

# Living In Sai

## Spiritual Discipline Program

### Regular Attendance and Active Participation in the Sai Center

#### In this issue...

National Spiritual  
Discipline Program Review

Purpose and Principle of  
the Sai Centers and Sai  
Organization

Life is a Puzzle – Solve it!

Musings from Professor  
Anil Kumar Kamaraju

Dear Young Adults,

Sai Ram! It was a glorious day in December 1961, in Repalle, a non-descript village 300 miles northeast of Puttaparthi. Thousands of devotees from the neighboring villages had gathered for a few precious glimpses of then nascent phenomenon called Sai Baba, who had arrived that morning to inaugurate a Sai temple and Center. Bhagawan addressed the devotees on this historic, unusually cold winter day with these warm words, “remember, Sai does not live in structures of stone or brick and mortar! He lives in soft hearts, warm with sympathy and fragrant with universal love.”

This month, we focus our attention on the next spiritual practice point- "Regular attendance and active participation at the Sai Center." Never before in the history of mankind has an Avatar founded an Organization bearing His name in His lifetime. An organization whose sole purpose is to educate, encourage, and inspire all to realize the divine principle underlying all existence.

Bhagawan created the Sai Center to help organize the local community of spiritual seekers. Bhagawan’s vision for the Sai center is to serve the purpose of a ladder – using which a seeker could climb to lofty heights of consciousness and realize oneness with divinity. A ladder is made of 3 components – the rungs that serve to support the hand, and steps that support the feet. The rungs on either side are devotion and education wings of the Sai Center – the steps form the service wing. Therefore, each of these wings, serve to support the seeker to climb to lofty heights of consciousness.

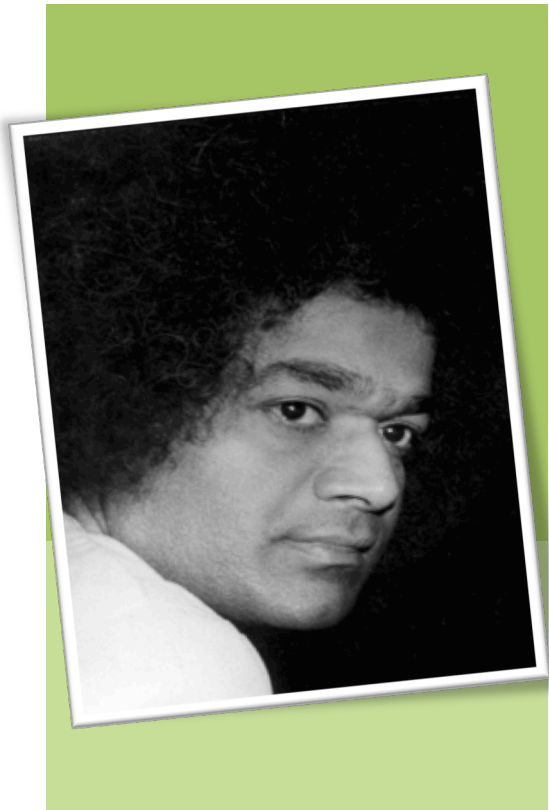
Bhagawan has reminded us on numerous occasions that He and the Sai organization are not two different entities – that they are inherently one and the same. One always feels His loving presence in Sai Centers around the world. For seekers of grace, for seekers of truth, Sai centers around the world provide access to a ladder using which one can find fulfillment to a journey of a lifetime. Sai centers that dot the global village are a unique gift bestowed upon mankind. We can all do well to reflect on the grace and compassion of Bhagawan as well as leverage this unique gift for our own spiritual progress.

Jai Sai Ram!



*“Remember, Sai does not live in structures of stone or brick and mortar! He lives in soft hearts, warm with sympathy and fragrant with universal love.”*

# National Spiritual Discipline Program Review



## Spiritual Discipline 1: Practice Namasmarana - Chanting of the Lord's Name

- ❖ Offer all your tasks at His lotus feet by silently repeating "Om Sri Sai Ram."
- ❖ While driving/walking to work, silently chant the Gayatri Mantra while focusing within.
- ❖ Invoke Swami's presence within, and ask for His guidance in your daily activities.
- ❖ Sing/Listen to devotional songs while doing household work like cooking or cleaning.



## Spiritual Discipline 2: Read Swami's Discourses / Books Daily

### Read

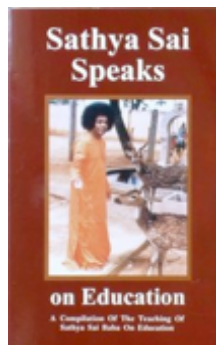
- ❖ Before reading, ask Swami to keep your heart and mind open to whatever messages that the text has to convey

### Reflect

- ❖ Pause and reflect on the essence of the reading and how these points can be applied in your daily life.

### Regular Application

- ❖ Keep in mind what has been read and at the end of the day assess how much has been practiced.



## Spiritual Discipline 3: Engage in Selfless Service

- ❖ Smile! [Serving Mankind Inspires Love Everywhere]
- ❖ Wake up in the morning and ask Swami, "How can I serve You and others today?"
- ❖ Be prepared - Keep some non-perishable goods - water bottles, granola bars etc handy to give out whenever you see a hungry person.

## Spiritual Discipline 4: Sense Control and Practice of Dietary Discipline

- ❖ Increase your intake of more "live" foods such as whole fruits and nuts.
- ❖ When ordering a dessert at a restaurant, split it with another friend / family member.
- ❖ Offer all food to Swami before partaking.



## Spiritual Discipline 5: Learn to Speak Softly and Lovingly

- ❖ Speak each one of your words with Intent of Love.
- ❖ Always pray before you speak anything: "Swami, speak through me!"
- ❖ Purity of heart, integrate thought (T), word (W) and deed (D) before speaking.



# Spiritual Discipline 6 - Regular Attendance and Active Participation in Sai Centers

Dear Young Adults,

This month, we shift our attention from 'Speaking Softly and Sweetly' to 'Regular Attendance and Active Participation in Sai Centers.' Continue reading ahead to gain insights on the purpose of the Sai Organization and the benefits derived from actively participating in Sai activities. In addition, the supplement document contains tools for conducting the study circle and applying this discipline in our daily life.

## Purpose of a Sathya Sai Baba Center

As per the Guidelines for AMERICAN SATHYA SAI BABA CENTERS - *The purpose of a Sathya Sai Baba Center is to provide a meeting place for studying and practicing the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba and to provide information about Him to the public. The Center is a focal point for individuals who are striving to lead disciplined spiritual lives and who want to devote a significant portion of their time and energy each week to performing acts of selfless service to the needy and the distressed.*

## Principle Objectives of the Sai Organization

- ❖ To help the individual to be aware of the Divinity that is inherent in him/her and to conduct oneself accordingly.
- ❖ To translate into practice in daily life, Divine Love and perfection, and therefore, to fill one's life with joy, harmony, beauty, grace, human excellence and lasting happiness.
- ❖ To ensure that all human relations are governed by the principles of Sathya (Truth), Dharma (Right Conduct), Prema (Love), Shanti (Peace) and Ahimsa (Non Violence).
- ❖ To make devotees of any religion more sincere and dedicated in the practice of their respective religions by understanding properly the true spirit of the religion.

Rules & Regulations of S.S.S.S organization, 1995 P. 2-3

### Swami says...

*"The sole objective of the Organization [Sai Centers / Organization] is to enable man to discover his innate Divinity, regain his Self-confidence and faith in GOD. The power and strength derived from Faith in Self and from faith in GOD, will be enduring and ever sustaining. The objective of the Sai Organization is to make People aware of this truth and to live in that awareness."*

Sathya Sai Baba- *Sevadal*, April 1983, page 4

# Active Participation in Sai Centers

## Why

- ❖ Sai Centers bring all who strive to realize their divinity and practice the teachings of Swami under one umbrella. It provides an environment where we can help each other grow spiritually.
- ❖ For youth, actively participating in Center activities enhances their sense of discipline and trains them to serve society and be future leaders.
- ❖ Being part of the organization motivates us to become ideal human beings and strengthen our inner relationship with Swami.



## How

- ❖ Create a loving and open environment that blends spirituality with having fun. Organize activities that most people enjoy outside the Sai Center (ex: sports, hiking, musical jam sessions). Have informal spiritual discussions in all activities. Use that as a way to encourage Young Adults to attend Sai center activities.
- ❖ Encourage young adults to express their opinions. For example, after a service project, ask the group to share their experiences, lessons learned, etc.
- ❖ Identify various talents of the young adults and assign them tasks that fit their talents. Example: If someone likes to work with kids, encourage him/her to teach SSE.
- ❖ Connect to the young adults on an individual level. Develop a one-on-one relationship with the young adults. For example, call / email them regularly to “check in” and see how they are doing. Foster an environment of mutual spiritual growth
- ❖ Incorporate a “buddy” system. Group 2 or 3 young adults together and encourage them to get to know each other more closely. Give them a specific spiritual discipline to practice as a group and ask them to brainstorm activities for the next young adult meeting.
- ❖ Living by example: As leaders it is very necessary to respect people’s feelings. This goes without saying. Treat others better than how you would like to be treated. If you are in a group setting, make sure that you are not focused on just your group of friends. Be as inclusive as possible.

### *Swami says...*

In the Sathya Sai Organization, seva (service) has pride of place. The Sai samithis (Sai Centers) were started only with service in view. Services should not be mechanical or enforced. It should be filled with love and rendered whole-heartedly. Whomsoever you may serve, regard it as service done to God.”

**Life is a puzzle,  
solve it!**

The answers can be found in the previous SDP newsletters and study circle guide.

**Fun Activity!  
Young Adult Photo  
Collage**

Take a picture standing next to Swami's altar at the Sai Center you attend (either alone or with other members of your local YA group). Please send in the pictures to [info@saiyausa.net](mailto:info@saiyausa.net). We will include it in a collage for our November Pilgrimage to Prashanthi Nilayam. We challenge all the local groups to send us the pictures (we hope to have at least 50 pictures, if not more representing the 50 different states)!

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**Across**

- 2. Swami has said that before speaking, we should\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Your brain releases these chemicals when you engage in acts of kindness.
- 6. When did we start our spiritual discipline program?
- 8. According to Swami, this has the same function as the hour hand in a clock.
- 9. He was a cobbler in Sikander city and loved by God
- 12. Broadcasts discourses from Parthi
- 13. How many codes of conduct are there in the SDP?
- 15. Doing service helps you to reduce this trait/quality.
- 16. While doing service you should focus on this and not quantity
- 17. It is not information but \_\_\_\_\_
- 18. Second of the three 'R's. Hint: April Newsletter
- 19. S.A.I- what does the 'I' stand for?

**Down**

- 1. Name of the YA soup kitchen in Birmingham?
- 2. How old was Swami when He wrote His first play?
- 3. What is the name of the Vahini we are reading?
- 5. God and you are \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Featured in the March study circle guide, this devotee exemplifies namasmarana
- 10. In which clinic did Ram meet Dr.Sai?
- 11. Swami has said that 'Youth is \_\_\_\_\_'
- 14. According to Swami, what is the biggest obstacle in life?



## Musings from Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju, professor at Sri Sathya Sai Institute and Swami's translator

The following excerpts were taken from a talk given by Prof. Anil Kumar at the Milwaukee Sai Center in February 2011:

"The Sathya Sai organization is an opportunity given to all of us, to every member and to every family. This organization is international in its composition. If there is any one place where people from all over the world assemble, it is in Prashanthi Nilayam, nowhere else. If there is any place where people of all religions—Muslims, Christians, Jewish, Hindus, Buddhists, and Parsis—come to a common place of worship, it is Prashanthi Nilayam. If there is any place where people of different age groups, vocations, and professions assemble to listen to the discourses, basking in Divine darshan, it is Prashanthi Nilayam. We should understand the value of Prashanthi Nilayam. It is a mistake to think of Prashanthi Nilayam as a geographical place in Andhra Pradesh, India. Your very heart is Prashanthi Nilayam. Your very being is Prashanthi Nilayam. The Milwaukee Sai Centre itself is a Prashanthi Nilayam. Let us not think that Prashanthi Nilayam is somewhere else. The human heart that enjoys peace, that enjoys equanimity, that is full of love, is Prashanthi Nilayam. It is not a geographical place; it is the human heart, our family, our organization.

The Sathya Sai Organization is a place to live in total love for eternity, to exhibit selflessness, to bring people closer and closer, not to drive people away from each other. We should be the best example in the community.

### Why should we attend the Sai Center? - A testimonial from a Young Adult

"So, we might ask ourselves how we became a member of Sai Organization and what our qualifications in joining the organization were. We have joined this organization based on our devotion and faith towards our dear Lord Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It is merely due to these two reasons and the love towards the Organization as our own life, that we have placed ourselves in it and have earned the right to be a part of it... We have demonstrated to have full faith in His name and His organization and want to bear the responsibility to spread His name in the manner suited to His message and majesty.

We joined the center to be part of its activities, to deepen our own sadhana, to cultivate our virtues and to overcome our ego by constantly being in contact with members who inspire us... By constantly being in present of such members, we engage ourselves in the twin process of purifying the mind and clarifying the intellect.

Our spiritual aim is to learn and know about our own self (The Truth). We are the Indestructible, Eternal Atma

and free from fear. This Truth can only shine forth from a purified mind and a clarified intellect. It is our duty, as member of the Sai organization, to ever be active in following and observe the disciplines laid down by our Lord. This spiritual aim has to be constantly engaged in the minds of our members and organization and the journey towards it has to be steady and fervent.

Regular interaction with our fellow members will teach us how to free ourselves from all prejudices and misunderstandings while learning how to speak softly and sweetly and give everyone the respect and attention due to them sincerely. We practice to develop the humility and tolerance that are needed and recognized as the behavioral characteristics of a Sai devotee.

So, why do we need to come to Sai center regularly and how does it help others? Well, coming to the center only elevates us to follow the three Ds laid out by our dear Lord: Duty, Discipline and Devotion. Now, how does this help others? It only helps US; change

has to start from within every individual before a grandeur impact can be seen. Having the enthusiasm to help and serve is not merely enough. We have to have the intelligence and the skill to carry the enthusiasm with great efficiency. So, how can we achieve this efficiency in every act we attempt? It's by adhering to the knowledge of Duty, Discipline and Devotion..."

- Young Adult, Dallas, Texas

### *Swami says...*

"Sai organizations must endeavor to promote faith in God. If that foundation is absent, worship, bhajan (devotional singing), puja (worship), acts of charity - all become meaningless, mechanical rituals, done under social compulsion. Inner transformation can be acquired only when these are done with faith."

Sathya Sai Speaks", Vol. VII, Chapter-18



# Living in Sai

## Study Circle Guide

### Regular Attendance and Active Participation in the Sai Center

#### Introduction

##### Objectives of this study circle:

1. Explore what the Sai Center means to each one of us.
2. Discuss the benefits of participating in Sai Center activities.
3. Work through the challenges that hinder active participation in Sai Center meetings and activities.
4. Dwell on what Swami says about the purpose of Sai Centers.
5. Come up with an action plan to increase our own individual participation in the Sai Center.

##### Study Circle Activity:

Start the study circle with 3 OMs. Starting out with sitting in a circle. The facilitator now takes the participants through the following exercises.

- ❖ Close your eyes. Visualize Swami sitting in the middle of the circle. Now visualize a connection between your heart and Swami's heart in whatever form that comes naturally to you. It could be in the form of a golden thread, a beam of light, etc.
- ❖ Ask Swami to send His unconditional love through that connection to you.
- ❖ Feel the strong powerful energy enter your heart from Him.
- ❖ Now visualize the same connection between Swami and everyone present in the room. Visualize everyone connected to Swami like spokes of a wheel connected to the center.
- ❖ Now slowly turn your attention to the Sai Center that you attend. Visualize the same connection between every member in the Sai Center and Swami.
- ❖ Thank Swami for His love and guidance in doing this activity.



What is a Sai Center?

Page 2

How to win your grace, Swami?

Page 3

Who is the most important person in a Sai Center?

Page 5

## What is a Sai Center?

### Discuss the following with the group:

- ❖ What does a Sai Center mean to you? Why do you attend a Sai Center?

### Quotes from Swami:

- ❖ Read the following quotes from Swami about the objectives of Sai Centers/ Organization and discuss the questions that follow.

*"The sole objective of the Organization [Sai Centers/ Organization] is to enable man to discover his innate Divinity, regain his Self-confidence and faith in GOD. The power and strength derived from Faith in Self and from faith in GOD, will be enduring and ever sustaining. The objective of the Sai Organization is to make People aware of this truth and to live in that awareness." Sathya Sai Baba, Sevadal, April 1983, page 4*

*"It is the duty of all those who are connected with the Sathya Sai Organizations to promote spiritual discipline and dedicate their lives to social service for leading a purposeful life. To promote the awareness of Divinity in human beings and build a genuine sense of brotherhood among people, should be their primary aim." - Bhagawan Baba's Discourse in Prasanthi Nilayam on 22-11-1980 "Sathya Sai Speaks", Vol. XIV, Chapter-56.*

*"Members of the Sai Organization must carry on their work with the firm faith that all are the children of one God. They must carry on their service activities in a spirit of unselfish dedication to the Divine. The practice of pure, unselfish love is the only way to attain God. They should purify their hearts and minds, regarding their body as the temple of the Divine." - Bhagawan Baba's Discourse on 12th May 1984 in Mumbai. "Sathya Sai Speaks", Vol. XVII, Chapter – 11.*

### Discussion Questions:

- ❖ Dwell on what Swami says about the objective of Sai Centers / Organization. How does regularly participating in Sai Centers help you to achieve this goal?
- ❖ Give some examples of gatherings outside a typical Sai Center that meet the same objectives that Swami emphasizes.



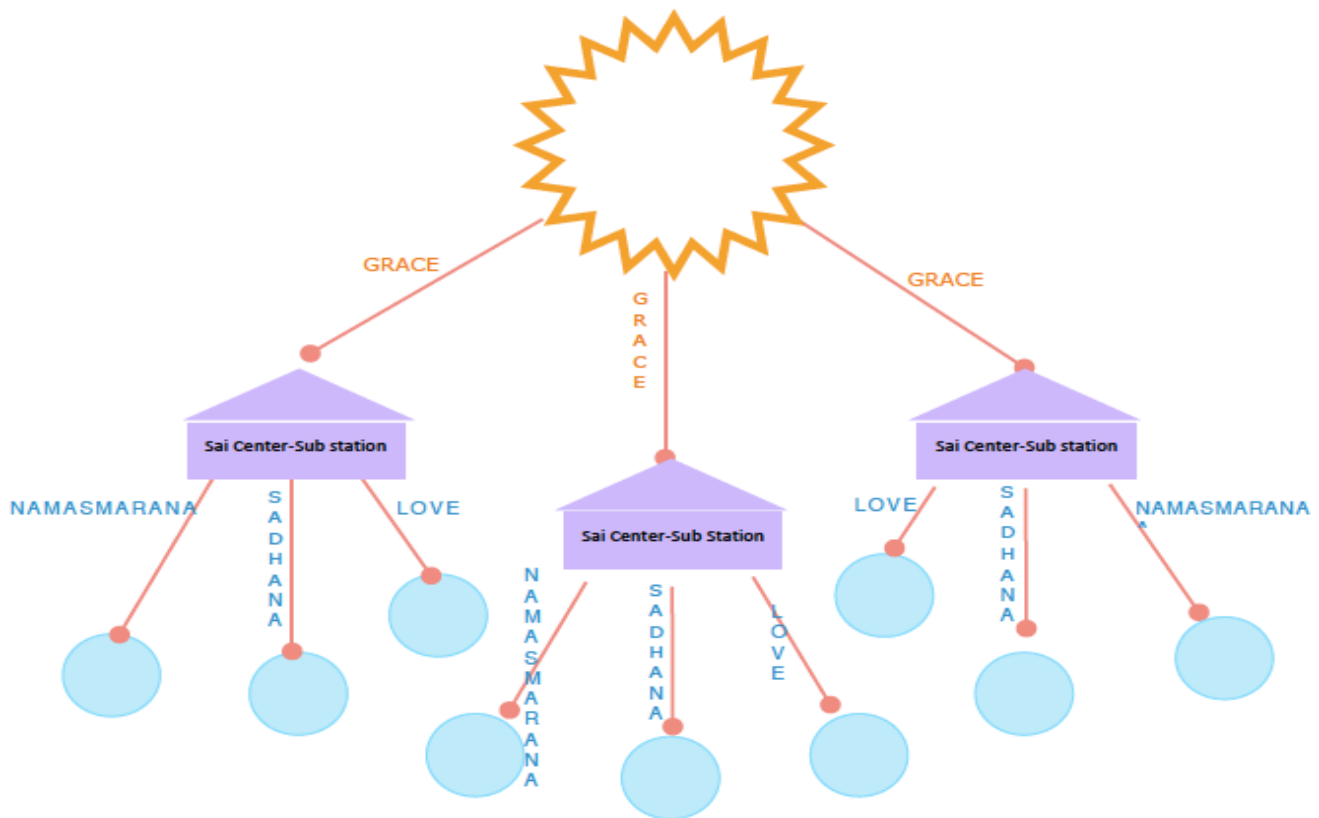
# How to win your grace, Swami?

Excerpts from an interview, January 2011

This was a question posed to Swami by a Sai Student during an interview in January 2011. Swami was delighted to hear this question and elaborated on how to win grace. Swami said, “Look here, God is like a massive generating station, producing grace... it is not so easy to connect to God directly... that’s why I have instituted Samithis (Sai Centers). Sai Centers are like a distribution system, which is connected to Swami (generating station). To connect to the distribution system, one needs a home. Here, home represents “Goal” or “Aim”. The goal should be to “please Swami”, to attain spiritual upliftment. The home should be well prepared – here preparation means cultivating faith in God. Namasmarana or sadhana is the wire that connects the home (person) to the Sai center.”

Therefore, being associated with a Sai center and undertaking sadhana (spiritual practices) is the divine prescription for drawing God’s grace. Swami also added the following in His infinite compassion: “Nothing will be smooth in Swami’s organization... Swami will insert Maya (conflict). It is important not to get entangled. One should retain the focus on Swami.”

To a question on schedule conflicts [complex schedule] for SSE children and lack of regular attendance at SSE classes, Swami had this to say: “If Swami is the center of life, complex things will become simplex.”



## Discussion Questions:

### Sai Center - A Distributing Station

❖ How does your Sai Center function as a distributing station for spiritual energy that we get from Swami (the generating system)?

**Units of the Distributing System:** A typical Sai Center consists of the following:

- ❖ Devotional Wing
- ❖ Service Wing
- ❖ Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) Wing

Discuss each unit of a Sai Center in detail. Which is the dearest to you? Share instances of how you have been involved in one or more wings of a Sai Center in the past 6 months or 1 year? How has it helped you progress in your spiritual journey?

### Swami's Maya: Challenges in a Sai Center

- Why do you think Swami would insert challenges into the Sai Centers? What is the bigger purpose of this in our spiritual growth?
- Share an instance where you have seen Maya being played out in the Sai Center. Were you entangled in it, or could you stay focused on Swami?
- What did you learn from it? Would you have dealt with it differently had you heard this interview transcript before?
- What challenges do you come across that hinders your regular attendance in a Sai Center?

## Group Activity

Note to the moderator: Break out the study circle participants into smaller groups of 2-3 people to discuss the following questions. Then have each group share what they came up with.

- As a group, write down at least 3 ways of how your young adult group can make a positive impact on the Sai Center.
- Come up with 3 creative activities outside of the Sai Center that the young adults can participate in.
- Discuss ways how the Center can be made into a stronger distribution center so that more Young Adults can connect to Swami.
- As young adults, what steps can you take to help meet the Center objective of realizing the divinity within and in everyone?

# Who is the most important person in a Sai Center?

Mr. Bozzani, an ardent devotee of Swami shared the following during the new Regional officers' orientation in 2005, Los Angeles, CA:

*"Dr. Hislop and few other members of the American Sai Organization were seated in the interview room with Baba. After listening patiently to the updates from each one of us, Baba asked us this question.*

*'Who is the most important person in a Sai Center?' We all took turns to answer what seemed to be a simple question.*

*Devotee-President, Swami.*

*Swami-No*

*Devotee-Devotional Coordinator, Swami.*

*Swami-No*

*Devotee- You, Swami!*

*Swami- no, no*

*It seemed obvious that we were not in the right track and requested Baba to enlighten us. Baba then very sweetly said, 'the last person who walks in through the doors of the Center is the most important person.'*

*So dear new officers, make sure you treat everyone who walks into your center as the most important person. They are the ones who are most in need of your loving words and warm welcome!"*

## Discussion Questions

- You have this colleague at work who has heard a lot about the Sai Center, especially the wonderful service activities and the multi faith gathering, and they want to attend the center. How can we make sure that he/she feels welcome at the Center?
- What does your Sai Center do to make people of all faiths feel welcome? What has your contribution been to ensure this?
- Have you witnessed an instance in your Center where a particular person or a group did not feel welcome in the Center? What could have been done differently to make the situation better?
- Swami says, "Members of the Sai Organization must carry on their work with the firm faith that all are the children of one God." How can we live this message in a practical way at the Sai Center level?

## Concluding Thoughts

The following questions are for each individual to reflect on. The answers can be shared as well depending on the inclination of the group.

- Reflect on your own personal spiritual journey. Would you be where you are without actively participating in Sai Center activities?
- How often do you attend Sai Center gatherings (bhajan sessions, study circles, etc.)? As an individual member of the Sai Center, what steps can you take to ensure your regular participation in Sai Center activities?
- Make a note of these commitments in your personal diary or outlook calendar. Give yourself a timeline of 3 - 6 months to put these steps into practice.
- Take a few moments and ask Swami to guide your Sai Center and all its members so that it could be the ideal Sai Center that He envisioned.

## Sandeha Nivarini Self Study

*Suggested Reading for the Month: Chapters XII and XIII*

*Discussion Questions on these chapters:*

1. What do you think is meant by Swami's statement "the gross is there, only to make you understand the subtle..."?
2. Consider a recent challenging situation in life with work, family, friends, or Sai center and analyze the situation identifying the "wise" and "unwise personalities" within you and the other person(s).
3. What is Swami conveying in this statement, "When will this war end, you ask? When both 'bad qualities' and good qualities fade out and man becomes quality less; then alone can man have Shanthi." Consider practical ways that we, on an individual level, can reach this point of awareness. What does Swami say about how to "avoid the battle altogether"?
4. Throughout Chapter XIII, Swami describes how the Ramayana is happening in our hearts every day. What does Rama and the other characters from the Ramayana represent?

