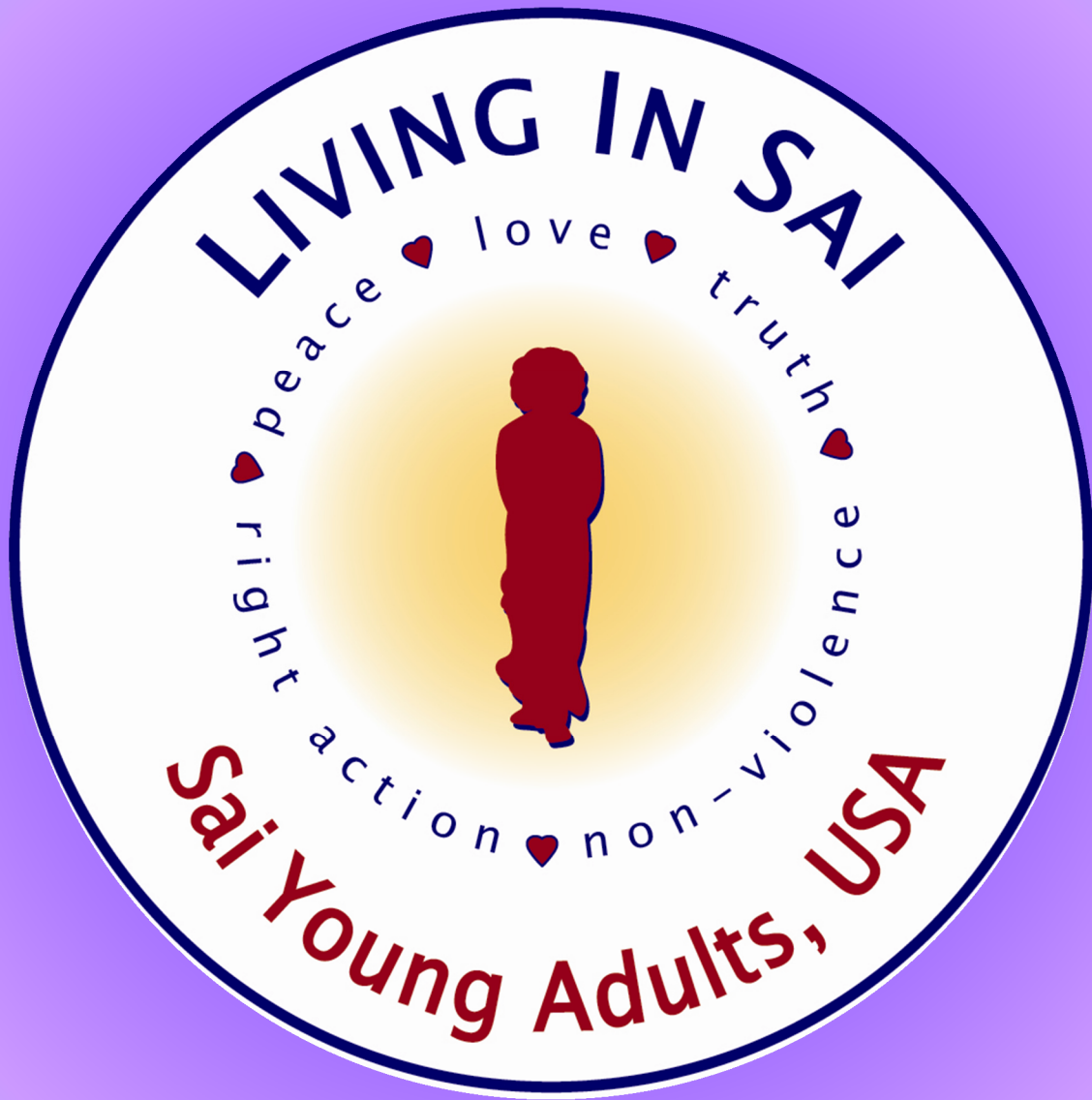


# Spiritual Discipline Program



**Learn to Speak Softly and Lovingly**

**July 2011**



## Be the living expression of God's kindness

Dear Sai Young Adults,

Sai Ram! Swami has often reminded us to “speak softly and lovingly.” In this issue, we endeavor to understand this directive of Swami and discuss how we might incorporate this as a spiritual discipline. Mother Teresa, an epitome of love in thought, word and action once said, “Be generous and understanding. Let no one come to you and leave without feeling better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness.”

We have all heard about the “win-win” situation. But, have you heard about a “win-win-win” situation? Some of you might be thinking that 3 wins are akin to 3 OMs. Well...sort-of, but read on to find out more.

It was the morning of Gurupoornima celebrations and Mahasamadhi darshan in Prashanti Nilayam, on July 15th 2011. A capacity gathering assembled in Kulwant Hall, with overflow directed to Poornachandra Auditorium. After the conclusion of the morning program and when it was time for the devotees to offer respects at the Mahasamadhi, multiple lines popped up. Recognizing a need to regulate the flow of devotees who were anxious and emotionally charged, several WYC delegates organized themselves to assist the local volunteers. As the team of volunteers set about organizing lines, the pathway from Poornachandra to Kulwant Hall was opened, adding a fresh influx of devotees to a yet to be organized group that was already inside Kulwant Hall. The result was an unmanageable confluence of devotees and a needless pandemonium in divine precincts. A brave group of WYC delegates from UK, Singapore, Netherlands, Mauritius, South Africa, and USA, held hands together to form a human chain... chanting “Sai Ram” with all the Love in their hearts. It was almost as if a magic wand had been waved at this jostling mass of devotees. A wave of calm enveloped everyone...orderly lines came into being that regulated the flow of devotees, and darshan of Mahasamadhi became possible for everyone.

One devotee amongst the surging masses walked up to a WYC delegate to thank her for her assistance with the crowd control. The devotee further remarked that Swami would, especially be very pleased with the delegate's kind and loving disposition under challenging circumstances. This young adult felt happy to have received a sweet acknowledgment of her service; the devotees were relieved that lines were reorganized for darshan; and most importantly, Swami's happiness which was conveyed through a devotee. Truly, a win-win-win situation. When we make each other happy, God is also happy with us.

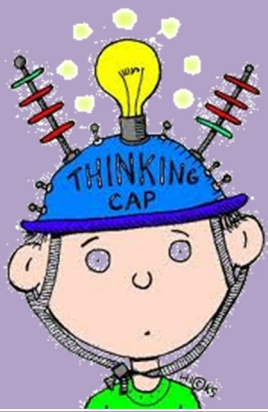
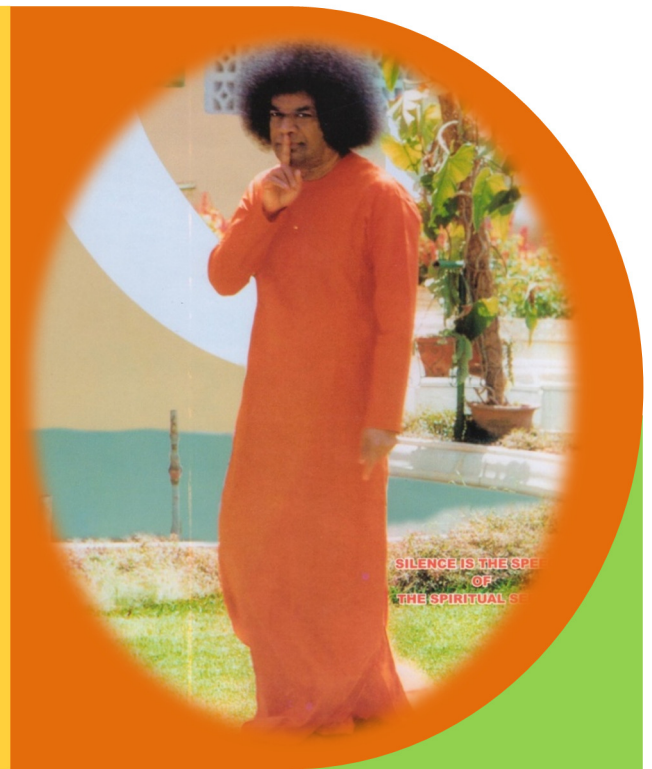
There are many who miss the joy of seeing our beloved Bhagawan's beautiful physical form. Yet, by living His message, all are guaranteed to experience His nectarine love and eternal presence within our own hearts.

Jai Sai Ram!



Silence is the only language of the realized. Practice moderation in speech. That will help you in many ways. It will develop Prama, for most misunderstandings and factions arise out of carelessly spoken words. When the foot slips, the wound can be healed; but when the tongue slips, the wound it causes in the heart of another will fester for life. The tongue is liable to four big errors: uttering falsehood, scandalizing, finding fault with others, and excessive speech. All these have to be avoided if there is to be santhi for the individual as well as for society.

(Sathya Sai Baba, SSS. Vol.1 p. 62)



## “THINK-TANK”

**Why Speak?** So that we can address the Sai in All! Swami is the perfect example of speech efficiency. Every word He speaks has a deep meaning and purpose. Even a small gesture of Swami is enough to convey the right message.



## Break-down of Sadhana

### 1. “Learn to Speak Softly”

- Living in Sai means feeling Swami within us and everyone else; recognizing the Swami in everyone is possible by speaking softly.
- How does speaking softly promote our Spiritual Growth:

Swami Says...

- “The ancients recommended the vow of silence in order to purify speech of its evils. A mind turned inwards towards an inner vision of God and speech turned towards outer vision both will promote spiritual growth and success.”
- “You have to practice speaking sweetly and softly and avoid unnecessary connections and relationships with all and sundry. The easiest spiritual practice is to reflect on God with love that is expanding and embracing one and all. It is the only way to realize the Divine.”

### 2. “Learn to Speak Lovingly”

- “You cannot always oblige but you can speak obligingly.”
- A kind word has the same effect as rendering service, by channeling Swami’s love through you.
- Speech must encompass integrity of mind/heart/word/deed. If we don’t watch our thoughts, it is very easy to say something which we don’t mean.

### 3. Practice silence

“It is only in the depth of silence that the voice of God can be heard.” We also know that it is also in the depth of silence that God can hear our voices.

# Inspiring Stories and Discourses

## Do not revile your brethren

(Shirdi) Sai Baba required no special place, nor any special time for giving instructions. Whenever any occasion demanded, He gave them freely. Once it so happened that a devotee of Baba reviled another behind his back in front of other people. Leaving aside merits, he dwelt on the faults of his brother and spoke so sarcastically that the hearers were disgusted. Generally, we see that people have a tendency to scandalize others un-necessarily, and this brings on hatred and ill-will. They say that there are various ways of cleansing or removing dirt (by means of earth, water and soap, etc), but a scandal-monger has got a way of his own using his tongue. Sai Baba had his own method of correcting the scandal-monger. He knew by his omniscience what the slanderer had done. When He met him at noon near the Lendi, Baba pointed out to him a pig that was eating filth near the fence and said to him - "Behold how, with

what relish it is gorging dung. Your conduct is similar. You go on reviling your own brethren to your heart's content. After performing many deeds of merit, you are born a man, and if you act like this, will Shirdi help you in any way?" Needless to say, the devotee took the lesson to his heart, and went away.



-Sri Sai Satcharitra Chapter 19

## Questions:

- Have you (whether with friends, family, or work colleagues) engaged in talking ill about someone in their absence? Have you ever (knowingly) been the focus of the slander? How did you handle either of these situations?
- How does "Living in Sai" relate to this story?

## Swami's Discourse: Virtues Needed to Serve

"You will earn My grace more by such service and sacrifice than by sitting in the front line and nodding to whatever I say. Do not push or pull people. Speak softly and sweetly. I have known many volunteers who reel off the excuse, 'Swami, they won't obey if we speak softly. They are used to only rough treatment.' I will never pardon such volunteers. The fault is always in their manner of speaking, the way in which they explain their actions, their temper, attitude, and approach."

~ Baba. February 24, 1965

More of Swami's words on being an exemplar volunteer by speaking softly and lovingly can be found at:

<http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume05/sss05-06.pdf>



## YA Testimonial

A few years ago while volunteering for a multi-Sai Center Christmas service initiative in NYC, a friend and I were blessed with the opportunity to compile gift bags of toiletry items for approximately 300 permanent patients of a special needs hospital. With much love and having set the intention to stretch our limited resources as far as possible, we set out to find the best bulk deals in the NYC /NJ area. We were on a mission!

Our first stop was Sam's Club. We decided to explain the project to the store manager in the hopes of obtaining some small discount. With much enthusiasm, respect, love and prayer for Swami's guidance, we proceeded to share details of the initiative and described the needs of this particular group of patients. The store manager was visibly touched, and asked us to wait in his office while he stepped out. Upon his return, we were thrilled to learn that instead of granting the discount we had requested, the store manager handed over a \$100.00 gift Card for us to spend in the store!



We felt the hand of God clearing the way. Our second stop was Target. Again we decided to take the same approach of sharing the service project details with the store manager with the same respect, enthusiasm and love. This second store manager was also moved enough by the project to offer a \$50.00 gift Card rather than just provide the requested discount.



We were feeling a sense of awe and immense blessings. Our lesson we felt was that when you proceed to do anything with the right intention, love and respect, ask for what you need and the Hand of God will always show you the way!

Jai Sai Ram!"

-Young Adult, New York City, NY

### 1) Speak each one of your words with Intent of Love

a) Practice radiating Love with each thought, word and action.

### 2) When speaking to people, constantly practice seeing Swami in them

a) If we see Swami in all, we will automatically speak softly and lovingly.

### 3) Always pray before you speak anything: "Swami, speak through me!"

a) Constantly remind yourself: I am not the speaker/doer – surrender! Make it a habit.

b) Identify with the higher Self and consciously let the Swami in you speak through you.

### 4) Integrate thought (T), word (W) and deed (D) before speaking

Unity of T, W, and D, coupled with love is vital and helps to build confidence

### 5) Smile and Be Happy!

a) What/How you feel inside reflects on the outside! Be happy and smile always so that your T, W, and D reflect this inner happiness and Love.

\* Try practicing these tips with real life scenarios





*“Before you speak, **THINK**: Is it necessary? Is it true? Is it kind? Will it hurt anyone? Will it improve on the silence?” – Swami*

**Description:** The speech litmus test is a self-evaluation tool to help you to measure how well you are practicing the spiritual discipline of ‘Learn to Speak Softly and Lovingly’ on a daily basis. We encourage you to take this litmus test towards the end of the day to see how you fared with the spiritual discipline during the day.

**How to use:** Each question has 3 choices. Circle the answer that best expresses how you did during the day. At the end, tally your scores and refer to the next section for the analysis of your score. You may compare your score with other YAs if doing the exercise in a group. You may also keep a record of your scores to see how you have been progressing in your spiritual practice.

## Section 1: Questionnaire

1. How often did you speak out of turn or when it was not necessary for you to speak?  
0. Most of the time; 1. Occasionally; 2. Rarely
2. How often were you truthful and honest?  
0. Rarely; 1. Occasionally; 2. Most of the time
3. How often were you polite and courteous while speaking?  
0. Rarely; 1. Occasionally; 2. Most of the time
4. How often did you feel that Swami was present during a conversation?  
0. Rarely; 1. Occasionally; 2. Most of the time
5. How often did you gossip or talk bad about someone?  
0. Most of the time; 1. Occasionally; 2. Rarely
6. How much time did you spend social networking / chatting with friends?  
0. Most of the time; 1. Occasionally; 2. Rarely

## Section 2: Analysis

Tally up your scores from the questions in Section 1, and write your score below. Examine what group your score falls under below:

### Litmus Test Colorbar



If you scored between:

1. 0 – 4 Points: You are in the red zone! You know you are better than this. Remember, Swami says, *“The tongue is liable to four big errors: uttering falsehood, scandalizing, finding fault with others, and excessive speech. All of these have to be avoided if there is to be peace for the individual as well as for society.”* Continue to remind yourself that Swami is present in all.
2. 5 –8 Points: You’re almost there! Being in the yellow zone most likely indicates that you have been a bit inconsistent with practicing the spiritual discipline. Revisit the questions where you scored 0 or 1 points and focus on improving those aspects. Always be aware of the truth that Swami resides in the heart of every being.
3. 9 – 12 Points: Congratulations! You are in the green zone. You have been doing a great job practicing the spiritual discipline of ‘Speak softly and lovingly’. Continue to apply this spiritual practice in your daily life!



## *National Youth Pilgrimage 2011*

***"Tell them to come for My Birthday!"***

We had previously shared that Bhagawan blessed us with direct guidance and grace regarding the first ever USA Youth pilgrimage and the spiritual discipline program! In March 2011, when presented with the tentative dates in August for the pilgrimage, Bhagawan surprised us and said, "Tell them to come for My birthday.!" As per Bhagawan's loving invitation, we are delighted to share with you the final dates for our pilgrimage:

**November 19<sup>th</sup> - November 26<sup>th</sup>**

We hope that this announcement will help you to start making travel plans, arrange work and class schedules. Information regarding the registration is forthcoming. Look out for the pilgrimage emails in your inbox!

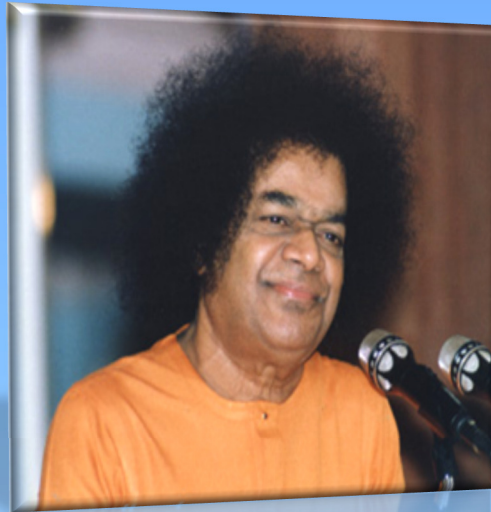


We love to hear from you! Do you have interesting insights, exciting experiences, feedback, pictures from your study circle... please send them to [info@saiyusa.net](mailto:info@saiyusa.net)



# Spiritual Discipline Program

July 2011



## Learn to Speak Softly and Lovingly

STUDY CIRCLE GUIDE

SANDEHA NIVARINI DISCUSSION QUESTIONS





## The objectives of the study circle are to discuss:

- ✚ Why is speech important?
- ✚ Why is silence important?
- ✚ Why is it important to speak softly?
- ✚ Why is it important to speak lovingly?
  - Does this mean you avoid speaking the truth if it will not be pleasant?
- ✚ How can we relate this to other spiritual disciplines/aspects of spirituality?

### Study Circle Activity:

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

### Previous Study Circle Review:

Review the last study circle on "practice sense control and dietary discipline" and discuss any experience since then.



### Interactive Session: Real Life Scenarios

*At the beginning of the study circle, ponder over these situations quietly and write down what you think in a piece of paper:*

1. You are in a really bad mood - it has been a very long and tiring day at work where nothing seemed to go your way and you have a terrible headache. You are in no mood to go home and cook. So, you end up stopping at a restaurant on your way home. The restaurant is relatively empty, but the waiter serving you is not in a good mood either. He is rude to you, and the food is delayed. You are really angry, and you feel like venting it.



**a.** You have the option of calling the restaurant manager and reporting the waiter which you feel is right. Or you may want to speak the waiter directly, in a loving manner, so that you are not guilty of speaking ill about a person behind their back rather than speaking to them directly. If you don't do this, chances are that the waiter will behave the same way with another customer. However, if you do report, the waiter might lose his job. What would you do?

**b.** Put yourself in the waiter's shoes. Perhaps he had a day similar to yours. How would you have dealt with the customer after an especially long day? Does it help to empathize with the waiter?

2. Think about a time when you were confused as to how you would break bad news to a friend. Did you do it? If so, how did you go about communicating the news?

3. You are in a competitive and aggressive work/school environment where everyone seems a little harsher and louder than you think is required. It is your first month at work, and because of your soft spoken nature, everyone seems to take you for granted. You did not envisage this when you started out on the job and now you need to change the situation. How would you deal with it?



4. Your boss/advisor/colleague snaps at everyone and is very loud, but he gets all the work done. You on the other hand are very soft spoken and find that a lot of work is dumped on you. A lot of times you feel that being aggressive is the way to be but you remember Swami's teachings about being soft and loving. So you are faced with this constant inner conflict. Have you been in this situation? If so, how did you deal with it? What do you think is the right solution?



5. Do you feel that speaking softly and lovingly can be done easily and more effectively only in spiritual circles like at the Sai Center and in service activities? How can it effectively be implemented in your work/school environment?

*At the end of the study circle, if necessary, go back to the situations and think about how you would do things differently.*

### **Tips to facilitate the study circle:**

1. It is always important to speak softly and lovingly to the extent possible. "You might not always oblige but you must always speak obligingly."
2. Unity of thought, word and deed and a pure heart will help solve all situations. For example, sometimes we might not be able to tell the entire truth, but if we have purity of heart, Swami will make sure things are done right.
3. Soft and loving speech comes from being in tune with the inner Swami in all situations and allowing the higher self to do the talking.

## Sandeha Nivarini Self-study Chapters

### Suggested Reading for the Month: Chapters 10 and 11

**Bhaktha:** Swami, how to get over the “obstruction of the present”?

**Swami:** There is a way for this also. Through Karma, the appropriate Karma. There is no obstruction that cannot be surmounted. Attachment to sense-objects can be removed by *Sama, Dama, Uparathi, Thithiksha*, by developing purity, self-control, withdrawal of desires and the ability to suffer. Dullness of understanding can be removed by listening again and again. Constant meditation on the things heard will abolish the habit of cynical criticism. All absurd conceit will vanish through the teachings one imbibes.



**Bhaktha:** Swami, to master all this seems impossible for everyone! To make it easy for all, tell me which is important?

**Swami:** My dear fellow, to know a thing, *Vijnana* (higher wisdom) is necessary. *Ajnana* (false knowledge) makes one ignorant, don't you know?

### Additional Interesting Read for the Month

Here are some best practices for this month's spiritual discipline compiled from Swami's numerous discourses by the Scotland Sai Center and can serve as a great reference. Please feel free to use it for reading and discussion in an individual or group setting.

Article:

<http://www.saiscotland.com/resource/ninecodes/speech.pdf>

- 1) Think of a situation where you have constantly used “I” while talking. What was your emotion like? Were you angry, happy or sad?
- 2) What do Jnani and Ajnani mean to you?
- 3) Swami has explained that, “Who said so? If you do not use the tongue, if you are silent in order to keep out the external obstacles to Sadhana, you certainly can develop your thoughts, you can desist from disturbing others, you can escape criticism and worry from others, you will get concentration, your brain will be saved from unnecessary burdens and it can improve much.” Dwell on this statement by Swami and explain what impact this statement makes on you? How or what prevents you from practicing the spiritual discipline daily?
- 4) Explain the difference between Vijnana and Ajnana and what does that mean to you?