

Overall, 28 youth from other republics and some 15 youth from Slovenia participated in the event. Here I must note that although these figures may seem low, it is of no little significance considering the small size of our respective homelands, difficult travel conditions and limited resources. Since the group was small, we were able to remember all names, communicate with everybody and create true bonds of friendship.

Guests started arriving on Thursday, although the event officially opened on Friday. In that way, we had already spent many hours together before the official opening. The opening address by Ljubica Klancar, the Slovenian Sai Youth Co-ordinator and Roman Povse, the President of the Ljubljana 1 Sai Centre, where the event was mostly taking place, was followed by learning and singing the “anthem” of the event, *Love All Serve All*. The song was selected because of its inspiring lyrics and also because of its melody in rhythm, which happens to be a *polka*, the national music of Slovenes, among other nations. Having learnt the song, we proceeded with a simple children’s dance which connected us even more. At the end of this first event, our brothers and sisters from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia surprised us with a small present. They gave us ornately written personal messages to be drawn from a bag. They also gave us a bowl full of sweets, which after been placed at the feet of Bhagavan, was gratefully accepted as prasadam.

After dinner, we gathered again for devotional singing. We were joined by several older members of the Ljubljana 1 Sai Centre who sang the Glory of God with us. Before retiring, a youth representative from each nation recited a prayer of his or her national religion and in his or her language. This was one of the most magical moments of the entire event. In respectful silence, Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Moslems listened to prayers in five different languages. We indeed became one soul and heart at that moment.

In the morning, following a good night’s rest spent at homes of various Slovene youth and Sai devotees in Ljubljana and in the Ljubljana 1 Sai Centre, we gathered again for Light meditation. We had a long day ahead of us. We headed for a spot in nature outside the city where the first workshop, “*How to become a world sports champion*”, was to take place. The idea came from a short workshop on collective sports held during the 2nd Youth Conference in Prasanthi Nilayam last November. This workshop was prepared by Mark Tim Atlanty (Slovenia) and was designed to take the whole day.

We journeyed to a meadow surrounded by a forest. The workshop started with the reading of Swami’s words, summoning youth to awake from their slumber and fulfil their Divine duty. A coconut brought by Croatian youth was broken in front of an altar, dedicated to Swami, and then the workshop began. The whole point was to experience how even in sports, every detail of preparation and team work must be dedicated to God in order to meet with

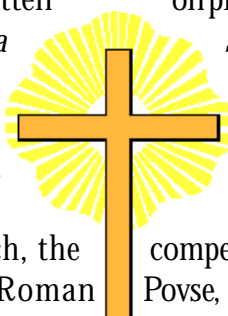
success. The sports discipline selected was soccer and participants were divided into four teams: “Om”, “Sri”, “Sai” and “Ram”. Each team had to elect a coach and carry out all necessary preparations for a game of soccer: from training, devising field strategies and assigning soccer players to painting placards, writing songs and cheering. Some of the slogans recited by the teams and written on placards were *Jay Siva Jay*, *Om Siva Sakti- Victory is Bhakti*, *Sai Fly*, *Sathya Sai*, *Sai is the Team I Live For*, etc.

We then took a lunch break. The delicious sattwic (healthy) meals were prepared by a team of cooks consisting of older Sai members who had with great enthusiasm responded to our request for providing us with meals.

After lunch, the competition began. The referee of the tournament, per our request, was Roman Povse, the President of the Ljubljana 1 Sai Centre, assisted by one of the youngest members of the Slovenian Sai Youth Wing, his five-year old son Tristan. Having presented themselves with song and placards first, all teams played well and the matches took place amidst the chanting of the Lord’s name. But the winning team was invincible in all respects: its name was Om, the mahamantra of all mantras. Their motto was Love and in their hymn, they declared at the beginning of the tournament that they had already won because they had already accepted the possibility of defeat. In addition, they replenished their strength during breaks with vibhuti. The first, second and third team received inscribed cups, whereas the fourth and last team was bestowed the greatest prize of all – pictures of Swami and packets of vibhuti. The sense of fraternity was again manifest. According to a prior agreement, cups were to be taken home by coaches of individual teams. But since some coaches came from the same country, which would mean that cups would end up in a single country, they were given to other members of teams, so that presently, all cups inscribed with Swami’s name are located in different republics of the former Yugoslavia.

During breaks between matches, individual nations presented their culture through songs and poetry. The beauty of each melody and every word still echoes in our hearts.

After dinner, the meadow was prepared for the last event of the day: devotional singing around a camp fire. Because the weather had been dry and hot for more than a month, all precaution was taken not to set fire to the surrounding forest. The fireplace was surrounded with three circles of stones, representing the three gunas to be transcended by Divine Fire. The stack of wood in the centre was set on fire by the representatives of all



countries present. This was followed by a magical evening of devotional singing. Youth were again joined by older members of the Sai family. Having burnt all the wood, we slowly packed into cars and left the meadow that will be remembered by all of us for a long time to come. Especially by youth from Bosnia and Herzegovina, for as they told as later, they cannot go for walks in nature at home because of the threat of landmines left behind by the war. For them, running around that meadow meant more than just having fun – it meant a special privilege bestowed on them by Bhagavan.

On Sunday, three workshops took place on the premises of the Ljubljana 1 Sai Centre. The first dealt with non-violence in communication and was prepared by Jelka Milic from Split (Croatia). The participants immediately responded to the topic and a lively debate developed about four types of communication and how to build a heart-to-heart dialogue within a family and elsewhere. The debate was occasionally interrupted by improvised situations staged by participants themselves.

In the break after the workshop, their national culture through though entirely in the conveyed the message: Divine heart is made manifest by man. The next workshop was “Animals”, prepared by Ljubica of the workshop consisted of a horses who had proven to be great



shop, Macedonian youth presented a short performance which all-Macedonian language clearly Light inherent in the human through sacred deeds performed was “Communication with Ani-Klancar (Slovenia). The first part slide projection and stories about teachers of communication. The main

point was to present animals as beings with their own private lives and thoughts, likes and dislikes, friends, enemies, joys and sorrows, thereby changing the common view of animals being dumb beings at human disposal. This enabled us to see them as Embodiments of God, which they truly are. The second part of the workshop consisted of participants dividing into groups, discussing their fears connected with a certain animal and trying to remember at least one virtue of that animal, thereby gaining some positive insight into the existence of the feared animal.

After lunch, the third and last workshop took place. Its title was “Relationships between Men and Women” prepared by Ranko Milic from Split (Croatia). Under Ranko’s guidance, participants discussed human qualities contributing to the development and maintenance of a relationship and wrong actions, which can endanger it. The workshop helped us realise the importance and gravity of the relationship with the two genders and the effect it has on our spiritual path.

With this, the gathering of Sai Youth from the former Yugoslav republics came to an end. What followed was the cleaning of the premises, more devotional singing, taking group photographs, going for ice cream and saying goodbye. The last participants did not leave until Tuesday, which meant that there was ample time for more heart connections in Sai's love. But our friendship did not end there. Since the event, the participants have kept in contact via e-mail and already started planning more joint activities, such as setting-up an exhibition about our meeting and the friendship between our nations, and creating an e-mail network through which we could discuss matters of joint interest. But what is more important is that our gathering was not a one time event, for youth from Croatia and Macedonia have already offered to organise the next meeting of Sai Youth from our part of the world.

Thank you, Swami, for charting our path of friendship, unity and love!



One Step Toward Me...

A STORY OF SWAMI'S INFINITE GRACE

Chetan Kharod, USA

In the fall of 1997, I was a flight surgeon serving an operational flying unit in the US Air Force. I had recently returned from Swami's physical Presence and was inspired to make some life changes. My earlier steps on Swami's path had been intense, but as with many things in life, once they passed, I had forgotten the effort required to take those steps.

I used to eat non-vegetarian food and drink alcoholic beverages. At that time, my rationalization was that food and drink were but one type of sensory input. I told myself that I was working hard on the other inputs. So why should I get so caught up in food issues? In my mind, what I ate was less important than "how I lived!"

In early 1996, someone relayed to me a Sai quote that no serious spiritual aspirant, much less someone considering himself a Sai devotee, should consume alcohol. From the day I received that message, I never touched alcohol again. That is how my path has been sometimes. I may expend a significant amount of energy thinking about how I will start something or give up something, but in the end, there is always a final common pathway. I finally resolve to do a certain thing, I dedicate it to Swami, and then refuse to give in to temptation! As I learned one autumn in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, avoiding temptation is often an arduous task.

My squadron was deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Southern Watch. Coming up to the deployment I had toyed with the idea of no longer eating poultry, fish, or pork, and had stopped eating beef almost a year before. For the weeks before I deployed, I had been praying daily to Swami to help me make this change. One day, while flying as aircrew in the back of the search and rescue aircraft, I was eating an MRE (Meal, Ready to Eat, a military nonperishable food ration). As I took a bite of the chicken stew, a voice in my head clearly told me "This is the last non-vegetarian food you will eat." I suddenly lost interest in the food and gave it to a combat rescue technician sitting next to me. I also pulled out my Swami photo from my flight suit and told Him that I wouldn't eat non-vegetarian food any more. Of course, I could not leave it at that and went on to say "Swami, no matter what happens, I swear that I will not eat that stuff and you will have to help me!" Easily said. Then another opportunity for excellence began.

From that day, even the meager vegetarian choices in our “chow hall” were less available as the deliveries of beans and legumes were cut off. Salads, some milk, peanut butter, bread, water, and juice were my source of nutrition. Over the next five days, the choices dwindled. However the intensity of my promise to myself and to Swami seemed to take on a life of its own. “Bring it on!” I said to no one in particular. “If all that is left of me is skin and bones, I will not go back on my pledge!” On the day of the most intense hunger pangs, I sat at the table with my Commander. He watched as I ate a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for dinner. He asked why this was all I ever ate. I said that vegetarian choices were limited, but any man who has food to eat is a lucky man! He excused himself and left the dining area.

Suddenly my “scramble” pager went off! This pager is only used in real life emergency scenarios! I ran to the Command Tent to do my job as the Medical Staff Officer. When I got there, the Commander was calmly sitting at his desk reading some intelligence briefs. I asked him what was happening. He put the papers down and turned to look at me, asking, “How do you think your mother would feel if she knew that you don’t have enough to eat?” Before I could say anything he told me that he had been watching me eat less and less over several days. He’d called the senior Supply Officer for the deployed forces and told him to find something for me right now. “Doc, I want you to go to your bunk and start eating what we’ve got for you. The military has been working on these for awhile, but they’re not out yet. You’re working hard and I want your nutrition to set an example for the troops. Now get on it!” I said “Yes, sir!” and went to my tent.

On the bed was a case of vegetarian MREs! I dropped to my knees and bowed my head as tears came to my eyes, my heart overflowing with grateful love. Even there, in the middle of a desert far from home, my best Friend came through. All I had done was make a commitment and offer my best effort to Him. And He overwhelmed me with His Mercy, Majesty, and Might! I just came one small step toward Him, and Swami did the rest! So, dear brothers and sisters, let us make the commitment and give Him a chance to love us, love us, love us!



Sai Gokulam

SERVING ANIMALS BY PRACTICING NON-VIOLENCE

Pramitha Mallawaratchie, Sri Lanka

Swami says, "...Animals have not come for the purpose of supplying food for human beings. They came to work their own lives in the world. But we have taken to meat eating as a habit." Therefore, in our attempt to implement this saying we, the Sai youth of Sri Lanka have established a cattle-releasing project.

Our goal is to have 75 cows released from the slaughterhouse by Swami's 75th birthday. Our original plan was to release one cow. However, due to the large response from the devotees, we managed to collect enough money for the release of 7 calves. After their release they were brought to the mandir in Colombo and treated for illnesses which they had contracted during their stay in the slaughterhouse. We found these calves to be in very poor health conditions. A veterinary surgeon and a few youths who regularly inspected the animals treated them.

During their stay in the mandir we discovered that devotees were donating more money for the release of even more cows. We released 11 calves this time, bringing the total number of released animals to 18.

One very important factor which we had to consider was the proper environment for the cattle's permanent stay. It had to have the proper temperature, humidity and cleanliness for the cattle to live in. Mr. Jinadasa Weeraman of Wellawaya was able to supply most of these requirements. More importantly, he was able to provide tender loving care. Thus the cattle were transported to Wellawaya.

During this time more donations were piling up at the mandir due to the vast increase in the devotees' response towards this project. With this third round of donations, we managed to release 19 calves and 2 cows. They too were sent to Wellawaya under the care of Mr. Weeraman. In order to mark Poson poya, a special Sai Gokulam was opened for the accommodation of the released cattle. On that occasion 4 more cows were released.

Sai Gokulam is a stopover for cattle that have been saved from the slaughterhouse before they are handed over to their new owners who will look after them with care. This is also a converging point for pilgrims who value the ideas of Ahimsa.



During our involvement in this project, unbelievable facts on how the cattle were treated in the slaughterhouse were revealed to us. We were told that the cattle were starved for days and fed only salt water in order to flush their digestive systems. This in turn was supposed to help the butcher clean the corpses. As a result of this, the cattle were prone to diseases such as diarrhea, and tended to be in very poor health. Therefore we decided that our next release project would go a step further and release the cattle not from the slaughterhouse but from the collection place, so as to increase their chances of survival.

An incident took place during the 1st cattle release. A gentleman from the neighboring embassy had been observing the activities taking place at the Mandir for sometime. And on that day he had seen the cattle that we released inside the Mandir. At this sight he had approached one of the calves and while stroking its head commented, "Mmmmmm delicious. When is the slaughtering festival?"

This was an unexpected shock for the youth who had been tending to the needs of the teary-eyed calves. In their shock, they replied that the calves were not for slaughtering and explained the purpose of their presence. This was a cause of great disappointment for the gentleman who talked endlessly about how delicious beef was and how much we would be missing. However, he helped in treating the calves for their illnesses, and by the end of the week had developed a certain attachment to the animals. When the time came for the calves to be transported to Walkway, he tearfully made a solemn promise not to partake in meat-eating as long as he lived in this country.

This story thus proves that with Swami's blessings, this project was a big step in the right direction toward minimizing cattle slaughter.



Dreams

Phalguni Dave, USA

*Are dreams ever real
Or are we living in a dream?
If so, then what is reality?
Reality is when we come out of our dreams
It's a step by step process
But one day we will come out
And that day will be called an awakening
Dreams are like bubbles
That carry our desires
But, only one dream is true
Reality, which is the path of Divinity
The path of Divinity leads to divine dreams
Which leads us to our ultimate reality
God
So again, don't live in a worldly dream
But in an Absolute dream*

Swami Says...

QUOTATIONS FROM SWAMI ON TOPICS RELATED TO YOUTH

CAREER

Unfortunately, there is a widespread opinion circulating freely that education is for jobs and not for the expansion of illumination. This is deplorable. Wisdom is illumination. It is the aim of education to radiate that light of wisdom. Such wisdom bestows upon man real power. Wisdom enables us to recognize mutual relationship of objects and individuals and to know the precedents and antecedents of each object. (*Sathya Sai Vahini, "The Inner Inquiry"*)

...Every profession, every stage of life, each sex, each period of life as fixed by age – childhood, boyhood, adolescence, youth, middle age, old age – has duties and obligations, which set the norm and guide the individual to benefit himself and society. (SSS VI, *"The Garden of No-Grief," Prashanti Nilayam, Nov. 23, 1967*)

Everyone is able to gain success in his profession or occupation only through concentration and one-pointedness in effort. Even the pettiest of tasks needs for its fulfillment the quality of concentration. The toughest problem yields before unswerving endeavor. (*Dhyana Vahini*)

The profession of a teacher is the most responsible one in every country. If the teacher strays from the path of truth, the entire society will suffer. (SSS X, *"The Teacher and His Task," Teachers' Training Camp, Brindavan, July 25, 1978*)

REVERING OUR ELDERS AND PARENTS

Therefore, at the outset, one has to honor one's parents. The mother is the visible manifestation of God. If ignoring the divinity of the mother, who is visible and adorable, one seeks to worship what is invisible; it must be regarded as a sign of ignorance. God exists in subtle form. He is invisible and is infinite and immeasurable. The mother is a visible and tangible proof of Divinity. When a child is born, the first person it beholds is the mother. The mother bears patiently much travail for the sake of the child. It is sweet to love such a mother. You may have love for God. But if you have no love for the mother who is physically present before you, how can you love the invisible Divine? (*Sanathana Sarathi, Aug. 1994, p. 214*)

At all times, the parents are there looking after you. You have to worship them. The mother can be compared to the earth and the father to the seed. Unless the seed is sown in the earth the plant will not sprout. You cannot ignore the father and mother who are responsible for your birth and growth. Even if you become the Prime Minister you must remember you owe your birth in the world to your mother. (*Sanathana Sarathi, June 1995, p.167*)

If you give joy to your parents, your children will be a source of joy to you in declining years. (*SSS V, p. 367, from Gems of Wisdom, p. 212*)

If your parents are not convinced about your (sons and daughters) views, try to explain the rational behind them. Speaking harshly to them will not help them understand your views. Be calm and give them a patient ear. Only then you will be able to convince them. (*Ladies Day Sandesh, Nov.1998, from Role of Women in the New Millennium, p. 20*)

LEADERSHIP

I want you to be leaders to protect the world. Leaders like lions - self-reliant, courageous, majestic, and just. The lion is the king of animals, and I want you to be king among men. *(Inaugural Address to Students, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning - Summer Course 1992, from Sai Baba's Mahavakya on Leadership: Book for Youth, Parents, and Teachers, by Gen. M.L. Chibber)*

Service is a prerequisite on the way to leadership. *(Discourse at 1st World Youth Conference, Prashanti Nilayam, July 19, 1997)*

Do not seek to exercise authority over others; seek rather to discover chances to be useful to them. When one neglects his duties, the positions of authority start causing headaches. Be a servant, a servant of God – then, all strength and joy will be added unto you. *(SSS VI, "The Heart of the Organization," Nov. 21, 1968)*

Only the person who practices Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa (Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-Violence), experiences joy there from and shares that joy with others, can be called a leader. In addition to these qualities, a good leader should be selfless and be imbued by the spirit of sacrifice (Thyaga). *(Foreword: Leadership is Idealism in Action, Dec. 1993, from Sai Baba's Mahavakya on Leadership: Book for Youth, Parents, and Teachers, by Gen. M.L. Chibber)*

MAR RIAGE

Before marriage, he is half body. Before marriage, she is half body. Lady is always left side. Right side is gent's. The gent's body is always the right side of the wife. Now you have only one body. In Indian philosophy or custom, this is called ardhangi. (Ardha means half.) Wife before marriage is only ardhangi, half body. Now the left side is joined with the right side and you are full body. (*Divine Memories of Sathya Sai Baba*)

Men should try to understand women, and women should try to understand men. It is the harmony, peace and mutual love between men and women that brings happiness and peace to the family. People want happiness in the family, but they do not lead exemplary lives. The fault lies with both the husband and the wife. (*Ladies Day Discourse, Nov. 19, 1995*)

Women should take the correct path then men will follow suit, as it is the women who have to take the leading role. The wife is half of the husband; if she becomes good, then her husband, who is the other half, will also become good. (*Ladies Day Discourse, Nov. 19, 1995*)

Love is life for man and love is everything in this world. It is love that shines brilliantly in every individual. But man, not being able to comprehend the significance of love attributes physical relationship to it. The love of a mother towards her child is affection. The love that exists between wife and husband is infatuation. The love that exists among friends and relations is attachment. The love towards material objects is desire. Love in totality, directed towards God is known as devotion. (*Guru Poornima Discourse, Aug. 3, 1999*)

Marriage means your whole life, a whole lifetime together, not just a few days, or a few weeks, or a few years. (*Golden Age, pp. 140-143*)

PARENTING

Above all, realize that children are precious treasures; yours is the great task of rearing them up to become devoted servants of God and sincere Sadhakas (spiritual aspirants) of the spiritual path. (SSS II, "Precious Treasure," Whitefield, May 19, 1962)

You must examine every story or account that you place before the children from the point of view of individual faith and social harmony. Does this lead the child to a better, more harmonious a more God-oriented life? That is the question you should ask yourself. (SSS IX, "Gurus – Not Teachers," Rajahmundry, Jan. 3, 1974)

Recognize the great potentials of the child; adopt such methods as the child himself might suggest or indicate. Help the child to reach Godliness and become aware of its high destiny. Do not presume that the child is some inferior personality or that it is incapable of attaining the heights. (SSS IX, "To the Mothers," Bangalore, July 10, 1974)

A mother carried her son on her shoulder, when she went to the market. A woman with a basket of fruits passed by her: the child lifted a banana from that basket and started eating it. The mother noticed it, and when she was told that he had cleverly lifted it from the basket of a passing fruit-seller, she complimented the son on his smartness. This made the child indulge in petty thieving and picking pockets, as it grew into a boy and in actual house breaking and dacoity. Once during a dacoity, he committed even murder, and when he was caught and jailed, he expressed a wish to see his mother before being hanged. The wailing weeping desperate mother was brought before him. She was sobbing at her son's fate. The son asked her to come closer to him; suddenly he tried to strangle her, and the guards separated them. The son said, "she deserves the punishment; for, it was she who brought me to this doom. Had she reprimanded me when I stole the banana when I was a child of two years instead of complimenting me, I would not have fallen into this evil way". (SSS IX, "Parents Beware," Dharmakshetra, Jan 6, 1975)

HEALTH AND SPIRITUALITY

All that you eat, all that you see, all that you hear, all that you take in through the senses make a dint in your health. (*SSS II, "Mithi and Gathi," Sathya Sai Hospital, Prashanti Nilayam, Oct. 10, 1961*)

The very joy derived from service reacts on the body and makes you free from disease. (*Sadhana-the Inward Path, p.179*)

Without health man cannot brave temptations, earn a decent living, fulfill his basic needs, and succeed in spiritual endeavor. (*SSS X, "Hospitals and Health," Sri Sathya Sai Hospital for Women and Children, Whitefield, Aug. 28, 1976*)

Illnesses are caused not so much by the food people eat or the conditions in which they live, but by mental weakness, and mental attitudes, prejudices, and predilections. Desires, disappointments, despair- they also cause diseases. For many illnesses, filling the mind with the thought of God is the curative drug. For the rest, regimented diet, sleep, pastimes, and activities are effective cures. (*SSS V, "Well or Ill," Dasara Discourse, Prashanti Nilayam, Sept. 26, 1965*)

You consider this habitation of yours as "your" body. No, it is the temple of God! God resides therein. Keep it clean, fresh and fragrant through developing compassion and love. Use the temple of God only for holy thoughts, words and deeds. (*SSS X, "Jesus," Brindavan, Dec. 25, 1976*)

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The modern system of education has become computer-oriented. There is craze for computers everywhere. You are not a computer. You are a composer. After all, what does the computer do? It does whatever you program it to do. It cannot function on its own accord. God-gifted brain is the real computer. Make proper use of it. Unfortunately, the modern man depends excessively on the machine to the exclusion of the God-gifted brain. The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that people depend on calculators even for simple arithmetic calculations. You should be self-reliant. (*Discourse at 2nd World Youth Conference, Prashanti Nilayam, Nov. 21, 1999*)

... the trouble is that while science and technology have advanced leaps and bounds, man has not learnt the art of using them in the right manner. He has allowed science and technology full license to cater to his sensual desires and thereby demeaned his nature and status. (*SSS IX, "Limits that Liberate," Brindavan, May 5, 1974*)

Everything should be under certain limits. It is good that science should grow. It should provide all sorts of conveniences; advancement is needed. But it is too much. What is the result? Scientific advancement led to the discovery of the atomic bomb, hydrogen bomb, and nitrogen bomb. They are all meant for annihilation totally, that you'll be fear stricken. After all insects can kill for that matter. Why should you invent bombs to kill? All this money should be made use of for the progress of society. (*Discourse at 1st World Youth Conference, Prashanti Nilayam, July 19, 1997*)

TIME MANAGEMENT

Embodiments of Love! Young men and women! Future citizens of the world! When one's wealth is lost, it can be acquired again. If one friend is lost, another can be got. If the wife passes one can marry again. If land is lost, it can be acquired again. But if time is lost it cannot be got back. In this vast cosmos and among the myriad species, man is the highest and noblest being. He is sublime. He is full of good traits. If a man loses these attributes of humanness, they cannot be easily regained. (*Discourse at 1st World Youth Conference, Prashanti Nilayam, July 16, 1997*)

Have a timetable for spiritual sustenance, just as you have now for physical sustenance. A breakfast of Japa and Dhyana, a lunch hour of regular worship of the Lord, "tea and snacks" of reading scripture or sacred books in the afternoon and a light dinner of Bhajana in the early hours of the night. If you follow this regimen you can sleep sound and wake refreshed. (*SSS IV, "Awake, Arise!" Kakinada, Mar. 25, 1965*)

Life is like a mega-clock. Its three hands indicate the rate at which the days, months and the year are passing. Man rejoices in the movement of clock's hands but does not realize every movement is a reminder of his diminishing life span. Hence, before the final hour strikes, every man should realize what his duties are and see that the remaining time is well spent. (*Discourse at 1st World Youth Conference, Prashanti Nilayam, July 16, 1997*)

Today you are wasting your time by not making any effort to know Divinity. Out of 24 hours in a day, you should allot 6 hours for personal work, 6 hours for social service, 6 hours for sleeping and the remaining 6 hours for spiritual practices like Japa, Dhyana and Yoga. Some people say they do not have time to think of God, but they waste hours together in mundane matters. Life becomes meaningless if you do not think of God. Body is gifted to make proper use of time. Body will be sanctified only when it is used for sacred activities. You should understand the relationship between body (Kaayamu), time (Kalamu) and responsibility (Karthavyamu). Do not waste even a single moment. (*Birthday Discourse, Nov. 23, 1999*)



National Service Projects

REGIONAL YOUNG ADULT REPORTS ON THE NATIONAL SERVICE PROJECT, USA

*“Serve the whole world. Understand the truth that you are born to serve the society.” --
Sathya Sai Baba, Inaugural Discourse, 2nd World Youth Conference*

After the Second World Youth Conference in November 1999, participating young adults returned home with a renewed enthusiasm to carry on Swami’s message of service and human values. In response to this energy, the USA Young Adult National Executive Committee comprising of Dr. Bill Harvey, Phyllis Krystal and Hal Honig, asked young adult representatives from around the country for suggestions on how to channel this energy into a nationwide movement. Thus, the National Service Project was born, where youth were committed to service projects with economically poor and disadvantaged youth in their respective areas. The theme followed Swami’s message that “Youth alone can transform youth.”

The United States is a very diverse nation economically, geographically, and socially and different opportunities to serve arise in different areas. The National Service Project allowed young adults to serve their communities by tailoring their projects to the various needs of their region. The following pages chronicle some of these projects, including how the projects were started and young adult reactions during and after the project. Each of the ten regions of the US is represented with at least one service project that follows two basic themes: Helping Troubled Youth and Technology Outreach. The experiences reported here illustrate the importance of the process of service and not the results. If the activity is done with selfless love and devotion, then beneficial results will follow.

As youth, our duty is to learn not just from books, but also from life. The National Service Project is a learning experience for many young adults and we hope that this can be a tool for other youth to follow the example of serving the needs in their community.

Included are excerpts from each of the regions and their accounts of how they as youth, transform youth. Full details of the project are available on the website, <http://www.syan.org>

Region 1: Northeast Region

For the past seven years, the youth from Brookline, Massachusetts have been involved with the Judge Connelly Youth Facility, a state sponsored detention and treatment center for delinquent youth, between the ages of 14 and 18.

After the 2nd World Youth Conference, the youth have expanded their focus to include a tutoring and computer literacy project for the boys in the Treatment group. To make the learning experience interesting as well as educational, tutors try out different methods such as hands-on science experiments and skits depicting human values. This project will provide an avenue for young adults to transmit the five universal Human Values, not through lesson plans and lectures, but through their own conduct and practice of these Human Values in the course of participation in this project.

Region 2: Mid-Atlantic Region

“The Sathya Sai Education in Human Values program is extremely powerful and much needed. A good example is the service being performed by the Philadelphia Young Adults at the Youth Study Center. At the Center we encounter children who have committed or been involved in an adult crime, and are awaiting adjudication... Each week we choose a value, which serves as the basis for that week’s activities through a story, a song, an activity, role playing situations and a quotation...By consistently engaging these children with positive spiritual energy, the Young Adults are themselves beginning to realize how powerful this Seva [service] can be.”

Using a devotee’s office in the financial district, New York City youth, in collaboration with the NY City Center members, put together a new program, which combines specific computer skills with Education in Human Values. Most of the students come either through an agency that deals with homeless or disadvantaged teens or through high schools that work with problem students. Another population group - new teen immigrants - has now been added. Youth is best equipped to transform youth, as Swami reminds us. Built on the unity and harmony of the volunteers, this project is fast developing and new possibilities are now beginning to take shape for the future.

Region 3: Southeast Region

Agape Corner is a non-profit, volunteer and donation based boarding home/school located in downtown Durham, NC. The school houses children aged 5-19 from various negative family backgrounds. So far the youth have done various activities with the chil-

dren of Agape Corner. They have helped them with their homework, played value-based games, taken them on educational field trips, and all in all earned their friendship and respect. They are now in the process of setting up a computer literacy program for the children at Agape who are interested in learning about computers. All in all, they believe that they can help give these children tools that will help them in the future. “We hope to not only teach them how to use a computer to write a resume for a job, but how to be a person of good character with good values and love for all.”

Region 4: Mid Central Region

With Swami’s grace, for the past 14 months the Saint Louis Center has been working with troubled teens at the Clayton Family Detention Center. Once a month, they visit the kids and entertain them by doing activities ranging from origami to basic science experiments. At the beginning of each session, they play “musical values”. “This project has been successful because it gives the kids the opportunity to openly address the way they feel on certain issues. We have found that they readily participate and have many things to say.”

Region 5: North Central Region

Young Adult girls from this region have been involved in a computer-tutoring project for youth at YOU, a youth training center. The classes are taught with an emphasis on their potential to improve the world as youth. They discuss computer-related careers, presentation and leadership skills, and emphasize the importance as a younger generation in having a positive outlook on life.

Region 6: Pacific North Region

Early this year, the region young adults did yard and maintenance work for a non-profit organization called Friends of Youth. This organization provides counseling, transitional housing, and shelters to youth in need, including single teenage mothers, children with criminal records, and homeless children. The youth cleaned the outside of a counseling center that is open during the day, and did yard work in a transitional subsidized housing project. The feedback on the project was very positive. People enjoyed getting outside and working, and they could see a nice change in the appearance of the buildings when they were done.

Region 7: Northern California Region

Most of the Bay Area Young Adults are working in the high-tech industry or studying technology in leading institutions. We felt that there could not be a more appropriate service action than using the talents and knowledge of the members to provide teens and deprived youth with a chance to be part of the revolution sweeping society in the form of computers and the internet.

Within the first two weekends, some of the young adults felt that they experienced a transformation of a different kind. As one young adult said, “I always had a tough time in practicing to see divinity in all beings. But, after starting the computer classes, I started seeing the true divinity in the innocent faces of the children. Whenever I see a happy smile on their faces, I am more and more motivated to share my love with them and make them happier. In the process I am developing a tendency to see divinity in all the beings around me. I have realized that service and sharing love is the best way to practice the human values.”

Region 8: Pacific South Region

Inspired by Swami’s teachings, “youth helping youth”, young adults answered the call to help some youth in the Los Angeles County detention system. The juveniles at the camp ranged in age from about 14-18 and were being detained here for minor offenses relating to gang activity or illegal drug activity. The group was paired up as tutors with several kids that were in a pilot program organized by Princeton Review to help the kids take the SAT.

Soon after the kids took the SAT, the youth group started to be more creative with the lesson plans. They had fun-filled group activities that included a review of essay writing skills, a workshop on fractions and a day of word games. “Over the weeks of working with the kids we received much joy, and their smiles let us know that they also were enjoying our company. In many cases just listening and talking with love was what was needed most.”

Region 9: Southwest Region

Young adults in the Southwest Region have initiated two new “youth for youth” projects, while continuing to maintain traditional service activities such as feeding the hungry, visiting elders in nursing homes, and participating in Sai Organization activities.

The Thomas J. Pappus School is a school for homeless children, where many of the students come from abusive families or otherwise unfortunate situations. The Young Adults intend to mentor these kids and offer love where none exists. The second project is in Saguache, the poorest of all counties in the state of Colorado, with the average annual income far below what is considered the poverty line. Many youths in this community are without hope or vision for their future, and many elders are alone and unable to care for their homes. Hence, in cooperation with the local youth mentoring program, Pilots for Prevention, Sai young adults and Sai Center members from across Colorado organized two service weekends for the benefit of the elders of Saguache. Through this project, young adults are bringing the spirit of service to the community, uniting youth and elders in need.

Region 10: South Central Region

The Houston youth group is currently working with Children’s Protective Services, an agency that deals with teenagers, ages 13 to 17, who have been removed from their homes

because of neglect and/or abuse. They celebrate birthdays, spend time with the kids, and play outdoor games with them. The young adult group targeted the youth because they can relate to each other, and it helps to serve them better.

“Everyone has a great time - It is difficult to tell because there is a high turnover of kids. But oftentimes, we hear ‘Do you have to do this? Do you mean that you do this voluntarily? Thank you so much for spending time with us!’”

