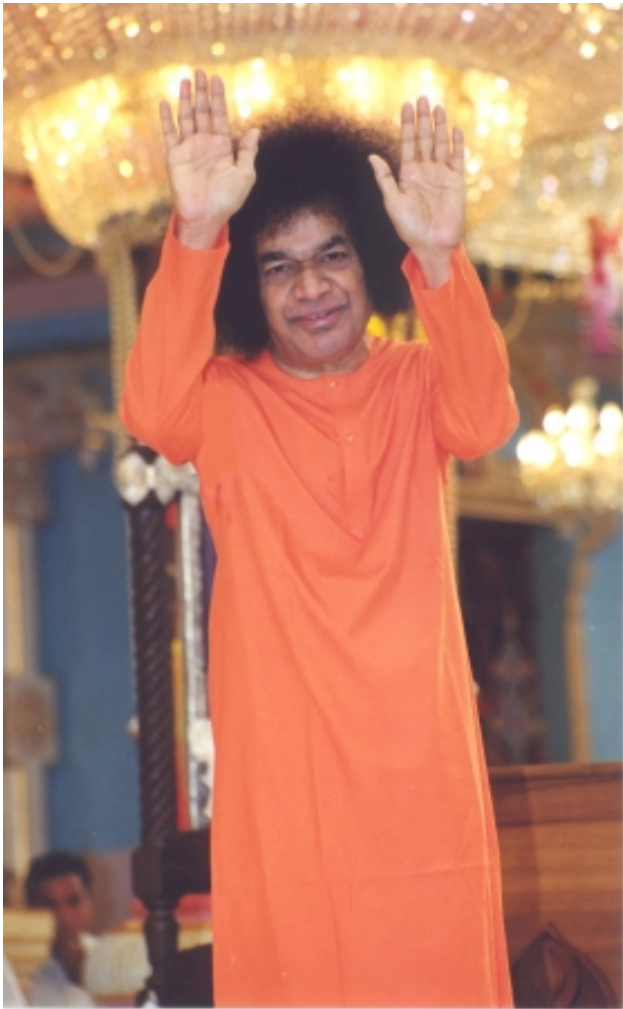




Sai Young Adult Newsletter, USA

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Contents

Sheena	3
Dearest Mother Sai	6
Forgotten Children	9
You Do My Work, I Will Do Your Work	15
God's Wonderful Plan.....	17
Learning How to Learn	20
Slovenian Youth Report	23
Come One Step Toward Me	28
Sai Gokulam	30
Dreams	32
Swami Says	33
National Service Projects	41

Dedication

This humble offering is dedicated with love and reverence to our most beloved Swami. Swami says, "Expansion is my life." Swami's life and mission have been continuously expanding in all directions and at all levels. Swami's unconditional Love has been touching more and more people around the world.

"Sai for Youth, Youth for Sai" 75th Birthday offering has been inspired and blessed by Swami to provide an opportunity for youth around the world to understand and apply His universal teachings in our daily lives.

To continue the learning process, to expand our understanding of Swami's message and to share ideas from Youth around the world, a website has been created, <http://www.syan.org/>

Thank you all for your participation, talent, time and most importantly your love in this team effort.

This is the beginning of our offering to Swami. We pray that we continue to grow on this journey of Love and Service.

With Love,
Sai Young Adult Newsletter (SYAN) Team, USA
syana@maestro.com

Sheena

AN EXAMPLE OF SELFLESS LOVE

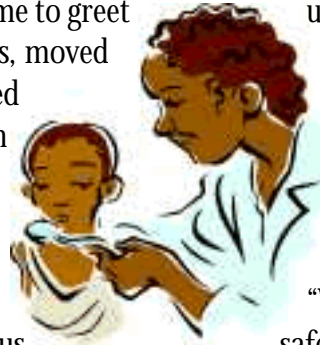
Raveen Bhojwani, Hong Kong

It was a hot rain that washed the streets of Calcutta that afternoon. The sun peeked from the clouds only for a few minutes at a time with a quick tease of its soft orange glow, and then it hid behind the clouds. More rain. But that was common here in the Bengal state of India, and the people didn't seem to bother about it much. Most of them were too busy amidst the hustle and bustle of one of India's poorest cities.

We had arrived three days ago, and were going to visit one of the local orphanages in a poorer area of the city to give some supplies of medicine and much needed food. My uncle and cousin were both doctors and due to years of serving the poor and needy in India, had an in-depth knowledge of the places that needed help.

At 3 PM, we waded through the small alleys and gullies of huts and dwellings. Dust blew up everywhere. Cows came to greet us and then, realizing we were not such interesting creatures, moved on, bored and almost disappointed. People whizzed past us. Some smiled while others wondered what strange men had come to this world within a world, which the outsiders called a "slum".

As we approached the gate of a small house made of mud and steel plates clumsily thrown over each other, a sister smiled and called out, "Welcome, welcome, welcome! I'm so glad God brought you to us safely!"



"Hello sister!" my uncle greeted her in kind while my cousin and I put down the large boxes of food and medicine we were carrying. After a brief introduction, the sister began showing us around the house. It was an orphanage managed by the nuns of the local Christian church. We met many small children inside. Most of them were severely malnourished and sick. Some lay in their beds, while others were out playing in the mud yard. In spite of their illnesses and withered structures, their eyes beamed at us when we looked at them.

They were curious, and some came over, touched us, then ran away bursting into giggles of child laughter. The sister quickly called them together and they made a line. We began giving out oranges and bread and the sister poured out some milk into each

of their cups. One by one, they ate and drank happily. "More bread!" they signaled. We jumped around happily giving the children more bread. We were elated to see them eat.

My eyes turned to one girl who lay in the corner of the room on a small bed. She was terribly thin and had a large bloated stomach due to protein deficiency. She had no hair and hardly any teeth, yet she smiled at me from across the room. I asked the nun who she was.

"That's little Sheena!" the sister answered. "We found her two days ago, lying in the street abandoned. She is very sick and has not eaten for a long time."

I walked over to little Sheena's bed. She smiled a toothless smile. I sat by her bedside for a minute, then pulled out an orange and a piece of bread and gave it to her. I knew she could not eat, but I gave them to her anyway. Her small bony hand reached out and she took the bread. She waited for a moment. I thought she might be shy, so I got up and walked towards the other children. But as I turned, I saw her tiny hand waving to me to come back!

"Ah," I thought, she had seen the other children wave and ask for more bread and wanted to join in the fun! So I walked to her bed again, pulling out another piece of bread. As I gave her the bread, she nodded and refused the second offering. Confused, I sat at her bedside. Then little Sheena took her first piece of bread and slowly, mustering all the strength in her bony fingers, broke it into two pieces and gave me one.

I sat by her bedside, with that half piece of bread in my hand, and watched her attempt to chew her half. My heart almost exploded from the absolute love of this little girl who wanted to share with me what I had offered her. Never in my life could I have imagined that anyone could be so absolutely, selflessly loving as to share what was most precious to them with a complete stranger. I held Sheena's other hand, and we both sat together for more than an hour - she, trying to eat her bread, and I, watching her and smiling. She couldn't speak, but it seemed as if we had a conversation in that time. We looked at each other and I felt she had become my own little Angel, sent to me from God. I read her a story and slowly Little Sheena drifted away to sleep.

That night, as we made our way back to our hotel, (little Sheena's offering still in my hand) I felt so honored by this little girl, who had shown me such Godly love and demonstrated the giving spirit of Christ himself. I wanted to go back and see my little Angel again!

The sun dawned that next summer morning for a short few hours. And then, it began to rain again. Rain, for many in India, was considered a blessing and I too was glad that it had rained, because that morning, little Sheena died. Her immune system had been too weak to fight a recurrent infection. Ultimately, it was a lack of proper nutrition that led her to the sad condition the nuns had found her in. Now she belonged to God.

In the days that passed, the memory of little Sheena stayed with me. I thought of her example of what it meant to give the way God gives. To give, even in the last hours of her life, the thing she needed most, to someone she never knew. This was the lesson of God's selfless Love, taught through the act of a starving child, who showed to those of us she left behind, the way we were meant to live.

We left that day at three. The rains poured over the Bengali lands. It was hot, and the sun, again, broke through the clouds in its radiant orange afternoon glow, like the smile of a little girl who will be in our hearts forever.



Dearest Mother Sai

"BE LIKE A CHILD AND THE DIVINE MOTHER WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU"

Anonymous

"You do not need to ask God for anything. If you have purity of heart, He will himself take care of you, just like a mother who attends to the needs of the child without its asking. Be like a child and the Divine Mother will take care of you. That is total Surrender. Leave everything to the will of the Mother. Do not ask for petty things lest you should lose Her proximity. The one who asks for food will be directed to the kitchen, but the Mother will feed the child herself who cannot ask. Only those with ego and those immersed in worldly life ask. But the one, who surrenders himself to the will of the Divine Mother like a child, will lead a peaceful life." ~ Baba

Our dearest Mother Sai is always watching over us. He plans our every breath and teaches us through every test. This summer was no different for me. After completing a demanding Junior year in college and summer internship, I was on my way to see Swami. The experiences that I am about to recount are surely ones that I have been waiting lifetimes to experience. However, the beauty in the experiences is not that the events took place. The experiences derive their beauty from their ability to serve as a lesson to all devotees of God, particularly young adults. The lessons are for everyone, not just me, which is why I share them with you today.

I arrived in Parthi during the hot and humid month of July. To every darshan I was carrying a few letters for Swami and a box with two rosary beads that a friend had requested Swami to bless. After a week of darshans without as much of a glance from Swami, my strength and devotion were beginning to be tested. That maya (illusion) and my own weakness caused my mind to question and forget the divine chance that I was amidst. Finally on August 2nd, Swami made His way to me during darshan and accepted my letters and blessed the rosary beads. This was a huge relief for me and allowed me to fully concentrate on Swami without any distractions. Later that same day, during afternoon darshan, Swami again stopped near me. However, this time He asked my friend Aaron where he was from. Aaron said, "USA Swami," and Swami indicated for us to go inside for an interview. I couldn't believe it! I was pinching myself on the walk towards the veranda.

Swami finished darshan and called us into the room. Both Aaron and I were trying to judge where we should sit in proximity to Swami. The closer we got to His chair, the closer we were to the ladies side. What a dilemma! We finally settled on a spot against the wall and furthest from the ladies side. Swami came into the room, saw where we were sitting and motioned for us to sit back, "Men and women separate," He said. We could not move much further, but we saw the lesson in His words. After spending some time with us in the outer room, Swami called three women from Russia into the private room. He came back out alone and stood in front of me with a look of confusion. He said, "They all want my robe, what am I to do?" There was a very important lesson in this very simple statement. Swami was saying that He has no will that is separate from the yearning of His devotees. Whatever they want of Him, provided they come with pure hearts, He has no choice but to yield.

Swami then called me into the private room alone. He stressed the importance of satsangh (maintaining good company) for youth. The distractions of the world are very strong. In order to cross the stormy sea, one must always have Sai on his mind. I sat at the lotus feet receiving direction along this path. He went on to say that there is no reason to worry. Our problems are not ours, they are His to worry about. He will take care of everything, if we only turn our mind towards Him.

In the outer room, Swami sat in His chair and pointed to His body. "This whole body from head to toe is pure selfless love". With a look of sheer majesty, He held out His palm and said, "I control the whole universe from the palm of my hand". He then looked at Aaron and commented on his studies. Swami said if we think of Him before our exams we will do well. After asking Aaron if he wanted love, he produced a gold chain with a small heart shaped pendant. Laughing to Himself, Swami said, "This is Love". He had simplified something so abstract as divine love into a piece of jewelry. He went on to say, "Without me there is no Love. Without Love, life is meaningless. Without Love, there is nothing". After this beautiful statement He threw the chain towards Aaron and it disappeared into thin air an inch away from His palm. This taught us that we must first secure His grace in order to experience divine love.

Sai as mother became clearer and clearer to me everyday. Two days after the interview, my mother was to arrive in Puttaparthi. Her train was to come at two o'clock in the morning and she would be travelling alone. The night before her arrival I could not sleep. I spent the whole night worrying about her safety and cursing myself for not taking more precautions on her behalf. I prayed to Swami that He look after her and see that she arrives safely. The next morning, after putting my mat down for darshan, I went to the gate

to wait for my mother. My heart exploded in gratitude for Mother Sai when I saw my mom with her luggage sitting by the gate. In darshan that morning, I felt the love of a thousand mothers emanating from Mother Sai. With each step he took towards me, my heart grew heavier with love. When he finally stood before me, the joy caused tears to hang in my soul. He stopped abruptly and looked down at me. With the compassion of the Eternal Loving Mother, He said, "Did she come...your mother?" What reassurance that He is watching over all of our concerns and hearing our prayers, whether we are aware of them or not. I replied, "Yes Swami, she has come". He then said, "Yes, she has come now and today". Now and today! What a profound statement! My eternal mother Sai has come now, He is standing before me and my birth mother has come today and is also sitting for darshan.

We as young adults must constantly strive to make Swami smile. Let us do what brings Him joy. When we falter, we musn't grieve in despair. Instead, we must be like soldiers of the Kali Yuga, equipped with the weapons that Sai's name confers. We should pray for discrimination to do what is right and resolution to correct ourselves when we do what is wrong. Sai will always be our guide and best friend. Let us all march on and be fearless knowing He is by our side.



Forgotten Children

AN AMAZING STORY OF THE TRANSFORMING SERVICE BEING UNDERTAKEN
BY THE SAI YOUNG ADULTS IN MOSCOW AND ST. PETERSBURG

Moscow Sai Youth

We were acquainted with a Russian man who worked with children from an orphanage situated in Vishny Volochok, a small old town between Moscow and St. Petersburg in Russia. We can only describe it as the ideal example of enthusiastic and selfless service. He has relied on his own capacities and on God's help. He has not only become a friend and a sponsor of the orphanage (visiting children and giving them material help), but he has also invited sometimes up to 20-25 children to come spend time with him in his apartment in Moscow. All of them would be there together for several days. Perhaps there was not space enough for them there, but there was more than enough warmth, concern, and a father's love for each of them, because it is this fatherly love that abounds in the beautiful heart of this good man.

We were excited and inspired by his stories about the children and their lives. It is impossible to understand how and in what conditions these children are living until you see it with

The Moscow Sai collect clothes, other essential Then we received tion that a group orphanage was Moscow in the



your own eyes. Center started to toys, books and items for them. some informa- of boys from the going to visit upcoming days.

Naturally, we were happy to participate in their program –and go with them to the theater, to the circus, to a seaquarium, to go sightseeing, to provide food for them and, in general, to make their visit bright. Of course, the main intention for us was to communicate with the children and to give them as much love and attention as was possible.

We liked them so very much. They were such charming boys, all in the same clothes of the same color, they even seemed to be all the same height –as if like they all were born in some special children's incubator. They were so simple and opened themselves easily in response to love and goodness. Of course, later on, when we would come into more close contact, we would start to understand more clearly that each of them has not only their own names but also their own individual characters. In that moment,

initially looking at these dozen boys, we saw that there was something very commonplace in their eyes. We had mixed feelings. On the one hand, we felt joy, a natural joy that people feel usually in the presence of children. At the same time, we felt sorrow because we always saw a trace of frustration and loneliness on their faces, as if they were lost, even when they were laughing. When the boys went back to Volochok, the man who invited the children told us that we must go to the orphanage in order to see everything there with our own eyes. So we came to Volochok and met with the head of the orphanage, Natalya Eugenievna, and with her deputy, Tatiana Ivanovna. These people most sincerely and soulfully dedicate their lives to the children and they have a great experience in teaching understanding, wisdom, and love. However, they are very limited in financial resources. The government does not subsidize enough even for shoes and clothes, which need to be replaced annually. The meals are poor; they only receive approximately 30 cents per day per child and this means there are no vegetables, no fruits, no milk or dairy. Their main staples are macaroni and porridge.

The administration there must work hard for keeping things in order, providing a normal teaching process and obviously, the children cannot get enough of what they really need — individual attention. The teachers are working almost without rest (no holidays) and their salaries, at twenty dollars a month, are not enough to live on in Russia at this time; they nevertheless provide all the care they can give under the circumstances. During the school year, the children usually have school six days a week. Additionally, in the residence halls the live-in caretakers provide custodian support during the nights and on weekends.

We discussed the situation together at the All Russian Sai Youth camp in July of 1999 and decided that the people from the Sai Centers, active Sai youth and adults, should come to Volochok for a week for service. The group can live at the orphanage and make closer relationships with the children. In this way we can better understand them, their lives, their needs and we can offer more effective and individual help. We can organize cultural activities, performances, and sport competitions, sing songs together, and go for picnics and so forth. The purpose will be to inspire the children in different ways and make them experience another life. We also wanted to hold classes in education in human values for helping them to choose the way of life, which would strengthen their moral basis.

Naturally, it was not a simple task. It was quite a new matter for us because the children were very special and differed from those who usually visit EHV classes. But everybody was full of enthusiasm, and here was the result: In August of 1999, a team of 20 rangers came to Vishny Volochok. Most of us had no serious experience on how to deal with children.

We felt confused — the next morning we were to meet the children, and what were we going to do with them then?

After a collective spiritual practice and a small organizing meeting, we came to our groups and saw the children in their beds even though it was time to wake up. “Good morning, children. Why don’t you wake up?” we asked. “There is nobody to wake us,” they answered. “Why nobody? And what about your caretakers?” – “They left for a rest.” All the caretakers who are supposed to supervise the children were permitted to leave for two days. There was only one supervisor on each floor. As a result, we were face to face with more than a hundred and fifty children whom we didn’t know and who didn’t know us. That was like learning to swim in the depths of the ocean!

During this week, we had many surprises and, therefore, we had many opportunities for our own inner growth. We sent one or two people to each particular children’s group. It was especially difficult to establish relationships with the older teenagers, because they were very independent, so it seemed to be almost impossible to influence them in the beginning. After our initial successful lessons, also mistakes and some failures, we met for daily discussions held late in the evening when everybody shared his or her experiences of the day. It was so interesting to spend time together. There were some real miracles; for example, two cars full of sweets and biscuits came all of a sudden; a contract was signed - during one day - to install proper showers, sinks and toilets on each floor where the children lived (before this they had had only an opportunity to wash themselves once a week in very harsh conditions in a building far removed from the main residence halls); people from the Sai organization had brought several machines for washing clothes as well as sporting equipment. Children and guests prepared many songs and performances for the big concert that happened on the last day of the week. And also, especially for this event, a big colored completed mural had been painted on the wall, according to the famous story about the Red Brigantine (by Alexander Green) that symbolizes a fulfillment of human dreams and a belief in the genuineness of miracles.

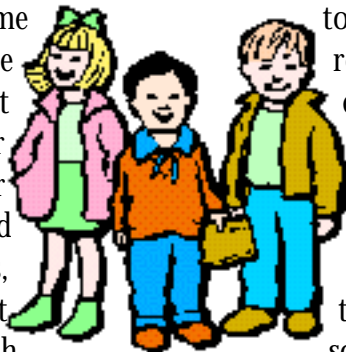
There were also some surprising cases of children’s transformation, such as seeing within them more giving and sharing attitudes. For the whole week, all of us felt like we were in the Swami’s Ashram (spiritual sanctuary). We felt a very powerful transforming energy of Swami and an intensive inner work, especially through creating different outer situations. A typical example was that during one of our usual evening discussions, all the young adults said that there had been some sign to show which group is best for them to work in. In one group of adolescent girls, we made visualization exercises with music (a kind of adapted meditation on light using a candle). During the exercise, each girl tried to imagine that she

was a little star. That star was very bright and luminous, and it was giving its light and warmth to everybody. Later on in their letters they would write to me saying that “*Your little stars are waiting for you!*” Another day we read together a nice and very deep story written by Hans Christian Andersen. It was about a teapot who felt himself as a very important person. Then his pride was totally destroyed and finally he had found the true meaning of his life. One girl wrote me, “*I like this story so much that I read it every evening.*” We also played a lot of games where we were running and jumping together, and it was difficult to say who enjoyed it more: the children or us.

Another remarkable event that occurred was that each person found the perfect place in which he or she could serve better, and each person knew what to do in each particular moment. For example, many children needed somebody to cut their hair and one of our devotees was a good professional in this field, so he was busy with this kind of service from morning until evening. What helped us to feel the Ashram atmosphere was discipline. Our morning spiritual practice gave us the right consciousness for the day and we also did very good organizing and planning. But, no doubt, we felt all the time that it was Swami who was the doer and it was He who guided this project.

All of us who came to the orphanage had become one united family. We felt like real brothers and sisters who cannot live separately without each other. So when we came back to Moscow, we met together for several days trying to find some reason to be together or even without any reason. It strengthened our youth group and gave us a good example that the easiest way to acquire oneness, love and bliss is through selfless service.

Is it possible that the very location of the orphanage was chosen by Swami with some deeper purpose? It is almost exactly between Moscow and St. Petersburg, so that we could work and grow together and develop a closer unified friendship. Later, the project started to expand, to grow more and more, beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg. And this August, about 50 people from various cities and towns of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine had come to Vishny Volochok. Most of them were participants of the 2nd Youth Camp of the Sathya Sai Organization in Russian-speaking countries. The Sai Youth started near St. Petersburg where young adults had lectures and study circles for a week. They then went on a bus and had an arduous 12-hour ride to the orphanage. They arrived at 4 o'clock in the morning and at 6.30 they were already singing bhajans (devotional songs). There were two main groups: one was making renovations, repairing and painting works and the second group was working with children. It is



difficult to imagine the tremendous amount of work that had been done in just one week of the camp: three big halls were painted and repaired and new ceilings from wood were made in rooms instead of old concrete ones, parts of which had been falling down. Our teachers held classes on the Sai Spiritual Education program in all the groups. We held picnics, sporting events, a children's performance in which wild rogues were transformed and had become new saints, as well as a 'TV show' and a big concert with Russian traditional songs and games that reveal the beauty and purity of the soul. We found that service is to be the main aim of Youth camps.

This is the best place where youth can put their extra forces, enthusiasm, energy and love while working together to share about Swami and His teachings. Only through our example in life and service can other people come to Swami. After a year of our work in the orphanage, the director and deputy director came to the Sathya Sai Organization Conference in May 2000. It was again Swami's miracle and divine timing since right when they arrived and entered the hall, there was a presentation of the film that had been shown in Prashanthi during the 2nd Youth Conference. Our part of this film was the service in their orphanage. So they saw their children and themselves on a big screen.

The project in this orphanage now includes not only sending letters to the children, but also collecting material help, donations, and frequent 1-2 day visits to Volochok by Sai youth. The children started to eat vegetables and fruits, receiving vitamins at least from time to time. Most of the children in the orphanage had already visited Moscow or St. Petersburg. They lived in our families' homes, had good meals, they had seen many interesting places such as theatres, churches, and museums, mostly receiving free tickets from the city social programs. They got a lot of presents like shoes and clothes but what was most important, a lot of love and attention. We came to Volochok again to celebrate a New Year together, with Santa Klaus, a New Year's party, presents, fireworks and Christmas performances. There was no limit to the happiness of the shining children and their teachers when a famous music group Neschastny Sluchay gave a charity concert in the orphanage. It was fantastic. In response to our invitation, they had made the long road drive from Moscow and back especially for this purpose. After the concert, the children even asked us, "Is this true? Are the musicians real?" Doctor Upadhi, the brilliant eye surgeon from England who had worked for many years with Mother Teresa, came for the whole day to check the children's eyes and to find out what medicine was necessary. Our friends from Malta International Charity Society had brought humanitarian help and they developed a special program. People in Malta love children and are ready to give them what they need. Malta families are inviting the children to visit them for two or three months and maybe some of them will become

their parents through adoption. Another miracle was that now our friends from Malta decided to organize a Sathya Sai Center in Malta. Can you believe it! And it would be the first Sathya Sai Center there.

There are so many things that happened that it's difficult to describe everything here. It's better to see it once with your own eyes than one hundred times to hear the story. We encourage everybody to try to do the same in your own town, or in any region where it is needed. If you want to grow together, to get and share such an experience we invite you to Volochok, with your open heart and your love! An expansion of love is taking place.

In October, wanting to visit a few boys and girls who were last year transferred from Vishni Volochok to another orphanage sixty kilometers further north, we visited one more orphanage in the same area. It is an orphanage where children from ours are going if they receive poor results in some subjects. Some of the children there have mental disabilities. The total number of children is 150. This orphanage is situated far away from everything, and that is why it is forgotten by everybody except by God, who gave them a wonderful director. His main purpose, as he said, is to teach children how to work and then to live in the world. They have a big piece of land and an old tractor and they are growing by themselves all kinds of vegetables plus some berries. For example, this year they grew 10 tons of potatoes, 1.5 tons of cabbage, 700 kilograms of beat and now they are making storage space for winter. From berries they are making jam and can enjoy it in cold times with pancakes.

The girls are sewing clothes for the boys from the old ones. They are making renovations by themselves when they have some materials. They are making pieces of furniture, for example, they made benches for the canteen. They even have a shoe repairing class.

The building for the school is very old. It had been a women's monastery, which was built in 1911 and then was converted into a school for orphans. There are holes in the roof and the walls have big cracks. The residence halls are in a very poor condition as well. When we saw their clothes and shoes we were almost ready to cry. They have been used so many times by so many children that it is difficult to explain their shape and color. The rooms where the children are living look like a soldiers' barracks, bereft of any home decorations, just beds and one small chair.

The children who were transferred from our first orphanage could not believe that we came again. They were thinking that they would never see us again. We found out that they had told their teachers and other children, stories about the "Moscovites" who were visiting their previous place, and about all the positive changes that took place since our first visit. We told them how much we love them and that we would come and visit again.

So now, we have one more place for service.

You Do My Work, I Will Do Your Work

A RARE AND POWERFUL MESSAGE OF ASSURANCE FROM SWAMI TO YOUTH

Gopikrishna Pidatala, India

“Swami, Give me strength and energy to render more Service at your Lotus Feet” was a young devotee of Hyderabad’s prayer to Bhagawan a few days after the 2nd World Youth Conference. Swami looked at him, gave a deep thought, smiled and said, “*You do my work, I’ll do your work*” in chaste Telegu. He readily agreed. Man today needs to realize that Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is born on this Earth out of His mercy to shower His choicest Blessings on all Mankind. After almost three decades of association with the Lord Sai, I can realize that I have wasted a lot of years. Swami is a role model for all of us.

“My life is My message”, Swami often says. What have we learned from His life? Swami says that the shortest path to reach God (Him) is by practicing the saying “Love all, Serve all”. Is it possible to practice this aspect in this mundane world? The answer is an absolute ‘YES’. There is at least one personality, a phenomenon, on this Earth who practices this aspect and is also teaching other beings to learn and practice it in their own lives, and that is our Beloved Lord Sathya Sai. A few years back, I asked Swami, “Swami, today life is full of turbulence, ego and this often leads me to bad thoughts. How do I ward off these thoughts?” Swami explained to me with lots of loving care. He said, “My dear, whenever you feel hungry, what do you do?” I replied, “I eat immediately”. Swami then asked, “How do you eat?” He went on to explain, “First you take a plate, serve yourself some food and then voluntarily your hands move to pick up the food to be placed in your mouth. Once in your mouth, it is then masticated by the teeth and involuntarily digested, isn’t it?” He asked, I nodded. Swami then went on, similarly, “whenever you get bad thoughts, think of God, think of Sai, involve yourself in good thoughts and good work.” As you develop this, Swami said that automatically bad thoughts are left behind. Make this your daily habit and you shall never have scope for bad thoughts, Swami answered. He immediately pointed at our team leader, Uday and said, “this is how he developed into a good boy. It took me seven years to scrub him of his bad habits and see how he shines today.”

Swami is our friend and our well-wisher, our God Mother, ever ready to help us, pacify us and lead us to peace. This is the absolute truth, but there is an important clause here. Swami tells us something, “Just do it. Do not try to analyze the pros and cons. There

are innumerable devotees of Sai who are still trying to gauge Sai and in this process they do not know what they are missing.” Often Swami directs us. He is like the Traffic Signal that shows you the path. We need to understand that Swami out of His mercy and grace gives us a number of chances even while we err. But at one point of time in order to make us realize the value of His word, He stops directing us. From then on, it’s misery. He ignores us, does not smile, looks away when we plead. This is when we realize what a fool we have been! Then we start practicing Swami’s directions with total surrender and PRESTO – Swami is back with us; all smiles, love, compassion bundled together.

Swami often talks of service to motherland, “Janani Janma Bhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi”, the mother who has given birth to you and the motherland you are born in is greater than Heaven. Serve your motherland, serve your society. It is this society that has brought you up. Pay back the debts you owe to society for bringing you up. Render service to society is what Swami says. Similarly, serving parents is the most important ideal we need to do. ‘PAY – RENT’ ... Swami often says that our very existence in this world is because of our parents, as our head, food and blood truly belong to our parents. Hence, it is our primary duty to pay-rent to our parents, and that is by providing loving care to them with devotion.

So dear brothers and sisters, let us all resolve to do His work and do our work too...



God's Wonderful Plan



A SURPRISING OPPORTUNITY AT THE ZAMBIAN SCHOOL OF HUMAN VALUES

Shruti Desai, USA

“The purpose of life is to grow in love, expand that love and merge with God, who is love, and this is best done through service. There is no discipline like service for the eradication of ego.” - Sri Sathya Sai Baba

In the Spring of 1997 my life had taken a disappointing turn. In spite of my high G.P.A and impressive test scores, every law school I had applied to had rejected my application. I was dejected and depressed, and my dreams and hopes were shattered. Although I agreed to my parents' suggestion that I should come home, relax for a year and use the opportunity to re-think my future, I did so reluctantly as I was agitated at the thought of wasting a whole year in Zambia. I did not know that going home would be my first step towards encountering God.

My parents had been devotees of Sathya Sai Baba ever since I had started college so I had heard of him, read about his miracles and seen his pictures slowly begin to adorn every wall in our house. I look back now and wonder why none of this made an impact on me, why nothing touched my heart. Devotees have told me that one only moves towards Swami when it is one's time. I have since recognized all the times when his love and blessings were so clearly present in my life and I unfortunately shrugged them off as luck and coincidence.

My first few days back at home were filled with restlessness and discontent. I would stay up watching old reruns and lie in bed until noon. Then one evening Mr. Kanu, the chairman of the Ndola Sai School, dropped by and invited me to spend some time at the school. I had read the newspaper accounts of the “miracle school”, had heard my parents talk of the tremendous faith and love that had gone into establishing the school and my curiosity was tweaked. I am so thankful now that Swami invited me into His school. I can still remember the overwhelming feeling of peace that surrounded me when I first walked through the gates of the school - I knew that I had come to a sacred place. I have never been to Prashanti Nilayam, but have heard from those who have made the pilgrimage there that they have had a similar experience. The school is truly a product of service and love and is so different from other educational institutions I had been exposed to. The purpose of education at the school was not to amass wealth and a string

of letters behind one's name but to develop character, to attain knowledge and use it for the benefit and service of others. This vision made sense to me and gave my life a new purpose. Swami's teachings on education and the development of youth covered the hallways I walked through everyday and soon I found I had committed them to memory. His words made so much sense and answered so many of the questions surrounding my life that I was forced to probe into and question my own education. Had I emerged from 16 years of study as a woman who embodied the five human values or was I just someone with a decorative diploma? The students, who were all much younger than me, had more confidence and faith than I ever had. They approached learning in a different manner and embraced their studies with dedication and commitment. I started probing more and more into Swami's teachings and opened my heart to him. Thus my personal transformation began. Being at the school every morning meant that wonderful people with personal experiences and amazing insights continually surrounded me. Going home every evening gave me the chance to hear how Swami had captured my parent's hearts. Every conversation I had would provide answers to questions I hadn't even voiced out loud. Every interaction would give me the guidance I was previously lacking. It was almost as though I was part of an intensive and narrowly tailored summer showers course! I began to eagerly read the books that stuffed my parent's bookshelves, old copies of Sanathana Sarathi replaced Glamour on my bedside table, prayer once again became part of my daily routine. I will never forget the day when I closed my eyes to pray and saw the loving and beautiful face of Swami looking back at me. It was that night that I acknowledged Swami as the divine parent, the powerful presence and the loving God that had always been a part of my life and was now in my heart.

With hindsight I see how carefully Swami was preparing me by exposing me to his teachings, to this words and to the importance of integrating the five human values in our everyday life. One day I came to school as usual, and discovered that I would be teaching the fifth grade class! What a blessing I thought, what an opportunity to serve the Lord. I was very excited . . . until the awesome responsibility of teaching at Baba's school actually began to dawn on me. The stakes were so high. The expectations were great and the thought of failure made my stomach churn. Would I be a good example, would I be a good teacher, would I be able to teach English and also implement EHV in the classroom? I had so many doubts and fears about my abilities. However I was quickly reminded by the wonderful role models that Swami had surrounded me with that God was in control and that I had no reason to fear when his presence was clearly all around me. The first day I was to begin teaching, the calendar in the principal's office caught my eye. Under Baba's smiling face were the

following words, “Take refuge in the almighty God who resides in your heart... Feel that you are in His hands and therefore always safe.”

I took the message as my personal mantra as I stepped into the classroom. For the first time in my life, I completely surrendered to God and dedicated all my work to him. I would pray with my students before each class and thank him silently at the end. Through His grace I was able to experience the joy that comes from teaching. I reminded myself everyday that I too was a student and although the boys looked up to me as a teacher I was simultaneously learning from them. Teaching was challenging yet the fulfillment and satisfaction that came from serving God was infinite. I began to see every experience, however big or small, as an opportunity to grow in love and in faith. I began to see miracles in all the little things that I had never paid attention to before.

As I experienced this wonderful transformation, fears and worries about my future began to dissipate. I knew that God had a wonderful plan for me that would unfold. Not only had Swami given me the opportunity to serve him, he had also blessed me with many qualities that I did not have before: trust, patience, self-confidence and compassion. I truly felt as though I had emerged from a cocoon and became a better woman. In the spring of that year I received a letter from a prestigious law school that I had forgotten I had even applied to. Not only did the envelope contain an acceptance letter but also a scholarship came along with it. This miracle overwhelmed me. Swami has always said, “If you take one step towards me, I will take a hundred towards you.” I feel as though I gave so little of my time and he bestowed nothing but love and attention on me since the first day I walked into the school. He gave my life a renewed purpose, brought me closer to my family and gave me the golden opportunity to serve him. The year that I had thought would be wasted, he made into the most important year of my life.



Learning How to Learn

A NATIONAL YOUTH EFFORT TO ASSIST STUDENTS IN NEED

Sri Ganesh Gopal, Malaysia
Kunaveni, Malaysia

The Sathya Sai Central Council of Malaysia, in its continued effort to contribute towards nation building, accepted the invitation of the Sultan Abdul Samad Secondary School (SAS) to conduct a three-month motivation program. Dr. Suresh Govind, then National Youth Coordinator, and his team of trained teen youth coordinators and facilitators from the Sathya Sai Central Council of Malaysia accepted the challenge. The program required the intervention into the lives of these "GCE- O Level", also known as SPM in Malaysia, bound students, 4 months ahead of their exams to observe and analyze the impact of the Sathya Sai Human Values Youth module.

School's Objective

- To instill in the students the need and desire to study and excel.
- To teach them effective studying techniques.

Date of Commencement

11 June 1999

Participants

Five of the weakest Form 5 Arts classes. One hundred and eighty-five students were identified. The school had indicated that these students were expected to Fail or at best obtain a General Certificate SAP.

Our Rationale in conducting the course

Change of attitude is directly related to the awareness and practice of Human Values.

Our Expected Outcome

Students who attend the program regularly (including the camps) will aspire to and achieve equal or higher than Grade Three.

Modes of Operation

Weekly hourly sessions based on Human Values and the tools required for improved performance.

- A one-day camp to set directions and goals.
- A two day, one night camp instilling the following thoughts:

1. All problems can be solved.
 2. All limits can be broken.
 3. The power is in your hands.
 4. Love and respect for parents is key to higher achievement.
 5. Concept of “An Ignorer” and “A Transformer”.
- Weekly tuition commencing August 14, 1999 and ending October 30, 1999
 - Parents Appreciation Day as the finale to the program.

Mid-Term Report from the School

Copies of the students’ mid-term reports were given to us to observe changes and improvement in their academic performances.

Evaluation

An evaluation form was designed and filled by both student and teachers.

Some Comments from Participants

“It gave me the encouragement to learn well and the motivation was very useful.”

“The motivation program was extremely useful because it increased the wish to study.”

“The program was an opportunity to release problems, to acquire effective study techniques and provided the realization that time is very short.”

“The facilitators have told us their own histories; specifically, how to overcome failures and this has been a benefit as well as a lesson.”

“This is an experience of a lifetime for me.”

“It taught me how to study and made me realize what is Love.”

“The counselors should lengthen the time frame of the motivational program.”

“This course is rarely organized, and is a waste if students do not participate in it.”

“On average students now study between 2 – 4 hours daily when previously it was between 0 – 2 hours.”

“Those students who have attended the course regularly have also indicated that their friends, teachers, siblings and parents have seen a change.”

“Students have now reported that they are aware of the importance of education, wish to succeed in life and have a goal after leaving school.”

“Most students have also reported that they had no goals previously and that it was laziness that prevented them from studying.”

The Actual Outcome

The results of the SPM (GCE-O Levels) 1999 examinations released on April 4, 2000 showed a significant improvement in the performance of the students who regularly attended the motivation and free tuition program, which was conducted every Saturday morning.

The results also revealed that the class teacher's own level of enthusiasm, motivation, and confidence in his/her students is another important factor in ensuring that students do well in the exams. One teacher in particular was very supportive of our motivation program and it was amazing, and thoroughly gratifying to note that none of the students in this particular class failed with the exception of one student who had not turned up for the exams.

An analysis of the performances in Mathematics has also been compiled to show the impact of the weekly free tuition classes. We chose to illustrate Mathematics, as it is an objective exam thus eliminating any bias in performance measurements.

Closing remarks

Sai's teaching has indeed made a difference in the lives of these students who now hope to continue their education in their chosen field. The counselor echoed our thoughts, "Though they may not have reached Grade 1, the values that have touched their hearts will certainly be cherished and put into practice as they perform their duties in the journey of life!"

Some parents, with tears and smiles of joy, came forth to thank the facilitators during the Parents' Appreciation Day program at the school in October 1999. Though they may not understand what made their children change almost overnight, they are indeed grateful – and the facilitators in turn are most thankful to the Unseen Hand that scripted this episode!

We are now conducting classes for the second consecutive year at the SAS Secondary School and have also extended our help to the neighboring PJ La Salle Secondary School.

And so the saga continues with renewed hope, greater vision and higher aspirations.



Slovenian Sai Youth

A TOUCHING STORY OF HOW YOUTH CAN BRING ABOUT CHANGE IN
CONSCIOUSNESS, EVEN IN A WARTORN PLACE

Ljubica Klancar, Slovenia

Although it is not yet time for annual reports, we would like to share with you an experience that has ignited a flame of love and hope in our hearts. In addition, it is an example of implementation of the recommendations adopted at the 2nd World Youth Conference in Prasanthi Nilayam. In August 25th to 27th, 2000, Slovenian Sai Youth organised a meeting of Sai Youth with delegates coming from all former republics of Yugoslavia: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and Slovenia.

Our original motive behind organizing the event was simply to “do something together”. However, what emerged in the end, with Swami’s grace, was something to marvel at with gratitude. Swami took us from the insignificant initial impetus of “spending more time together” to an event which is probably the first attempt to bring together people from all over the former Yugoslavia. As a result, a connection was established not only among youth but also among older members of Sai Organisation who helped in the preparations or listened to impressions of participants after they returned home. Many of them thanked Swami for giving the necessary courage to youth to bring together people living in antagonistic war-torn states. Without realising it, we helped their hidden dreams come true. A connection of fraternity and unity between Yugoslav nations was brought back to life. We learnt that political borders have no place in Divine Love.

The theme of our meeting was “Communication” – a skill greatly needed in our part of the world. Here, it must be pointed out that we did not select the topic. Rather, while we were considering the programme and possibilities for individual workshops, we realised that they all had the common theme of communication. As invitations were sent out to national youth co-ordinators in early July, nobody expected such enthusiastic responses. Despite limited resources and obstacles such as obtaining visas, many young women and men, girls and boys, expressed a determination to come to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. Knowing that many of our sisters and brothers from other former Yugoslav republics lived under more difficult circumstances than us, Slovenian youth helped to cover travel and visa expenses for youth from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, thereby ensuring that youth from all parts of the former Yugoslavia would participate in the event.