands lead you on a journey beyond the walls of your prayer place. Your faith compass will free your limitless Self as you understand that your heart is capable of beating for all human beings, irrespective of colour, race and gender, and, indeed, for all His creation.

Treasure your experiences with Swami as more than a stunning account of cosmic consciousness. Fill your own footsteps and your hands with the gracious kindness that you have experienced by Swami's Divine Footprints and Divine Hands. Remember your experiences with Swami are both timely and timeless.

Make Swami the Head of your family, the CEO of your life! Sit back, fasten your safety belt, and welcome the Divine Footprints and Divine Hands to navigate and guide you.

Swami reassures us: *"All are My children, I have equal compassion for all. Do your duty and open yourself to the grace of the Lord, obviously there will be success. There is no doubt about it."*

Om Sai Ram

*Maggi & Sonny
Nayagar*



Whatever your difficulties, whatever the ordeals you have to undergo, in any situation, do not give up God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



YOU ASK FROM ME A THOUSAND THINGS OF THE WORLD ...

KAMNI BHARWANI

The day I was leaving home for university, my father handed to me a travel wallet containing my ticket, passport, credit card, cash and some other travel essentials. As he walked me through the contents, preparing me for my new independence, one unexpected item caught my attention. It was a photo of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba that my father had slipped into the transparent pocket of the wallet.

I still find this amazing, as I pretty much knew nothing about Baba at that time, except that He was a Holy Man living in Puttaparthi who could perform miracles. I knew this because I had read about it in a TIME magazine article.

My family respected all gods and gurus, so my father could have equally chosen to put in a photo of Guru Nanik, Lord Krishna or any of the innumerable gods, goddesses or gurus photos that he had collected over the years. But for some reason, even before I had ever walked into a Sai Centre, or smelt *vibuthi*, or heard the words 'Sai Ram', I had Baba manifest His omnipresence to me, by accompanying me to university in this way.

Occasionally, during my reflective moments at university, I would open this wallet and talk to Baba's picture. Although I was comfortable praying to a formless God, a strong feeling stirred within me because of the picture, which till today I cannot explain.

I distinctly remember that a few times I asked Him if He would call me to Him one day, and if He would guide me and keep me in His service. I have no idea what motivated me to ask this, but the only thing I can say is that there was a

magnetism emanating from Him. It effortlessly drew me in when I looked at the photo.

But then, once I closed the wallet, I really wouldn't even give Baba a second thought, till perhaps the next time I travelled or had a reason to open the wallet again. Somewhere at the back of my mind, I must have assumed that if any 'call' from Baba came, it would be much later in life, after all my ambitions and goals were achieved and I was ready for a spiritual retirement.

I couldn't have been more wrong! In fact, it was only a couple of years later, through what I consider to be a series of strange and miraculous events, that I suddenly found myself sitting in *darshan* at Prashanti Nilayam. The moment I caught my first glimpse of Baba, tears just flowed endlessly. He stopped right in front of me, graciously accepted my letter and stared back at me intensely. I didn't understand what was happening to me, but I knew instantly that, from that moment, I belonged to Him.

I tell this story because it has formed the bedrock of my belief that no wish of ours, no conversation of ours and no thought of ours goes unheard by Swami. He is our innermost self, and so He knows each of our true longings, even before we have discovered them for ourselves. When He says His relationship with each of us is direct and heart-to-heart, I knew instinctively from this introductory experience that He meant it.

Since that first *darshan* in Prashanti Nilayam, my journey with Swami has been an unfolding of this intimate, heart-to-heart relationship that began with a photo; a relationship that was confirmed by

the Physical Form but nurtured day-to-day by the Sai within.

Swami always says that the true hallmark of our devotion to Him is reflected in the transformation we undergo. In my own experience, some transformations happen effortlessly overnight, a sudden shift occurs in our mindset, just like the flick of a switch. Some happen gradually through our consistent *sadhana*, like the dimmer that slowly intensifies the brightness of the light. And still others happen painfully and often traumatically, targeting the possessions, relationships, beliefs and roles that we treasure and hold on to the most.

Sometimes the only way for the karmic layers of our ego to get burnt away is to walk through the blazing fire of life's tests and hurdles. This is what Swami often refers to as the 'breaking and re-making' of His devotees. In whichever form we experience it, the purpose of transformation is always for us to 'let go' of what is unreal and to open up space for us to be closer to whom we really are.

Some of the transformation I experienced began as soon as I returned from Prashanti Nilayam. Sai, the inner motivator, inspired me to do many things that were completely new to me. I was prompted to make my first visit to the Sai Centre in Hong Kong to attend *bhajans*. It was a totally novel and strange experience for me, but it profoundly touched my heart and I have returned for *bhajans* regularly since that day.

Before I knew it, I found myself assisting and then teaching Bal Vikas classes. Nothing in my background or life experience made me a suitable candidate for this. I had never been to any spiritual education classes as a child. I didn't know a single *bhajan* or *mantra*, or anything about Swami's life story or the great Indian epics. I had never even attempted meditation. But somehow the idea of values education resonated with the deepest, truest part of me. I felt compelled to dedicate myself to it.

It was just so clear to me that this was what was missing in the education system and in our upbringing, an education for the heart and not just for the mind. The love and the innate wisdom

of the children regularly left me in awe. Ironically, I myself was the primary Bal Vikas student in my own lessons.

Swami's *Educare* brought out from within me deep values messages, creativity, self-confidence and a passionate courage that I didn't even know I had. It is said in the Bible that with His grace, the blind can see and the lame can walk. I feel very much like that about my experience as a Bal Vikas teacher.

On the spiritual path, the guru is the one who leads the way, who removes the darkness of ignorance. Some people wonder how it is possible to have Swami as their Guru if He is not accessible to physically talk to, to consult on their problems or to guide with a personalized programme of *sadhana*. For me, I always feel that He directly guides my path and progress.

This universe is His university. He is the principal and we are all His students. When He wants me to focus on a specific topic in the divine curriculum, He will find a way to guide me to it. It may be through books I read, talks I hear, emails I receive or even a conversation with a friend.

Other times, He will prompt me through inner reflections that come from prayer and contemplating on life experiences. When He feels I need the personal guidance, He will delegate me to one of the 'professors' in His university. A learned mentor or spiritual teacher will appear to give me the human touch I need.

When He wants me to be cleansed and recharged by Holy vibrations, He will send me to Puttapparthi or other holy places for pilgrimage, always arranging the trips in His usual mysterious style and delighting me with His trademark sweet miracles.

The Bhagawad Gita has said it so clearly: He has a thousand eyes, a thousand feet, a thousand arms and a thousand heads. We cannot limit Him, who is limitless.

Recently, Swami found a way to validate this for me. After all these years, I still use the same travel wallet given to me by my father. Some months ago, when I opened the wallet to get my passport, I

took a few minutes to admire the familiar photo of Swami. I was overcome with an immense feeling of gratitude for all His love and protection, and a sense of wonder of how He had chosen to enter into my life.

Suddenly, I had an impulse to remove the photo from the pocket. It occurred to me that these calendar photos usually have quotes at the bottom. In all these years, I had never thought to remove the photo, but in that moment I just knew He had something to tell me.

And if I had needed anymore proof that my Sai and I were connected heart-to-heart, the words that were printed on that calendar photo left me with no further doubt. They read:

"You ask from me a thousand things of the world, but rarely do you ask for me." Baba

These words meant so many things all at once. But most of all, to me these words were His tender acknowledgement that, perhaps, all those years ago at university, I did sincerely and innocently just ask for Him, if even for a split second. And He has so sweetly answered in a way beyond my imagination. I felt so humbled.

It is so simple. We just need to ask for Him from our heart and remain open to His grace.

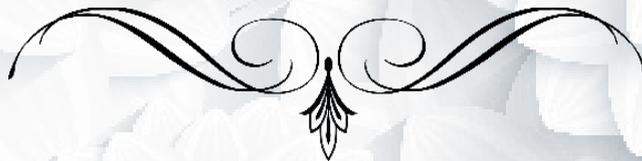
Jai Sai Ram

Karni Bharwani



The same am I to all beings,
to Me there is none hateful nor dear;
but those who worship Me with devotion,
are in Me and I am also in them.

- Bhagawad Gita,
chapter 9, verse 29



人而無德，無異於魔

印度是許多在各大洲獲得崇高聲譽的高靈的祖國。

這是許多英勇斗士的故土，他們在沙場上戰勝了入侵的敵人。

這是無數滿腹經綸者的聖地，他們教導吠陀經及其他經典給其他國家的人民。

然而，不幸地，印度子民，今天，已忘了那些靈性原則而誤入歧途。

(泰盧固詩)

Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo
Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava, Atithi Devo
Bhava (敬母如天，敬父如天，敬導師和賓客
如天)是吠陀經的主要教導。Sathyam Vada,
Dharmam Chara (說真話，行正義)也是吠陀經的
主要教導。然而這些吠陀經的教導今天再也不得
一聞了。

根諸真與愛

現今我們在世界的各個角落，隨處都可以看到正在變本加厲之中的貪婪與欲望。甚至外國人也覺得有必要控制感官。人，今天，由於誤用和濫用其感官，而正在累積他們的罪業。擁有欲望是無可厚非的，但必須有所節制。人，今天擁有無窮無盡的欲望。再者，現今一切都受到污染。喝的水，吃的食物以及呼吸的空氣都被污染了。其實，所有五大元素都污化了。人的生命全靠這五大元素來維系。當這五大元素被污染時，人的生命還不受到影響嗎？表面上他言和色怡，但內心卻充滿苦澀。這是很糟糕的。

人生的目的是什麼？誰是一個真正的人？人類是聖靈的化身。當他卻誤入歧途時，他還能被稱為人嗎？這就是為什麼今天要找一個真正的人類是那麼困難的原因了。就算是那些受過高深教育，考獲高級學位，身居要職的人，尚且不能被稱為人，倘若他們缺乏真與愛。其實，他們浪費金錢和時間於接受這所謂的沒有任何精華的高等教育。雖接受高深教育，飽讀經書，並明了諸如持名，坐禪，瑜伽，祭祀等的靈修法門，但若不培育人今天已完全遺忘的真與愛，這一切都是枉

然。不論誰在講述任何事物，幾乎都不例外地帶有不實的因素。迄於愛，人們卻口蜜腹劍，何愛之有！沒有真與愛，你如何獲得心境平和？

正義來自真理。故說，Sathyannasti Paro Dharma (最偉大的正義莫過於堅持真理)。有真理與正義，平和自然流露。愛只有在平和之中才能培育起來。有愛之處，暴力就不能存在。於是人才能平靜地執行他所有的行動於身心靈三個層面。因此，如果你要平和，你首先就應該培育愛。如果你想擁有愛，你就應該堅持真理。然而今天，人，事無巨細，動輒訴諸虛假。不僅此也，他還充滿嗔怒。嗔怒完全遮蔽在人之內的真理。人之誕生於世不是為了成家立業或填飽肚子而是救贖他的生命。如果他與此背道而馳，他便失去他的人性。如果一個人擺脫欲望的糾纏，他便超凡入聖了。母親渴望看到她含辛茹苦帶大的孩子快樂幸福。然而不幸地，今天人們卻不愛他們的父親和母親。其實，他們誰也不愛。

諸位愛的化身！

在這世界裡，不論我們放眼何處，我們都看不到一絲一毫的平和。甚至在賣花者身上，賣菜者身上以及賣柴者身上，我們都找不到平和。平和在哪兒？平和只在我們之內。它在我們的話中也在我們的心中。它是不能得之於外的。不論我們執行什麼靈修，如持名，瑜伽和祭祀等，它們都不能帶給我們平和。首先，我們應該使我們的心穩定和平靜。在這世界，我們觸目所及，無非鬥爭與衝突。即便親密朋友也會為了一些小事而爭吵起來。其實，在這世界上你是找不到一個真正的朋友的。這些鬥爭與衝突就得歸咎於邪惡的心了。是故，要維系你的心的純淨，這心不是心

臟而是靈心。就連一絲一毫的污穢也不應該沾染它。

只有神能提供你真正的福樂

世人今天正在囤積大量的金錢。然而，這是為了什麼？當他們撒手塵寰時，他們會帶走什麼？他們非得兩手空空地離開不可。就連他們的身體，他們也得拋下。五大元素融於五大元素。於是，身體也就被火化了。你不應該以你的身體和財富為傲。錢來而有所往，德至則有所長（Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows）。我們應該培育品德。人今天雖接受高深教育，但卻喪失品德。缺乏品德根本就不是人。實際上，他是化身為人的一個惡魔。沒有品德就沒有人性。要敬老尊賢，要感恩父母。但今天，世人缺乏這樣的感恩之情和尊敬之意，心想，“我們為什麼要敬老尊賢？我們為什麼要愛他們？”不論他們到哪兒，他們渴求的就是金錢，更多的金錢！我們真正的財富是什麼？愛是我們真正的財富。如果我們得到這愛的財富，我們就得到一切了。甚至連天上的雲朵，我們也可以抓在手上。

一切都在人的手上而所有的神祇都存在於他之內。其實，他不是別的，他從頭到腳是神聖的。世俗的一切就如過眼雲煙，來而又去。以這些過眼雲煙之物為傲是一大謬誤。在說話時，我們無所不談。但當要付諸實行時，我們的言行就不一致了。這是一大罪過。

啊，世人！在這世上除了神之外，誰能帶給你快樂幸福。只有神是在每一種方式下保護你。你應該常常冥思著祂。如果你常常冥思著祂，你就可以擺脫一切苦惱了。有些人開你玩笑地問，“你總是說，神，神，神…但，祂給了你什麼？”給了你一切的就是神。獎賞你的，懲罰你的，和保護你的就只有神。一切是神。Ekam Sath Viprah Bahudha Vadanti（真理是一個，但智者以不同之名稱之）。我們叫神這個或那個名字，只是滿足我們自己。其實，所有的名字都是祂的。我們應該把祂永遠安裝在我們的心裡。不論遇到什麼困難，都要視之為神的旨意而加以接受。沒有人知道神為什麼把困難給他。你大可作這麼想，困難是為了你的幸福而給你的。Na Sukhat Labhate Sukham（你不能從幸福中導致幸福）。快樂是介於兩個痛苦之中的。所有苦難都該歸咎於人的心念。當人的心念不安時，他處處都陷於煩惱。他甚至厭惡他的一生。他開始感到他的生命本身就是一種糟蹋。人的心念及其欲望就是所有這一切的根由。

不要傷害任何人。要愛每一個人。你會從中得到極大好處。如果你幫助任何人，這種幫助會轉而幫助你。這一類的幫助今天在這世上已看不到了。不論你到哪兒，就只有自我，自我，自我和我的，我的，我的！人已變得那麼自我中心以至於他除了他自己和他親近的人外，他什麼都忘了。Viswam Vishnu Swarupam（整個世界是主毗濕奴的化身）。人並不僅是會腐朽的臭皮囊；他是聖靈。因此要認為每一個人都是神聖的。不要在肉體上或精神上傷害任何人。有些人借傷害他人來得到某種滿足感。但他們將來必會嘗到這些行為的果報。他們不明白他們必須面對的是什麼苦難。你吃什麼，就只有什麼氣味的嚼。如果你吃黃瓜，你不可能打出芒果氣味的嚼。所以不論你做什麼，你一定會體驗到它的果報。所以，要存善，向善，行善，言善並體驗好的果報。無論神說什麼，都只是為你好而說的。基士拿說，“阿周那！你因你的虛幻而感到憂心。這場戰爭只會帶給你勝利。這勝利是為了什麼？為了展示人的神性。”

愛每一個人而接受神的愛

諸位愛的化身！

你所有的苦難就像一面鏡子。它們揭露你的真相。你懷持各種欲望，造成你必須承受各種痛苦。因此，不要讓欲望有立足的余地。你的無窮的欲望就是你所有苦難的起因。有因方有果。沒有種子，如何長出樹苗！因此，必須先有種子，才能長出一棵大樹。不論你遇見何人，都要視之如己。認同你自己是他。要培育更多這種感覺。你是誰？你說，“我是某某。”你叫什麼名字？你說，“我的名字叫納卡巴。”就這樣，每一個人都有一個不同的名字。甚至如果整個世界問神，“你是誰？”，祂會說，“我是我”，“Aham Brahmasmi”（我是梵）。其實，整個世界都瀰漫著梵。你不能找到梵不在其內的任何一個人。那麼，不論你批評或讚美任何人，這批評或讚美都會到達神那兒。如果你批評神，你不能避開其後果。因此，絕不批評神。任何人說你什麼，就讓他去吧！要認為，他不是批評你而是在批評他自己。不論他說什麼，它都會進入稀薄的空氣中。那麼，對那進入稀薄空氣中的話語做出反應有用嗎？只有愛才能到達心坎裡。你應該擁有哪一類的思想？你的思想應該洋溢著真理。只有思想是純真的，你才能體驗到愛。所以，要以愛來度過你這一生並以愛來結束你這一生。不論你為他人做什麼，其實，你是在為自己而做。

不論好或壞，助益或傷害，一切都是你自己思想（Sankalpa）所造成的。因此，要愛每一個人。倘若你不能愛他人，那你就保持靜默。切莫辱罵他們。其實，沒有人有權力去批評他人。同樣的愛存在於每一個人之內。愛能批評愛嗎？不，不。愛從不批評。它總是提供給每一個人愛的體驗。甚至鳥獸也具備愛。人難道不應該愛他的同胞嗎？當天賦予他那麼多優良的品質時，人就應該愛他的同胞。只有這樣他才能成為神的愛的接收者。所以，要愛每一個人，從而獲得神的愛。結合真（真理）與你的愛為一體。切莫訴諸虛假。你只可以透過真（真實，真理）而擁有愛。有真與愛之處，才有平和。有平和之處，才有非暴力。因此，人主要應該培育真與愛。然後他就不會動輒訴諸暴力。你可以執行任何靈性修習，如苦行，祭祀，瑜伽等，但你必須充之以愛。

神與你的關係才是真實的關係。祂以你的兒子，你的女兒，你的朋友及其它關係的形相來到你面前。在你所有的苦難中，神是你真正的相關者。那就是為什麼祂被稱為Apadbandhava（在苦難中的知己）的原因了。但我們該怎麼應付這種關係？我們不應該在世俗的層面來應對之。

這裡有一個小例子。結婚後，夫妻建立起親密的關係。他們彼此對對方說，“你是我而我是你。”但一星期後，關係起了一點變化，導致丈夫是丈夫，妻子是妻子。婚後不久，當夫妻倆一道出門而丈夫看到一根刺，他非常擔心妻子被刺到。於是他喊道，“刺，刺，刺。”，並把妻子拉開以免被刺到。多深的愛與關懷啊！一星期後，他們到市場去逛。丈夫看到另一根刺並對妻子說，“那邊有根刺；你難道看不到嗎？”再過些時日，當丈夫看到刺時，他生氣地叫道，“你瞎了嗎？”僅只幾天，這愛就起了變化。如果我們寄托我們的信心於這愛而在這種愛之中過我們的生活，那麼，我們能延續多久呢？這愛僅只幾天就起了變化。肉體的愛畢竟不算是愛。兩個身體就像是兩顆水泡。兩者都充滿著空氣。這會爆裂而那也會爆裂。當水泡爆裂時，裡面的空氣便與外面的空氣融合為一體。因此這一類的愛不是我們應該期盼的。心心相印的愛才是重要的。就是這心心相印的愛把我們帶到神那兒。

集體拜讚利益參與者

在此，那麼多人已到來參與拜讚。他們所有人都具有Sraddha（信心）與Bhakti（虔誠）嗎？他們都能獲得Mukti（解脫）嗎？不，一點也不。在所有這些人當中，或許僅僅有十個人的祈禱可以

抵達神那兒。集體拜讚就是希望很多人的參加可以帶動幾個人的愛抵達神。拜讚也是為了讓社會大眾培育起對神的愛。

導師那納克（Guru Nanak）開始集體讚唱的方式。當有人問他說，“那麼多人一起讚唱。神每一個人都聆聽嗎？”，他回答，“最少一兩個人的愛抵達神是可能的。那就足以保佑大家了。”因此，我們應該舉行Samashti Bhajan（集體讚唱）。Samashti（集體或團體）是由 Vyashti（個體）形成的。當很多個體集合在一起就組成一個社團，那麼他們的Pushti（力量）就大大地提高了。Parameshti（神）不是為了好玩而創造了Srishti（萬萬物）。祂為了彰顯萬物的一體性而開天辟地。

一體性是萬物的根本原則。它意味著促進愛的原則於眾生之中。然而，不幸地，今天政黨正以黨派路線來分裂或分化人們。一家四口卻步上四種不同的途徑而把屋子劃分為四個部分。這是很糟糕的事。甚至一個家庭內有四百人，他們之間還是應該要有一體性。每一個人都應該幫助他的鄰居。大家都應該互相幫助。然後我們才能看到萬物一體，和諧一致的情況。否則，創造天地萬物便失去其意義了。

你應該全心全意地參與拜讚，歌頌神的榮耀。就算你不能執行任何其他的修行，念誦神的名號總可以吧！那就夠了。（講至此，Swami唱一首拜讚，“Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin...”然後繼續祂的講道。）不唱拜讚，你得不到平和與快樂。平和只可以通過拜讚來獲得而不是其他法門。“Hari Nam Bina Ananda Nahin”（不讚唱訶利，Hari，神，之聖名，你不能得到福樂）。“Japa Dhyana Bina Samyoga Nahin”（不執行持名與坐禪，你不能與神融合為一）。何謂瑜伽？它不僅是閉上眼睛靜靜地坐著而已。何謂靜坐？它不是閉上眼睛憶念著神。你應該安裝神於你的內心。不要認為你跟神有所不同。你應該與神合一。神的Ardhanareeswara（兩性體，雌雄同體）的形相就說明這真相。一個是Jiva（命我，個靈）而另一個是Daiva（梵）。真正的超脫意味著個靈與梵的結為一體。有個靈（Jiva命我），就有梵（Daiva）。因此，你大可不必苦苦追逐神，巴結神。神存在於所有Jiva（個靈）之中。不要認為你自己僅是一個個靈；要認為你是梵。因為你對身體的執著，所以你才認為你自己是一個Jiva（命我）。你不應該作如是觀。

同樣的阿特瑪（Atma 純靈）存在於眾生之內。如果你考慮到阿特瑪原則，萬物就成為一體了。那麼多的個體出現於這禮堂之內。他們之內的阿特瑪是一個，同樣的一個。天空中只有一個太陽。它提供光給整個世界。同樣，神就像太

陽，祂照亮每一個人的生命。如果我們批斗他人，我們就陷自己於黑暗之中。因此要愛大家，服務大家。如果有人辱罵我們，就讓他去吧。辱罵會融入稀薄的空氣之中。因此，總

要認為沒有人能批評你。對‘神總是會保護你的’要深具信心。要培育起對神的萬變不渝的信心。還有很多人否定神的存在。如果沒有神，你從哪裡來？你出自何處？如果你對神沒有信心，你的這一生便被糟蹋了。

總要記得神

所以，諸位愛的化身，要培育真和愛。當你擁有真和愛兩者時，你就擁有平和了。當你擁有平和時，你就能有一個幸福的人生。你不會憎恨任何人。只有當你缺乏愛與真時，你才有憎恨。你應該融合愛與真於你的生命中。當你擁有愛時，你會愛每一個人；你會使每一個人快樂。因此，要銘刻與珍藏愛與真於你內心而決不忘掉它們；即便在夢中也不例外。日有所思，夜有所夢，夢僅是醒時的反應，反映和反響。你在白天所做的一切，會在夜裡來到你的夢中。夢有如過眼雲煙。不要追逐它們。堅持著真實的，永恆的和不變的神。如果你堅持著神，你就能成就一切。於是你就不会有恐懼和擔心了。

讓人們說他們喜歡的，不予以回應。要這麼想，他們是批評你的身體而不是你。不要太重視你的身體。你不是那身體。當你說，“這是我的身體”時，那麼你應該問你自己，“我是誰？”這‘我’不是個別的‘我’。它是根本的‘我’。它不僅與一個特別的個體有著密切的關係。它也跟所有的個體息息相關。基督教的標志十字架的十，表示腰斬自我的‘I’。

只有在你斬除自我的I之后，你才能達至神性。因此，要放棄狹窄的‘我’與‘我的’的感覺。你說，“Naa Koduku, ” “Naa Bidda, ”（我的兒子，我的女兒）。這裡‘Naa’的意思是沒有；它表示空空如也。只有神永遠與我們同在。一切是神。你應該永遠記得神。不要浪費時間，哪怕是一分一秒。浪費一秒也是一大糟蹋。如果你憶念著神，即便一瞬間，你也會體驗到無比的福樂。當你陷入痛苦哀傷的情景，就閉上你的眼睛來想神。這會給你帶來平靜。不要因任何事物而感傷。要以勇氣和毅力去面對一切。勇氣與毅力是你真正的力量。身為主的信徒，你就應該這樣地在一生的每一刻都深思著祂。（薄伽梵唱一首拜讚，“Rama Rama Rama Sita...” 然后繼續講道。）

同學們引吭高唱拜讚，“Kausalyama Rama Charan, Vaidehi Priya Rama Charan, Bharatachita Sri Rama Charan, Ahalyodharaka Rama Charan, Hanumatsevita Rama Charan”

（常常膜拜憍薩裡雅（Kausalya）之子羅摩的蓮花足，那蓮花足是悉多（Sita）最喜愛的，是婆羅多（Bharata）虔誠膜拜的，是哈努曼（Hanuman）衷心服務的，以及，拯救了阿哈裡亞（Ahalya））。所有歌中所提及的五個人都是羅摩親近的人。每一個神化身（Avatar）就是這樣地選擇一些幸運者，給予特別的恩惠。被甄選的人都是完全降服的人。羅摩是母親憍薩裡雅的靈光。羅摩說，“憍薩裡雅生我。要不是憍薩裡雅，我如何來到世間？所以，我的母親就是我的神。”

歌的第二行是，“Vaidehi Priya Rama Charan”。Vaidehi意指一個超越身體執著者。另一行是“Hanumatsevita Rama Charan”。哈努曼心裡只念著羅摩並不斷地念誦“羅摩，羅摩，羅摩”。“羅摩，羅摩，羅摩”的聲音發自他身體的每一個毛孔。有一次，羅摩問他在沉思什麼。哈努曼說，“Swami！我身上的每一根汗毛都在讚頌您的名號！”說著，他從身上拔下一根汗毛並放近羅摩的耳邊，發出‘羅摩，羅摩，羅摩’的聲音。因此，當靜慮於神的名號時，我們的整個實體應該洋溢著神聖的意識。我們的每一個念頭，每一句話和每一個行動都應該充滿著神的名號。然後我們才能超凡入聖。

Daivam Manusha Rupena（神寓於一個人的形相之中）。神化身為人。一個不斷地念誦羅摩名號或任何神的名號者才是一個真正的人。甚至一個無神論者在他身體疼痛時也說，“Ayyo Rama！”當一個人受傷時，他會叫“Abba Rama！”所以，每一個人都會在某個時候或某種狀況呼喚神的名號。我們總應該時時沉湎於神的名號之中。要念誦神的任何名號——羅摩，基士拿，阿拉，耶穌。神的名號眾多，但神只有一個。糖果甚多但只有糖提供所有糖果以甜味。同理，在所有名號中，神聖的原則是同樣的一個。

我是一個但我存在於每一個人的所有不同的形相之內。在我的創造物裡有的是一體性，但你們卻由於視差而看到分殊性。你應該看到萬物的一體性。你不應該依據你的視覺。你的肉眼看到好的也看到不好的兩種。當一個人的眼睛有缺陷時，他看到兩樣東西而不是一樣。缺陷在於你的眼睛。說真的，神是一個。念誦任何名號但要以愛去念誦。如果你以愛去念誦聖號，你到處就體驗到愛了。

(source: 取自《百善》第40期第29-43章)

-निसन्देह निवारिणी-

भक्त : प्रणाम स्वामी ।

स्वामी: तिमी आयौ ? दशैमा त आएनौ नि ?

भक्त : त्यतिबेला भक्तहरूको धेरै घुईचो होला र म आफ्नो इच्छा पुग्ने गरी हजुरसंग कार्य गर्न नपाउला भनी मैले सोचे । त्यसैले म हजुरको जन्मदिनको केहि दिन अगाडि आएको हुँ जसबाट हजुरले अनुग्रहसाथ प्रदान गरेको आदर्श प्राप्त गर्न सकू अनि हजुरको अबतार भएको उत्सव मनाइने शुभदिनमा आफ्नो हृदयमा भक्ति र ज्ञानको जागरण गर्न सकियोस् ।

स्वामी :अति उत्तम । साँचैने उत्तम बिचार हो र तर तिम्रो भनाईको तात्पर्य मेरो जन्मदिन बाहेक अन्य दिनमा तिमीभित्र भक्ति र ज्ञान जागृत हुँदैनन् भन्ने हो ? के तिम्रो बिचार यही हो ?

भक्त : होइन, होइन मेरो भनाइ त्यो होइन स्वामी हजुर यस संसारमा शुभ मुर्हतको एक शुभ दिनमा शुभ रूप लिई अबतरण हुनुभएको हो, होइन र ? यस्तो पबित्र दिनमा म आफ्ना हृदयमा हजुरका दिव्यवाणीहरू प्रतिस्थापन गरी यसलाई पबित्र गर्न सकू भन्ने मात्र मेरो बिचार हो । आजको दिन शुभ छ मुर्हत पनि पवित्र छ ।

स्वामी :धेरै राम्रो, आज तिम्रो के सन्देह छ ?

भक्त : आज म हजुरका दिव्यवाणीहरू सुनी तिनलाई जीवनमा उताछु भन्ने सडकल्प लिएर आएको छु । काशी गए पनि शनिबार छेवैमा भन्ने भनाइ छ नि त्यसैले मैले आज आउदा शङ्काको भुतलाई साथमा ल्याइन त्यो भूत मेरा पछि लागेको छैन यो सबै हजुरकै कृपा हो ।

स्वामी :अति सुन्दर , तिमीमा सन्देह हुँदैन वा तिमीले सन्देहलाई कुनै प्रश्रय दिदैनौ भने त्यसबखत मन पबित्र भयो भनी जान्नु । यी दुबै कुरा भए भने एकाग्रता आयो भन्ने बुझे हुन्छ । भइगयो, यी दुबै कुरा छाडौ । तिमीमा कुनै सन्देह छैन भने मैले तिमीलाई सन्देहको बिषयमा किन सम्झाइरहनुपरयो ? त्यसो भए आज म तिमालाई के बताउ ? तिमी नै भन ।

भक्त : स्वामी , हामीले साधारणतय कसरी आचरण गर्नुपर्छ भन्ने बारेमा बताउनुहोस् । हामीमा के के गुण हुन पर्छ ? हामीले कुन बिषय बुझ्ने प्रयत्न गर्नुपर्छ ? हजुरको अनुग्रह र दिव्य सन्निध्य प्राप्त गर्न हामीले के काम गर्नुपर्छ ? कृपया मलाई यिनीहरू मध्ये बढी महत्वपूर्ण ठानिएका रत्नहरूबारे बताउनुहोस् ।

स्वामी :ओहो मलाई कस्तो लाग्दछ भने एक समय पार्वतीले ईश्वरलाई भनेकी थिईन भगवानका सहस्र नाम (हजार नाम) सम्झन गाह्रो छ । यी सबै नाम थाहा पाउन र जप्न धेरै समय लाग्छ । त्यसैले कृपा गरी यो सबैको अर्थात हजार नामको सरस्वरूप मलाई एउटै नाम बताउनुहोस् । त्यस्तै तिमीलाई पनि मैले भनेका र लेखेका सबै बुझ्न गाह्रो भएको जस्तो लाग्यो । त्यसैले तिमी पनि मलाई महत्वपूर्ण कुरा मात्र बताउन भन्दैछौ होइन त ? तर हेर, तिमीलाई थाहै छ नामको आफ्नै महिमा हुन्छ । तिमीले सोधेका बिषय अर्कै हुन् । यिनीहरूको लक्ष्य र अन्तिम निष्कर्ष एउटै भए पनि अभ्यास र कार्यक्षेत्र एउटै हुन सक्तैन । यी सबैको सार एउटै शब्दमा दिन सकिदैन तापनि म तिमीलाई छानिएका केही रत्नहरू, महत्वपूर्ण आचरणका सिद्धान्तहरू दिदैछु तिनलाई प्राप्त गर र आनन्द प्राप्त गर । यी रत्नहरूले सुशोभित भएर सुन्दर होउ ।

भक्त : मैले खोजेको यही हो म कस्तो भाग्यमानी ।

स्वामी :त्यसोभए ध्यान दिएर सुन, म भन्छु ।

- १) प्रेमलाई जीवनको प्राणजत्तिकै ठान्नुपर्छ ।
- २) सबैमा समानरूपमा पाईने प्रेमलाई नै [परमात्मा] हो भनी विश्वास गर ।
- ३) एउटै परमात्मा प्रेमका रूपमा सबैमा रहेका छन् ।
- ४) अरुमा भन्दा पनि मानिसले भगवानमा आफ्नो प्रेम केन्द्रित गर्ने प्रयास गर्नुपर्छ ।
- ५) ईश्वरप्रति देखाईने यस्तो प्रेमलाई भक्ति भनिन्छ । भक्ति प्राप्त गर्नु नै सबैभन्दा महत्वपूर्ण परीक्षा हो ।
- ६) आत्मानन्द खोज्नेहरूले इन्द्रिय सुखभोगका पछि लाग्नु हुँदैन ।
- ७) सत्यलाई जीवनदायी प्राणवायुसरह ठान्नुपर्छ ।
- ८) जसरी प्राणबिनाको शरीर बेकम्मा हुन्छ र केही क्षणमै कुहिन र गन्हाउन थाल्छ त्यसरी नै सत्यविनाको जीवन पनि बेकम्मा हुन्छ र यो दुर्गन्धयुक्त हुन्छ साथै दुःख र कष्टको सिकार हुन्छ ।
- ९) सत्यभन्दा ठूलो अरु केही छैन भनि विश्वास गर ।
- १०) सत्य नै सबैलाई संरक्षण गर्ने परमेश्वर हो । सत्यभन्दा बलवान रक्षक अरु कोही छैन ।
- ११) सत्यस्वरूप भगवानले सत्य बचन र प्रेमपूर्ण हृदय भएकालाई दर्शन दिन्छन् ।
- १२) सबैप्रति असिम दया राख, साथै आत्मत्यागको भावना पनि राख ।
- १३) तिमीमा इन्द्रियनिग्रहका निमित्त स्तिर चरित्र र वैराग्य पनि हुनुपर्छ ।
- १४) जिब्राद्वारा हुनसक्ने यी चार पापदेखि सधैं होसियार रहू : (क) झुटो बोल्नु (ख) अरुका नराम्रा कुरा गर्नु (ग) अरुका पिठयू पछाडि कुरा गर्नु; चुक्ली लगाउनु र (घ) धेरै बोल्नु । यी प्रवृत्तिहरूलाई नियन्त्रण गर्ने प्रयास गर्नु श्रेयस्कर छ ।
- १५) शरीरले गर्ने पाँच पापलाई रोक्न कोसिस गर □ हिंसा, व्यभिचार, चोरी, मादप पदार्थ सेवन र मांसाहार । उच्च जीवनका लागि यिनलाई सकेसम्म टाढा राख्ना नै लाभदायक हुन्छ ।
- १६) मनले गर्ने आठ प्रकारका पापहरूबाट हरबखत सतर्क भई बस्नुपर्छ : काम, क्रोध, लोभ, मोह, ईश्या, द्वेष, मद र मात्सर्य । यी सबै अबगुणहरूलाई सकेसम्म टाढा राख्नु मानिसको कर्तव्य हो ।
- १७) मानिसको मन खराब कामतिर चाँडै नै लाग्दछ । मनलाई यसरी बहकिनबाट रोक्न भगवानको नाम सम्झनुपर्छ वा कुनै असल काम वा यस्तै कुनै राम्रो काम गर्ने प्रयास गर्नुपर्छ । यस्ता काम गर्नेहरू अवश्य पनि भगवानको अनुग्रहका निमित्त योग्य हुन्छन् ।
- १८) कहिले अरुको ईश्या डाढो गर्ने बानि छाड्नुपर्छ र उनीहरूलाई पीडा दिने इच्छा त्याग गर्नुपर्छ । अरुका सुखमा आफू पनि खुसी होउ । दुःखमा परेकाहरूलाई सहानुभूति देखाउ । उनीहरूको समृद्धिको कामना गर । ईश्वरप्रति प्रेम देआउने मार्ग यिनै हुन् ।
- १९) धैर्य मानिसहरूलाई चाहिने शक्ति हो ।
- २०) सुखसंग जीवनयापन गर्न खोज्नेले राम्रो काम गर्नुपर्छ ।
- २१) क्रोधलाई प्रेमले, आसक्तिलाई विवेकले, असत्यलाई सत्यले, खराबलाई असलले र लोभलाई दानले सजिलै जित्न सकिन्छ ।
- २२) दुष्टका बचनको जवाफ फर्काउन हुन्न । यस्ताबाट टाढै रहनु बेस; यो तिम्रै भलाइका लागि हो । यस्ता मानिसहरूसंग सबै सम्बन्ध छुटाइदेउ ।

- २३) आफ्नु जीवन र आत्मसम्मानको त्याग गरेर भए पनि साधुहरूसंग सत्सङ्ग गर । तर भगवानसंग साधु र असाधु छुट्याउन सक्ने विवेक पाउनका निमित्त प्रार्थना गर । तिमीले आफूसंग भएको बुद्धिको प्रयोग गर्ने प्रयास हरबखत गर्नुपर्छ ।
- २४) संसारमा मुलुकहरु जित्ने र प्रसिद्धि कमाउनेलाई वीर भनिन्छ । निसन्देह तर, आफ्ना इन्द्रियमाथि विजय हासिल गर्ने वीरहरुलाई ब्रम्हाण्ड विजेता भनी घोषणा गर्नुपर्छ ।
- २५) मानिसले गर्ने कुनै पनि असल वा खराब कामको प्रतिफल अवश्य मिल्दछ ।
- २६) लोभले दुःख मात्र ल्याउछ ; सन्तोष नै सबैभन्दा उत्तम फल हो । सन्तोषभन्दा ठूलो आनन्द अरु केहि छैन ।
- २७) अरुको कुभलो चिताउने कलुषित विचारलाई जरैदेखि उखेलेर फ्याँक्नुपर्छ । यसलाई रहन दिइयो यसले जीवनलाई नै खतरामा पार्छ ।
- २८) दुःख र हानिलाई धैर्य गरी सहन गर ; आनन्द र लाभ पाउने उपायहरु पाउने प्रयास गर ।
- २९) क्रोधले सताउन लागेमा मौन होउ वा भगवान्को नाम सम्झ । यसको सट्टा क्रोध बढाउने कुनै कुरा नसम्झ । यसले अपुरणिय क्षति गर्न सक्छ ।
- ३०) अहिल्यैदेखि सबै खराब आचरणहरु त्याग । यसमा ढिलाई नगर । यिनले एक रति पनि आनन्द दिदैनन् ।
- ३१) आफ्ना शक्तिले भ्याएसम्म गरिबहरुको कष्ट मेट्ने कोसिस गर । तिमीले खाने अन्न उनीहरूसंग बाँडी खाउ । उनीहरुलाई एकपटक मात्र भए पनि आनन्द देउ ।
- ३२) तिमीलाई अरुले जस्तो व्यवहार गरेको मन पर्दैन, तिमी पनि त्यस्तो व्यवहार अरूसंग नगर ।
- ३३) अज्ञानमा भएको गल्ती र पापका लागि शुद्ध हृदयले प्रायश्चित्त गर । यस्तो गल्ती र पापलाई दोहोरिन नदेउ । सत्मार्गमा लाग्न आवश्याक शक्ति र साहस पाउनका लागि भगवानसंग प्रार्थना गर ।
- ३४) भगवानतिर लाग्ने उत्साह र उमङ्गमा दलल पार्ने कुनै पनि कुरालाई आफ्ना अगाडी पर्न नदेउ । उत्साहको कमीले मानिसको सामर्थ्य क्षीण हुन्छ ।
- ३५) कातर नबन र आनन्दको परित्याग गर ।
- ३६) मानिसहरुले तिम्रो प्रशंसा गर्दैमा गर्व नगर र कसैले निन्दा गर्दैमा उदास नहोउ ।
- ३७) तिम्रा साथीहरुका बीचमा कसैले कसैलाई घृणा गर्छ वा झगडा गर्छ भने उनीहरुलाई अरु बढी उत्तेजित पार्ने गरी आपसमा झन् घृणा फैलाउने कोसिस नगर । यसको बदला दया र प्रेमद्वारा उनीहरुको पुरानो मित्रता कायम गर्ने कोसिस गर ।
- ३८) अरुको दोष औल्याउनुभन्दा आफ्नो दोष पत्ता लगाई त्यसलाई जरैदेखि उखेलेर फालिदेउ । अरुका हजारौं दोष पत्ता लगाउनुभन्दा आफ्नो एउटै दोष पत्ता लगाउनु धेरै बेस हुन्छ ।
- ३९) तिमीमा नभएका खराबीलाई लिएर अरुले जे भने पनि वास्ता नगर । तर, आफूमा भएको खराबी भने अरुले देख्नुअगाडी नै सुधार गर्ने कोसिस गर । तिम्रा खराबी देखाउने मानिसप्रति क्रोध देखाउने वा बदला लिने प्रयास नगर । त्यस्ता मानिसको उल्टो खराबी देखाई जबाफ दिने पनि कोसिस नगर । बरु उनीहरुप्रति आभार प्रकट गर । अरुका खराबी देखाउन खोज्नु तिम्रो ठूलो भूल हो । आफ्ना खराबी तिम्रा लागि असल हुन्छ । अरुको दोष थाहा पाउनुसंग तिमीलाई केहि मतलब छैन ।
- ४१) तिमीसंग केही समय बचेमा त्यो समय अनावश्यक गफमा खेर नफाल, बरु यसलाई भगवानको ध्यानमा लगाउ वा अरुको कल्याण हुने काममा लगाउ ।

४२) भगवानलाई भक्तले मात्र चिन्न सक्छ, भक्तालाई भगवानले मात्र चिन्न सक्छन् । अरुले तिनलाई चिन्न सक्तैनन् । त्यसैले भक्तिशून्य व्यक्तिहरूसंग भगवानसम्बन्धी कुरा कहिल्यै नगर ।

४३) कसैले कुनै बिषय गलत बुझी तिमिसंग कुरा गर्दछ भने त्यस गल्तीलाई सपोर्ट हुने गरी अरु बिचार अगाडि नसार; उसको भनाईका राम्रा र मीठा कुरा मात्र ग्रहण गर ।

४४) तिमि एकाग्रता चाहन्छौं भने हुलमा वा बजारमा हिड्दा आफ्ना दृष्टि चारैतिर नडुलाई दुर्घटनाबाट जोगिनेसम्म मात्र आफ्नो दृष्टि अगाडिको सडकमा केन्द्रित गरी हिड्ने गर । सडकमा हिड्दा आफ्नो ध्यान यताउता नदौडाई खतरा पन्छाई एकै दृष्टि राखी हिड्यौं भने एकाग्रता सिद्ध हुन्छ ।

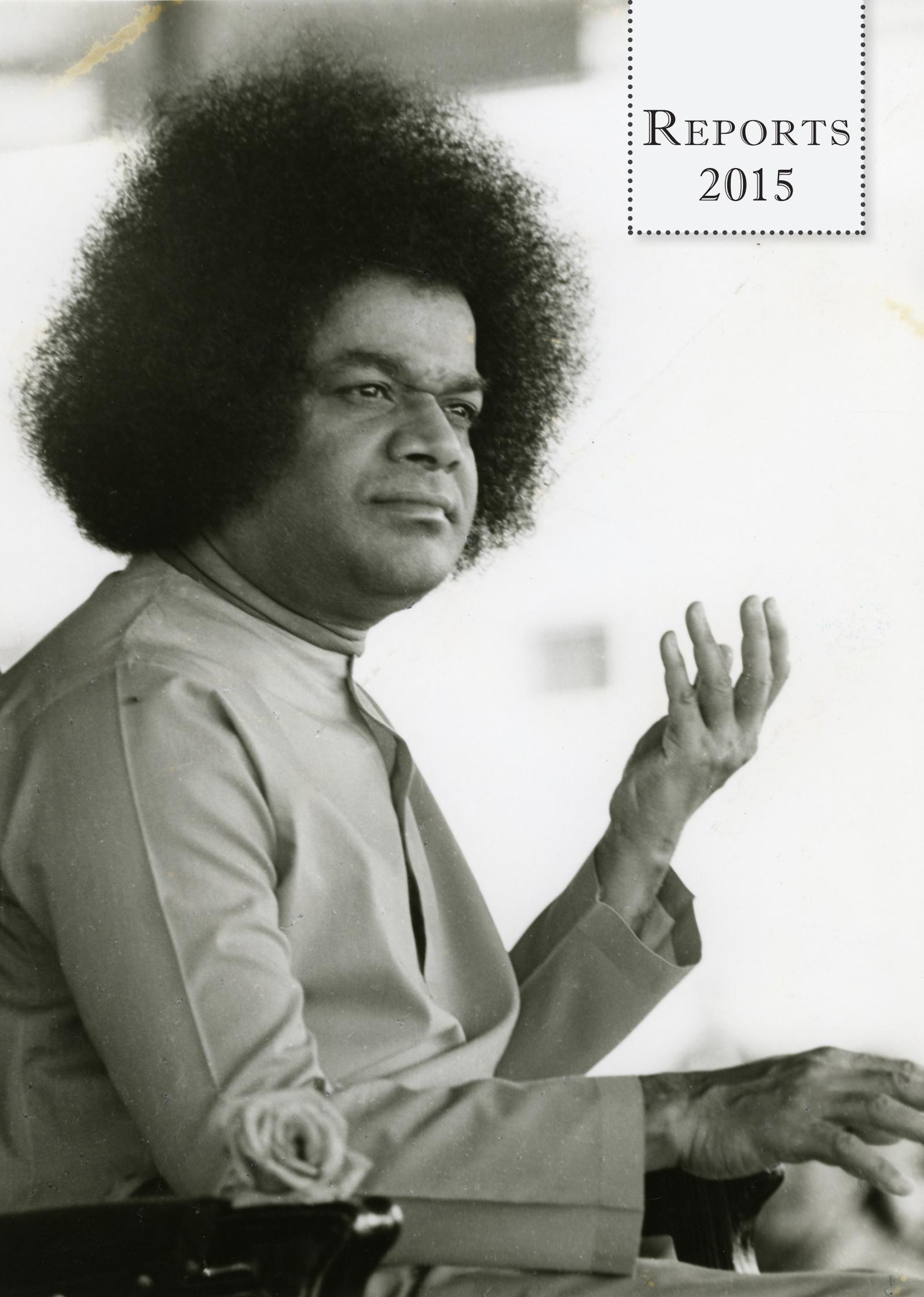
४५) भगवान र गुरुका सम्बन्धमा सबै शङ्का त्यागिदेउ । तिम्मा सांसारिक इच्छा पूर्ण नभएमा भक्तिलाई दोष नदेउ । यस्तो इच्छा र भगवान भक्तिबीच कुनै सम्बन्ध छैन । यस्ता सांसारिक इच्छाहरु एक न एक दिन अवश्य त्याग्नुपर्छ । एक दिनअगाडी वा पछाडि भक्तिको भावना अवश्य ग्रहण गर्नुपर्छ । यसमा विश्वस्त होउ ।

४६) तिमि ध्यान र जपमा अगाडि बढ्न नसकेमा वा तिमिले आकाङ्क्षा गरेका अभिलाषाहरु पूर्ण नभएमा पनि भगवानसंग उदास नहोउ । यसले तिमिलाई झन् उदास पार्नेछ । तिमिले आफूमा भएका अलिकति शान्ति पनि गुमाउनेछौं । ध्यान गर्दा वा जप गर्दा तिमि निराश हुनु वा निःसहाय हुनु वा निरुत्साहित हुनु हुन्छ । यस्तो बिचार आयो भने यो तिमो आफ्नो साधनाको कमजोरी हो भन्ने ठानेर यसलाई सुधार गर्नेतिर लाग । तिमिले आफ्नो दैनिक जीवन र कार्यक्षेत्रमा स्वेच्छाले सबै सिद्धान्तअनुरूप आचरण र काम गर्न सके मात्र दैवत्व सजिलै प्राप्त गर्न सक्नेछौं । त्यसैले यी आदेशहरुको दृढतासंग पालना गर । स्वामीको जन्मोत्सवमा विवतरण गरिएका यी वचनरुपी मिठाईलाई राम्ररी चपाएर पचाउ र आनन्दित होउ । कुरा बुझ्यौं ?

भक्त : हजुरका वचन अमृततुल्य छन् स्वामी । हो स्वामी अमृततुल्य छन् मानिसलाई यस्ता साधारण कुराहरु पनि थाहा छैन । त्यसैले उनीहरु गलत बाटामा हिड्छन् । उनीहरुलाई सुखको बाटो देखाईदिने कुनै किताब पनि छैन । मजस्तै सबै संघर्षशीलका निमित्त हजुरले भनेको कुरा प्राण वा श्वासजतिकै हो । हामी सॉच्चै भाग्यमानी छौं । मलाई आर्शीबाद दिनुहोस् जसबाट यो वचनहरु मेरा हृदयमा छापियून् र हरेक दिनको व्यवहारमा प्रयोग गर्न सकू । यी वचनहरु पढेर वा सुनेर मात्र केही प्रयोजन छैन । म बिदा हुन्छ स्वामी ।

स्वामी: हुन्छ, जाउ र जन्मोत्सवका लागि फेरि आउ । सातै दिन मात्र बाँकी छन् होईन र ? आज १६ भयो, जन्मोत्सव २३ मा पर्छ, भनेपछि ७ दिन बाँकि रहयो । त्यतिबेलासम्म यो मिठासले तिमो हृदय टम्म भरियोस् पनि ।

REPORTS
2015



SPIRITUAL WING

“The organizations named after Me are not to be used for publicising My Name or creating a new cult around My worship. They must try to spread interest in recitation of God’s Name, meditation and other spiritual exercises that lead man Godward.”

Sathya Sai Baba

The primary objective of the Spiritual Wing is to facilitate devotees’ spiritual progress based on Bhagawan’s teachings. Various sadhanas and events have been initiated this past year which have richly complemented those of the other Wings of the Organisation in spreading Swami’s message to the broader community and helping individuals progress on their spiritual journey.

Selfless Service & Love Booklets

We are ever grateful to the Prashanti Council who compiled the two study guides, entitled Selfless Service and Love, from discourses and writings of Bhagawan Baba. In keeping with the theme of the World Conference in November 2015, these two booklets have been used to read messages after Bhajans every Thursday and Sunday for the past year. The messages clearly allowed devotees to contemplate on the theme ‘Love is the source; Love is the path and Love is the goal.’

Study circle facilitators were also encouraged to use these booklets in study classes, thereby extending the teachings to Youth, Bal Vikas Gurus and the Mahilas.

Pre-World Conference Zone 5

In January this year, Hong Kong was privileged to host the Pre-World Conference for Zone 5.

Our honoured guests included Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Mr. Nari Chugani, Mr. Lachu Chablani, Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai and Mr. Alvin Leo. Other delegates also joined us from Taiwan, Guangzhou and Japan. During one of the bhajans, a flower fell from Swami’s picture.

It was a very fulfilling two and a half days during the weekend of 23-25 January. In addition to inspiring talks by each of the dignitaries, there was a sharing session by delegates from Zone 5 on ‘Personal Transformation through Love and Service’. Additionally, moderators of the study classes that had studied the Love and Selfless Service booklets reported their observations in the discussion of these topics.

Two teams joined an interesting Forum to reflect on the question ‘Can Sai Devotees Really Live with Love and Selfless Service’. Great emphasis was placed on the word ‘*really*’ by both teams. A flower fell from the altar during one of the talks.

There was also a Round Table discussion where devotees were able to ask questions on Love and Selfless Service. The dignitaries offered clear guidelines on how to make Love the thread running through Selfless Service.

The conference ended on a high note with a game quiz entitled ‘Kaun Banega Param-Premi’. Selected participants were posed questions from the Love and Selfless Service booklets. Lifelines were offered if participants were unable to answer.

It was an interesting medium to the study of Sai literature, making use of resources that can enhance spiritual knowledge.

Mahashivratri

Bro. Raganath Rao, who has very kindly been recording audio talks on the Bhagawad Gita for the past 22 months, enlightened devotees on the way to 'Experience Auspiciousness on Mahashivratri' through two presentations on 9th and 12th February 2015. He reminded us that we need not wait for the yearly festival to experience this auspiciousness, since Shivratri is in fact a monthly occurrence.

Garuda Purana & Silence

In March, Bro. Ragu made two presentations. The first was based on the misconception that the Garuda Purana is associated only with death. He explained how if one is engaged in sinful deeds in this body, one is certain to face challenges. Whereas, virtuous deeds help man to progress spiritually. Bearing this in mind, it is imperative to lead a virtuous life to enjoy lasting happiness.

The second presentation was on the 'Importance of Silence'. He explained that the reason for the constant inner chatter is one's *vasanas* and that, according to the Vedas, a thought, once sprouted, will always continue. Bearing this in mind, one should think and speak only goodness, manifesting unity of thought, word and deed. He also touched on the importance of speaking only if our words do not hurt others – and if others' words hurt us, to offer that hurt to Bhagawan and respond with Silence.

He encouraged devotees to spend some time daily in Silence and to carry that Silence for as long as possible each day.

Launch of Personal Sadhanas

After the wonderful Pre-World Conference that Swami blessed with His presence, it was important that we maintain the momentum of our study and practice of the teachings in the Love and Selfless

Service booklets. To this end, two concept papers were prepared to bring two daily personal sadhanas to the devotees. Both are linked to the Love and Selfless Service teachings.

R.A.C.K.S

The first was what we decided to call R.A.C.K.s – Random Acts of Conscious Kindness. On 9th April, we launched this Sadhana with an explanation and suggestions on how to participate and make it a personal offering to Bhagawan. The Sadhana idea and the concept paper were taken to individual groups – Bal Vikas Gurus, Youth and the Mahila in their study circles to encourage them to practice and experience the joy of giving and serving.

Bhagawan says "Love all, Serve all" and kindness is a manifestation of Love which makes an ideal offering to Bhagawan for His 90th Advent.

Sai Aradhana Mahotsavam

On this day, bhajans were held and a movie of Swami's darshan was shown. Sis. Isabella Chu presented a short talk on the Importance of Love and Unity amongst Sai devotees. Devotees were also reminded to continue with R.A.C.K. Sadhana as their personal offering to Swami. Prasad was lovingly prepared by the Bal Vikas gurus and distributed to all.

Interfaith Group

Also in April, the Inter-faith group held a study class at our Sai Centre. The discussion focused on Swami's words: "There is only one Religion – the Religion of Love". Participants enjoyed a hearty Indian dinner, which had been prepared by Mahilas.

Easwaramma Day

To celebrate Easwaramma Day, the Mahila Wing organized a High-Tea for young ladies entitled "Do you Really Believe?" In spite of a thunderstorm warning, we had a house full of ladies who came to hear the importance of really believing the words we utter when we pray. The highlight of the afternoon was a short drama that depicted a

young lady (played so wonderfully by a Bal Vikas guru, Sis. Lavina Daswani) who says her prayers mechanically and is totally shocked when God (played by Sis. Shaleena Moolchandani) actually responds to the prayer!

A dialogue ensued between them and Lavina realized that everything we say to God should be uttered in good faith and that it is important we believe the words we use in our prayers do reach God.

All participants joined an activity in which instructions were given verbally to make a hat out of newspaper. The instructions were given once only since the aim was to instill the importance of listening when God speaks, as His words may not be repeated and intense attention and concentration is needed to follow His direction.

In typical Sai-hospitality, the Mahilas served a sumptuous hi-tea that was enjoyed by the 90-plus ladies who attended.

Seva Workshop

In June, we held our second ever Seva Workshop entitled “Seva a Pathway to Divinity”. The Centre has up to 13 sevas a month that are led by different devotees. Each of these leaders reported on their sevas. In addition, devotees were invited to share how the seva they participated in had resulted in a personal transformation. Other short presentations included Seva as a Sadhana, Disciplines in Sai Seva, The Role of Money in Sevas and Creating awareness of Sai Seva.

An official Seva booklet detailing our many sevas has also been published to document the work that is being done and for distribution to the general public.

Guru Poornima & Janmashtami

July and August being summer holidays, activities were limited. However, Guru Poornima, and Janmashtami celebrations took place with full devotion. Bhajans were held on both days and a darshan movie was also shown. A day before Guru Poornima, we launched the second Personal Sadhana programme, this time on Silence.

An explanation on the importance and benefits was presented to complement Bro. Raghu’s talk in March. Once again devotees were encouraged to participate and experience that “Only in the depths of silence can the voice of God be heard.” Booklets on the R.A.C.K.s sadhana were produced and distributed to the devotees.

Professor Vijay Menon’s Visit

In September, we had the pleasure of a visit by Professor Vijay Menon. He gave a public talk at the City Hall that was entitled ‘Thought Leadership’. Over 100 members of the general public, including professionals in different fields of work, heard of the values of Truth, Righteousness, Trust, etc. The new SSIO 6-minute video was shown for the first time in Hong Kong.

Copies of our Seva booklet were distributed at this public meeting to encourage newcomers to join our sevas. Subsequently, we have had at least two new join our Sunday breakfast seva and some donations of clothes.

Bro. Vijay also addressed the devotees in the Sai Centre after bhajans on 10th September on how to ‘Make your Life Better.’ Needless to say he urged devotees to live life walking in Swami’s presence.

On the evening of 11th September, he had a meeting with the Bal Vikas gurus and offered encouragement in the mammoth task of educating the children. He also addressed the Youth to reveal “The One Secret to Success.” Simply put the secret is humility.

Sadhana Camp

On 13th September, we held our Sadhana Camp entitled ‘Fill your cup with Amrit’. Once again, Bro. Vijay filled the day with his wonderfully inspiring messages and stories that caused all devotees to reflect upon the changes that practicing Sai’s teachings can bring to their own thinking, actions and, most importantly, to their lives. In the morning, he started with ‘Your Cup – what’s in it and what are you going to fill in it?’

This was followed by an activity where a cup was given to each participant to look at the choices

they make in life and how to deal with the grace of God. The participants were delighted to take their cups home as mementoes of the day.

After lunch, Bhagawan's darshan movie was shown and this was followed by a sharing session by three devotees of what their 90th birthday offering to Swami will be and why they have chosen that. This was followed by another inspirational talk by Bro. Vijay on 'Life is a Journey'.

The Bal Vikas gurus put their heads together and conducted an activity entitled 'Watch your Journey'. Three stations were set up for – Watch your Words; Watch your Thoughts and Watch your Actions respectively. Participants had to make the rounds of all three stations to participate in the activity and reflect on the importance of their thoughts, words and actions.

Afternoon tea was followed by a final talk by Bro. Vijay on the 'Joys and Sorrows of Earnestness'. He touched on the challenges of an individual's journey of transformation and how to overcome hurdles on the path.

With so many inspirational messages during the day, it was imperative to allow participants to see how they could further their spiritual journey by participating in any one of the five areas that the Sai Baba Centre is currently engaged in. Every participant made a commitment to his or her chosen option.

The camp ended with a 10-minute silent reflection on the lessons of the day and how to fill one's cup with Sai-Amrit.

We are immensely grateful to Bro. Vijay for taking the time to motivate and inspire with his get-up-and-go attitude.

Avatarhood Day

To celebrate Avatarhood Day this year, Hong Kong's contribution is a Human Values App that includes value-based stories, posters, quotes, songs and more. This is befitting the theme: 'Human Values for Nation Building'. The App was launched after special bhajans on 20th October when a walk-through of the app was given to devotees. It is the

first of its kind of contribution. With Bhagawan's grace it will be accepted worldwide.

Ongoing Activities

In addition to weekly bhajans at the Sai Centre on Thursday and Sundays, bhajans are also conducted in five different venues throughout Hong Kong at devotees' homes. Suprabhatam chanting continues every Thursday morning by devotees at the Centre.

Study classes catering to senior devotees at the Sai Centre are facilitated by Bro. Allen Yao on a fortnightly basis. Two separate study classes are led by Sis. Anju Daswani especially for young ladies, and there is an additional weekly study class for the Mahilas. The text for study used is Swami's Bhagawad Gita. The Youth have their own study class and are now readying Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.1.

90th Advent

As this year's Sai Sarathi goes to print, preparations are in full swing for the World Conference to be held in Puttaparthi this November. Rehearsals have begun for the cultural programme that is a part of the 90th Birthday celebrations which will be held on 11th December this year.

Conducting the activities and participating in them has been fulfilling and a blissful experience. We pray Bhagawan guides us and blesses us that we may continue to spread His messages to the devotees and to the community at large.

"The goal of human life is to attain self-realization. The best way to reach this goal is through transformation and one of the primary means of attaining this goal is by becoming the Sai Ideal. Your goal is permanent and eternal bliss. It is within you and can be attained only through love."

Sathya Sai Speaks V.32

Sai Ram

Maina Shardaasani
Spiritual Wing Convenor

SERVICE (SEVA) WING

“Service to society is very important. The best way to love God is to Love all and Serve all.”

Sathya Sai Baba

The existing sevas are continuing as before and commitments by the individual seva heads have kept the consistency of each seva running. In fact, this year we have had many people who are not even devotees join our sevas, just because they derive a special satisfaction from them. We are glad that we can be a bridge for such seekers.

Seva at the China Sai Baba Centre

Last year in October, during the 2nd anniversary of the opening of the Centre, some of our Hong Kong devotees distributed 500 school bags to pupils in a nearby school. This year, a seva has been organized to distribute to pupils in another school about 150 scarves that have been especially knitted during the course of the year by devotees from the Mahila Wing.

Seva Workshop

A workshop entitled “A Gift of Grace” was organized on June 20th at the TST Sai Centre and was attended by about 90 devotees. The objective was to help people better understand how seva should be offered in both thought and deed, taking into the account the guidelines highlighted in the LOVE and SELFLESS SERVICE booklets that have been special learning instruments for all of us during this World Conference Year.

Some newer devotees were given the opportunity to share their experiences after they have come into Swami’s fold. They also spoke of the impact that

participating in the sevas has had in their worldly lives. Further, leaders of the different sevas were given the chance to explain the unique features of their respective sevas so that everyone is aware of what is happening in the Organisation’s sevas. This is so important because we are all working under the one Sai umbrella and unity is our strength. It is this unity that has enabled us to do HIS WORK all these years.

No new sevas were added this year as the plan was focused on creating greater awareness in the local community amongst non-Indians and non-devotees by giving them a clearer picture of the seva work the Sai Organization is doing domestically and internationally.

Seva Booklet

For this purpose, the Hong Kong Sai Organisation produced their first Seva Booklet to highlight the work of the local Organization. We wish to thank those who have tirelessly dedicated many hours over several years offering these sevas, which has made this booklet possible. The booklet was offered to the Lotus Feet of Swami during Krishna Janmashtami.

About 100 booklets were distributed to non-devotees at a talk in the City Hall in September during Bro. Vijay Menon’s visit to Hong Kong.

Sevas during upcoming 90th Birthday

Every year during Baba’s Birthday, the Seva Wing prepares a special gift that is distributed to all

the recipients of our different sevas – totalling 13 in a month – as a token of our love for Him. This year, we offer a special packet of commonly used household items (about 7 - 8 in total) in a special bag that has our message of Love printed on it. Some of the items included are: a blanket, towel and face towel set, shawl, a pair of socks, a toothbrush and toothpaste set, and a T-shirt.

Approximately 900 – 1,000 packets will be distributed at the various monthly sevas. All participants in the Seva Wing are looking forward to this, especially because 2015 is the 90th birthday of our beloved Lord.

In closing this report, we will just like to add that the sevas offered by so many individuals in the local Centre – approximately 150–200 of us – whether in the cooking, knitting, distribution, purchasing of items, packing, etc., has given so us

joy beyond words. We are confident that Swami's work will continue in the years to come, just as when His physical form was with us. We know this work is only possible because He remains with us, inspiring us, motivating us and guiding us in this work.

We hope and pray He guides us to new levels, and that as His instruments we can achieve what He told us over the years, namely that "Our Life Is His Message".

On behalf of the Seva committee: Jai Sai Ram.

In His Service,

Arjan Sakhrani
Seva Wing Co-ordinator



Love must be manifested as seva (selfless service). Seva must take the form of food for the hungry, solace for the forlorn, consolation for the sick and the suffering. Jesus wore Himself out in such seva. The heart full of compassion is the temple of God. Develop compassion. Live in love.

Be good, do good and see good. This is the way to God.

- Sathya Sai Baba



EDUCATION WING

“Education should serve to enlarge the vision and broaden the outlook of the people. What is necessary is harmony of 3H – Head, Heart and Hands. What the head thinks should be examined critically in the heart, and this right decision should be carried out by the hands. This should be the primary product of the educational process.”

Sathya Sai Baba

The Education Wing is responsible for the “Bal Vikas” programme (also called Sathya Sai Education (SSE)), which was founded by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in 1969. The aim is to nurture human values in the children and to instill spiritual disciplines so that, along with the knowledge they acquire from their academic studies, they understand that education is not for a mere living but for a fuller and meaningful life.

No fees are charged and currently there are over 230 children, aged from 4 to 17 years. About 26 committed volunteer teachers conduct the classes once a week for one hour and fifteen minutes. The classes are grouped age-wise and are conducted in the Sai Centre on Kowloon side and in the teachers’ or devotees’ homes on the Hong Kong side. The classes in Tsuen Wan are conducted in the Tsuen Wan Sai Centre.

Until the previous year, children graduated from Bal Vikas at the age of 15 whereupon they joined the Teen Youth, before they moved on to university. From this year, they continue as Group IV (Senior SSE group) until they are 18 years old, when they will move on to university.

Teachings and Teaching Methods

In Hong Kong, we follow certain teaching techniques Bhagawan Baba has advised for Bal Vikas. For Group I children aged between 4 to 6 years, the human values are taught through prayers,

bhajans (devotional singing), silent sitting and story telling. The children are engaged in colouring and arts and crafts activities through which they bring out their understanding of values taught in the classes.

For Group II children, aged between 7 to 10 years, apart from human values, the 5 D’s (Duty, Devotion, Discipline, Discrimination and Determination), Ceiling On Desires, the five elements and their spiritual significance, and community service are introduced. The teaching method includes prayers, bhajans, silent sitting, guided meditation, story telling and activities like quizzes, puzzles, discussions on stories, role-play, etc. The children are encouraged to apply the values and sub-values taught in the class to real life situations. The impact of this exercise in shaping the children’s personality is discussed in the next class.

For Group III children, aged between 11 to 14 years, topics like Human values, 5D’s, C.O.D. and the five elements are continued with interactive discussions to bring out the understanding of the topics, and their importance to life generally and the purpose of human birth. The topics of Heroes and Leadership are also introduced to make the children aware of their contribution to their fellow human beings and to society.

Heroes from all walks of life, like spiritual heroes, epic heroes, patriotic heroes, martyrs, humanists, etc. are discussed with the children, who are then

asked to choose some contemporary heroes and then articulate what, in their opinion, are the values they possessed which made them heroes. The unity of faith (sarva dharma) is also a topic studied by this age group.

For Group IV children, aged between 15 to 18 years, it is no more a top down approach but an inside-out approach. Topics and values are subtly introduced through activities or role-plays in the class. It is more than just understanding the values at mind level, it is application of the values in the class itself so that the teens walk away from the class equipped to handle life challenges in a positive and dharmic way, in order to find better fulfillment and lasting happiness and peace in the world. The aim is to equip them with the right tools and techniques for good decision making skills.

All in all, the objective is to teach Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Truth / Teachings) to the children during their impressionable years, in order that they grow into responsible adults who can lead the family, community and nation along the right path.

Special Spiritual Activities

The 10th World Conference of the Sathya Sai International Organisation in Prashanti Nilayam will coincide with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's 90th Birthday celebration on 23rd November this year. The conference theme is "Love is the Source, Love is the Path, Love is the Goal". Two booklets, "Love" & "Selfless Service", which are compilations of Baba's quotes on these subjects, were provided for this occasion. Almost all of our special spiritual activities this year were based on this theme.

- **By Bal Vikas Children**

Bhajan learning by the children with the selected Bal Vikas teachers continued this year and, thus, the standard and quality of the Bhava, Raga and Thala of the Bhajans kept improving.

On 14th March and 13th June, Bal Vikas children aged 4 to 8 years sang bhajans in the Sai Centre for an hour, and so parents and other family and friends were invited to attend. All the 19 children sang with devotion and the lead singers and others thoroughly enjoyed the bhajan session.

On 15th March and 14th June, at the regular Sunday bhajans at the Sathya Sai Centre, Bal Vikas children aged 9 to 14 years sang the bhajans. This included Chinese (Mandarin) bhajans. The Sai devotees who attended this bhajan session were very pleased to see the dedication and respect shown by the singers and other Bal Vikas children. The quality of the bhajan singing was quite impressive. The Bal Vikas team of teachers who trained the children were very grateful to Bhagawan for His grace.

- **Commemorating Aradhana Day on 24th April**

In April, one week was dedicated to commemorating the advent of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The theme was "His Life, His Message". Baba's life story was shared to show how He lived the teachings and values that are being taught to the children in Bal Vikas. Children are blessed to have been born as contemporaries of the Avatar and to benefit directly from His life teachings.

- **Easwaramma Day on 6th May**

Mother Easwaramma was an epitome of selfless service and sacrifice. Every year, the Bal Vikas children spend a day in various activities designed around a particular theme dedicated to Mother Easwaramma. Following the theme of the 10th World Conference, the theme this year was "Love & Selfless Service".

The day was dedicated to the service of BHOO MATA (Earth Mother), GURU MATA (Guru Mother) and GO MATHA (Cow Mother).

Group 1 children aged 4 to 6 years were engaged in Bhoomi (earth) Seva on Saturday, 9th May. Children were taken to Kowloon Park to offer their service to 'Bhoo Mata', the land that sustains us by providing food. It was a good opportunity for the children to serve in a spirit of Love and Selflessness to the land that yields crops that feed the body. They helped clean Kowloon Park under the supervision of the Bal Vikas gurus. Parents were also invited to join. Group 2 children aged 7 and 8 years were engaged in Guru Seva on the same day. They were taken to the Gurudwara to offer service.

This was a good opportunity for the children to know about the Sikh community in Hong Kong and the selfless service they render to the people of Hong Kong. Our Bal Vikas children did service by helping in the kitchen and helping to clean the temple premises. The children had lunch prasad at the Gurudwara afterwards. Parents were also invited to join.

Group 3 children aged 9 and 14 years were engaged in Go Mata (Cow) Seva, also on that same day. The children went to the Yuen Long Cattle Farm to spend the day and to offer their service to 'Go Mata', the cow who gives sustaining milk to us.

It was a good opportunity for our city children to experience farm duties in a spirit of Love and Service. They tended to the cows in the farm under the supervision of the Bal Vikas gurus and the caretaker of the farm. The children were very sincere and took to the task with sincerity and love, and it was heart warming to see them care for the cows. They also acknowledged the caretaker who was taking care of this farm on her own freewill with the selfless objective of tending to the cows who had no other home.

Community Seva

Bal Vikas children engage in community seva activities thrice each year. Since the last year, the first such service activity is done by all children from 7 to 14 years together. This year it was Narayan Seva, feeding the street sleepers in Hong Kong.

On 26th September about 95 Bal Vikas children and 25 gurus and women / men volunteers and Bal Vikas parents joined together to offer food to about 260 street sleepers who live on the roads of Yau Ma Tei and Shamshuipo.

All the children gathered at 1 p.m. in the Sathya Sai Centre and helped to unwrap and sort the items that were to be packed in 260 bags. They also helped make cheese sandwiches under the supervision of the gurus. The children packed the following eight items in each plastic bag: water bottle, apple juice, lemon tea, banana, Oreo biscuits, toothbrush and toothpaste, napkins and sandwiches.

Bal Vikas Parents cooked about 260 cups of vegetable fried rice according to instructions given by the regular Seva team. The children packed the 260 hot meal boxes.

The 90 children and the gurus and men volunteers were then divided into two groups before they left in buses for the different districts. All in all there were about 7 locations and at about 4:15 p.m. the children were put into several groups so each one got the chance to distribute the dry bag of eight items and the hot meals. Women volunteers stayed back to clean the Sai Centre.

It was an eye opener for the children. The seva had a great positive impact on the children, gurus, volunteers and parents. Many expressed their wish to do this seva regularly. Bhagwan's hand was visible in every action that day: after the Amber rainstorm warning was raised at 2 p.m., the skies cleared by 4 p.m. and during the entire time the seva was done it was a dry day with perfect weather.

The other two sevas were done during our regular visits to the China Coast Community Limited, Shatin Toa Home for the Aged and the Little Sisters Of the Poor. Children bonded with the residents and played music and they sang devotional sings, danced and played games with the residents. The residents are always happy to see the innocent and kind children.

Bal Vikas Gurus – Service and Spiritual Activities

The Pre-World Conference for Zone 5 was held from 23rd – 25th January in Hong Kong. The President of the Prashanthi Council, Dr Narendranath Reddy, and other dignitaries and delegates from overseas also attended. Bal Vikas gurus participated in a panel discussion, shared their personal transformations and presented a quiz game.

On 23rd May, the Ladies Wing organized an event "Totally Tea", which was an inspirational afternoon. A Bal Vikas guru, by God's grace, took the lead role in the drama entitled "Do you Believe?" She depicted a role that portrays to all of us. Many times when we pray we do not pay attention to the words, and so imagine the shock of the character when God

actually talked to her after she had routinely called on Him. The afternoon was thoroughly enjoyed by the gurus. It was a learning experience for them.

On 20th June, the Sai Organisation arranged a seva workshop. Two gurus spoke on this day, one about the personal transformation as a Bal Vikas guru and the other on Discipline in Sai Service. All gurus who attended this event clearly understood the correct attitude and purpose of Sai service.

Bal Vikas Gurus – Personal Development and Training

Every week, on Tuesday, Bal Vikas gurus meet for study circle. This year the gurus took up the booklet on “Selfless Service” and under the guidance of our Senior Sai devotee they contemplated on Sai quotes and learnt the meaning of selfless service. Some Tuesdays were allotted to learning bhajans, some for sharing teaching ideas, techniques, parent matters, organising events and a workshop on Silent Sitting.

Since January 2014, a 5-10 minute audio commentary by Bro Raghu on the Bhagawad Gita has been circulated and shared by all gurus every day, which has been very beneficial for personal growth.

Bal Vikas gurus also learn and benefit from attending talks by various guest speakers / Sai devotees from overseas. Recently, the Sai Centre organised a Spiritual Sadhana Camp on 13th September with Bro. Vijay Menon as the guest speaker. Gurus presented an activity and conducted three games to bring out the teachings of Bhagawan Baba: Watch your thoughts, Watch your words, Watch your action. All those present participated in the games, where were interesting with value learning.

Children, Gurus and Parents – The Triangle

The triangular partnership of children, gurus and parents, where each one is equally important, is the basic foundation of the Bal Vikas. Based on this principle, PGA (Parent-Teacher Association) is organised usually in October every year. This

year, the parents were invited for PGA where the photo /video images of the various activities of the children in the classroom, outside the classroom, in the seva activities and other special events were shown to parents. The parents’ feedback, their suggestions for improvements and expectations from the programme were actively discussed.

PGC (Parent-Guru Conference) also is held every February/March where every teacher meets up with the class parent for 10 minutes to discuss his or her child’s progress. This discussion helps both gurus and parents better understand the children and fosters a partnered effort for the child’s benefit.

Bal Vikas parents also like to get involved when any opportunity for seva is given to gurus, other than regular Bal Vikas activities. This year for Aradhana Day on 24th April Bal Vikas gurus arranged 350 boxes of prasad to distribute to the devotees who came for the day’s special programme in the Sai Centre. Bal Vikas parents and gurus combined their effort in His service.

Bhagawan Baba’s Birthday cultural programme is a very special day for all Bal Vikas children as this is the occasion for the children to show their love, respect and gratitude to Baba. This year, too, they have been blessed with offering three different programmes, and all children, gurus and parents are looking forward to offering their best effort together.

All of us at Bal Vikas feel that we are fortunate to have been chosen by Bhagwan Baba to be in Bal Vikas and in His service. Being a Bal Vikas guru humbles us and puts us on the spiritual path to personal growth by which we can lead the future generation in a righteous way.

We seek Baba’s blessings and grace to continue in this humble service and to be His worthy instruments.

In Sai Service,

Seetha Subramanian
Education Wing Convenor

MAHILA VIBHAG

*“As is the Food, so is the Mind, As is the Mind, so are our Thoughts,
As is the Thought, so is the Action, As is the Action, so is the Result.”*

Sathya Sai Baba

In our lives today, we are exposed to countless pressures and temptations of all sorts. We are working very hard day and night to satisfy our desires so that our families may be happy. And, yet, this happiness is only temporary.

From the time we are born we are influenced by our environment and we happily identify ourselves with our name and body, which we perceive to be real. We seek satisfaction from our desires and attachments but, we find happiness only as periods of interval between our pains and sufferings. Lasting peace and happiness always seems to run away from us.

But, we are blessed to be born in this Golden Age when the Avatar, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, came to earth to remind us of our purpose in life and to show us how to realise it.

Rather than seeking happiness through our worldly lives, He tells us to recognise our innate nature, our true identity, which is bliss forever. To experience this bliss we need to develop pure thoughts and feelings.

How then can we cultivate this purity within? Firstly, we must be vigilant about our thoughts. Our senses, our food and our environment affect our thoughts and feelings. Swami confirms that whatever we take in through the five senses is food and, just as the food we eat to nourish the body has a direct effect on our minds, so too all that we hear, see, touch and smell has an immediate influence on it too.

For our spiritual upliftment, Swami has graciously given us women the 19th of every month to celebrate as ‘Ladies’ Day’ – a day when we organise special activities and informative talks. Swami says *“Spirituality is forgetting worldly concerns and immersing oneself in God.”*

Spiritual Activities

Apart from bhajans, weekly study circles and chanting of *Namavali* daily in individual homes, this year on 19th March we re-learned our Food Prayer ‘*Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir*’ (from the Bhagawad Gita) by Sis. Ramaa Srinivasan, who taught us the proper chanting with pronunciation and meaning, so that we can chant it regularly before partaking our meals at home with the family.

Swami reminds us that to purify the food we consume, the responsibility lies in the hands of the women, since they are the embodiments of Shakti in the home and they are responsible for the nourishment of their families. Impure food results in an impure mind. By saying the food prayer before eating we are offering to God. The food is turned into prasada that will nourish us physically, mentally and spiritually.

Swami also says that the food consumed by you and the family should be proper, pure and wholesome. Care should be taken to see that food consumed does not have much fat content for fats are detrimental, not only to one’s physical health but also mental health. Meat and alcoholic drinks take a heavy toll on one’s health and cause many

diseases. Putting this into action, on 19th August we had a cooking demonstration of healthy vegetarian food by Alisha Mahbubani and Karshy Sakhrani.

On 19th February, 19th April and 19th July, the Mahilas from different wings performed the Namavali and this was followed by the Thursday bhajans. Swami says “*In the Kali Age, Namasmarana is the easiest way to achieve liberation. Whenever My glory is sung there I manifest Myself.*” The name of the Lord is so powerful that by merely uttering it we have Him by our side, protecting us, guiding us and giving us strength to undergo life’s journey.

Also, on 19th April after bhajans, we had a special message by Dr. Margaret Taplin on the ‘Importance of Womanhood’.

Service Activities

For our spiritual growth, on 19th January, 19th June, 19th September and 19th October we had *sevas* at different homes. Swami says, “*Seva or selfless service is the most important activity, for it is the highest sadhana.*” It is the very essence of bhakti, the very breath of bhakta, one’s very nature. It is only through the *seva* experience that one is convinced that all beings are God’s children, that all bodies are altars where God is installed and all places are His residences.

These *sevas* are well attended by the women, where they entertain the elderly with singing bhajans, playing games, music and dance, food and drinks, gifts, etc. Silent sitting is also practiced with the elderly at these *sevas*.

The Mahilas continue to visit the home for mentally challenged adults every month and they arrange fun activities, gifts, etc. for this *seva*. The purpose of this *seva* is to strengthen the connection with these residents and bring them joy.

On 19th November, a special *seva* was organized to celebrate Swami’s 90th Birthday. We took beneficiaries from the different homes we visit for a scrumptious lunch sponsored by the Mahilas. We entertained our guests with various games and each was given a gift hamper of basic necessities. As part of our ongoing *seva*, this year we knitted

scarves which were distributed to children in a school in Guangdong province.

Special Activities

On 23rd May, the Mahilas hosted an inspirational afternoon of ‘Hi-Tea for a Higher-me’ at the Sai Centre and about 90 ladies attended. The event was open to all women and devotees were encouraged to bring a friend or two along. The theme for the afternoon was “Do you REALLY Believe ... ?”

This afternoon started off with a guided-meditation by Anju Daswani which was followed by a role-play conversation with God, based on the prayer ‘Our Father, Who art in heaven’. This was enacted by Lavina Daswani and Shaleena Mulchandani. Milan Bharwani and Anushka Nainani continued this with a post-play Q&A discussion and this was followed by an entertaining game by Naina Shamdasani.

The reflections of this afternoon was:

- Communication and connection with God
- Mindfulness and intensity in our prayers
- Ensure to carry the message of the prayer through the day
- Do you REALLY believe or have faith in what you pray?

The feedback on the event was very positive and the message was well received.

Whatever spiritual sadhana we take up, be it namasmarana, meditation or serving the underprivileged, it should be done with discipline and sincerity. Ego should not cloud our hearts and minds, for then the Lord ceases to work through us. Therefore, we should surrender our thoughts, words and deeds, indeed everything, unto His hand to become His instruments. Love should be the foundation of all our spiritual practices. It is only with this purity within will we love all mankind. Swami says, “*The greatest power He possesses is Love and where there is Love, there God Is.*”

Jai Sai Ram

Nisha A. Sakhrani
Mahila Wing Co-ordinator

YOUTH WING

“It is only the youth who have the power to transform other youth through our own example, conduct and exemplary character.”

Sathya Sai Baba

Since the establishment of the Youth Wing in 1985, we have provided a forum for the holistic development of youngsters between the ages of 18-35. The aim and objective of the Youth Wing is to encourage youth to develop and practice spirituality in their daily lives.

Spiritual Activities

The Youth Group has for many years been primarily involved in conducting weekly study sessions to bring in-depth spiritual learning to young people. Currently, our very own aunty Kantu Shamdasani conducts weekly classes on the text ‘Sathya Sai Speaks, volume 1’. Members feel the knowledge gained from this study group has influenced their outlook and made a difference to their daily experiences and ability to deal with everyday challenges.

In addition to the classes, the Youth conducted Sunday bhajans at the TST Sai Centre and also participated in Akhanda Bhajans.

Service Activities

Swami says that an important way to relate and connect to our very true nature is by engaging in selfless service. As part of our spiritual growth, the Youth have been involved in various service activities:

- **SSEHV Classes**
Special Educare English Enhancement Programmes were conducted by the Youth at

two local primary schools. The focus of the programme is to develop students’ confidence in English language through Human Values.

- **Visits to the Home for the Mentally-Challenged**

The Youth continue to visit the home for mentally-challenged adults with the *Mabilas*, where the youth take charge of arranging fun activities, music and dance for the residents. These sevas bring happiness to these residents who have developed good relations the Sai sevadals. The visits have been an eye-opener and humbling experience for all participants.

- **Street Sleeper Seva**

The Youth boys participate with the Service Wing to the distribute hot meals to street sleepers in Kowloon and Hong Kong Island.

The Youth Wing encourages members to take an active role in the local Sai Organisation by working with all other wings.

At the National level, members are involved in Sai publications, the Birthday celebrations and some national projects/events. The Youth also makes written contributions to the quarterly newsletter *Spiritual Blossoms*, which is published by the Sai Organisation. The Youth also extend a hand to the Bal Vikas in various activities.

Several Youth members were also involved in the design of the 5HV app that was released on 20th October, Avatarhood Day. Additionally, the Youth

are leading the construction of another app for young people on the teachings of Bhagawan.

On the Zonal level, a few of our members are involved in the publications of the Zonal E-Newsletter and other projects. For example, they participated in helping to create an exhibition of Swami's life, which was part of the exhibition at the 10th World Conference in Prashanti Nilayam.

Let us pray that in the near future, with Swami's grace and guidance, we can inspire more young people onto the spiritual path and to be part of His Mission of Love!

Jai Sai Ram,

National Youth Group



SSEHV

The SSEHV programme conducted by the Institute of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE) of Hong Kong in partnership with the South China Normal University has now been consolidated as school-based policy in clusters of schools in four provinces.

The ISSE of Hong Kong has continued to provide resources and regular seminars for teachers and teacher educators/leaders, programme evaluations and research data collection. In addition, local teacher education institutions in each province are involved in supporting the schools to engage in SSEHV-based action research projects. The local Education Bureaus are also involved in all training activities and provide top-down support to the school clusters.

In April, a competition was held in Yang Shuo district of Guangxi Province to find the teachers who were using SSEHV the most effectively in their classroom subject teaching. The ISSE HK

team observed lessons taught by the finalists and made recommendations. A values-based leadership training session was conducted for graduate students from South China Normal University, who form the secretariat for our project. The students have continued with monthly SSEHV training by distance education under our guidance.

In Hong Kong, the Sai Youth have been active in providing values-based English tuition to senior Chinese students in the Queen Elizabeth group of schools. The Senior Bal Vikas and Teen Youth conduct a monthly Saturday morning programme in a government primary school, in which they interact with disadvantaged children to do SSEHV activities in English.

The main purpose of this activity is for the Sai students to work closely with one or two of the children to enable them to build a rapport and to encourage the children to develop their confidence to speak English in a safe, supportive setting.

TSUEN WAN CENTRE

"You can attain God only through love. He cannot be attained by any other means."

Sathya Sai Baba

The Tsuen Wan Sai Centre has about 121 members, including *Mahilas* and Youth, some of whom play active roles in the running of the Centre and in leading its activities. All Wings are actively engaged in all Centre activities.

In addition to regular *bhajans* on Thursday and Sunday evenings, *bhajans* are held on the third Friday of each month at a *bhajan* group in Kam Tin, in Yuen Long, between 7 to 8 p.m. About 20 odd devotees attend to keep alive the singing of the glory of the Lord's name there.

Study circles are conducted on the second and fourth Sunday of every month. This year, the study has been of the Love and Selfless Service booklets. Although the progress has been slow and steady, these topics have permitted side discussions of great interest to the functioning of the Sai Centre and also the individual lives of the devotees. Thus, Swami's teachings in these two booklets have been carefully studied for its application in our daily lives.

As in the case of previous years, the leading festivals were celebrated in the Sai Centre with much enthusiasm on the part of the devotees. The festivals included Shivaratri, Buddha Poornima, Sathya Sai Aradhana Mahotsavam, Guru Poornima, Krishna Janmashtami and Christmas.

Additionally, speakers have been invited throughout the year to speak on the devotees' spiritual *sadhana*.

The Seva Wing continues to be active with several *sevas* held during the year, including special *sevas* in commemoration of Sathya Sai Aradhana Mahotsavam, Avatarhood Day and Bhagawan's Birthday. These are in addition to the three regular *sevas* which are held in Tsuen Wan, Yuen Long and Yau Ma Tei / Jordan. In total, there were about 35 *sevas* this year.

In addition, the *Mahilas* have continued their commitment to serve the residents of the so-called Cage Homes. Their *sevas* are conducted twice each month and on each occasions. About 6 – 7 *sevadals* visit about 10 cage homes in Cheung Sha Wan, Sham Shui Po, Yau Tong and Jordan to distribute rice, juice, tissue, salt, towels, biscuits, oil and noodles.

There are presently 17 *Bal Vikas* students who are taught by 2 teachers. There have been 35 classes this year. Also, the children have twice been taken to the cage homes for *seva*.

There are 16 Youth members and they are active in *bhajans*, dramas, dance, study circle and general Centre affairs.

We pray that Bhagawan always blesses us so that we become worthy instruments of His love, so that we may serve better.

Jai Sai Ram

Kanta Rai

Sai Centre Chairwoman



Sathya Sai International Organisation, Hong Kong

Tel: 2367 4240 / Email: saiorghk@netvigator.com

For General Information Contact Verkha Mahtani at 9377-7671

or visit our website: www.saibaba.org.hk

WEEKLY BHAJANS

Every Thursday : 6:25pm - 7:50pm

Every Sunday : 6:25pm - 7:50pm

SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

Head: Naina Shamdasani 9205 9025	Suprabhatam - every Thursday 7:30am - 8:00am / Sharda Chettri 9409 3006	Bhajans in Ap Lei Chau - every Thursday 5:30pm - 6:30pm / Manju Aravind 9813 8903
	Study Circle - 1st & 3rd Monday of every month 7:15pm - 8:30pm / Allen Yau 2813 6986	Bhajans in Mid-levels - fortnightly on Fridays 5:30pm - 7:00pm / Poonam Mahtani 2540 2292
	Bhajans & Study Circle in Mid-levels - every Monday 4:00pm - 5:15pm / Rakhee Nandwani 2530 4444	Bhajans in Tai Koo Shing - once a month 7:30pm - 8:30pm / Gope Daswani 9634 9239

SEVA ACTIVITIES

Head: Arjan Sakhrani 9453 4022	Narayana Seva, Cage Home - fortnightly on Thursdays 1:00pm / Balu Peswani 9218 4656	Street Sleepers Narayana Seva on HK Island <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • second Wednesday of every month Haresh Wadhvani 9021 4467 • last Friday of every month Ashok Kirpalani 9779 5209
	Narayana Seva, Rice Distribution - quarterly Bob Nandwani 9644 0509	Street Sleepers Narayana Seva on Kowloon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • second Friday of every month Cooking - Anmol Nainani 9500 9090 Distribution - Anand Nandwani 9354 5198 • last Wednesday of every month Haresh Wadhvani 9021 4467
	Visits to Home for Mentally Challenged Once a month <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anju Nandwani 9230 7751 • Babita Mahtani 9465 5933 	Street Sleepers Breakfast Narayana Seva <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HK Island - second Sunday of every month Ashok Kirpalani 9779 5209 • Kowloon Side - second Sunday of every month Priya (Vimal) Mohinani 9485 4065 • Kowloon Side - last Sunday of every month Kalpana Bhojwani 9644 0292
	Narayana Seva, Rice Distribution Dongguan (China) - every 2 months Mike Manuja 9754 0857	

WINGS

REGULAR CLASSES

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

EDUCATION Head: Seetha Subramanian 9427 6667	Kowloon (TST) every Monday, Wednesday, Saturday Hong Kong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-levels - every Wednesday & Friday • Aberdeen - every Monday, Wednesday, Saturday Tsuen Wan Centre - every Sunday Laxmi Gurung 6346 9494 New admissions - please email to balvikasadmissions@gmail.com	Guru's Study Circle - every Tuesday 6:15pm - 7:30pm
MAHILA VIBHAG Head: Nisha Sakhrani 6338 2706	Senior Mahila - every Tuesday 11:30am - 12:45pm / Nisha Sakhrani 6338 2706 Junior Mahila / Anushka Nainani 9040 9090 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • every Wednesday 6:45pm - 8:00pm • every Friday 10:45am - 12:00pm 	Community Seva <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in Tai Kok Tsui Meghna Chotrani 9371 9294 • in Mong Kok Asha Mahtani 9056 1021 Ladies' Day Celebration - 19th of every Month Knitting Seva - Anju Daswani 9750 9315
YOUTH	Youth Study Circle - every Friday 7:15pm - 8:30pm / Ishina Sakhrani 9042 5442	Visits to Home for Mentally Challenged every 2 months 1:30pm - 4:30pm

For information of the Devotional, Educational & Seva activities of the Tsuen Wan Centre please contact
Kanta Rai at 9751 7454