

# **Introduction For Newcomers To The Sathya Sai Organisation**

The Sathya Sai Organisation is a global spiritual movement promoting the practice of human values and providing opportunities to participate in service activities. It is a multi-faith organisation drawing people from all walks of life and all spiritual paths and religions. There are more than 2100 Sai Centres in over 114 countries, world-wide. The Sathya Sai Organisation has no membership fees and members are never required to purchase books or materials. No one is permitted to solicit funds on behalf of the Sathya Sai Organisation.

Service activities are practiced as selfless service being offered to the One who is present within the heart of every other, and when offered with purity of heart, enables reduction of ego and purity of thought, word and deed.

Other activities offered by the Sathya Sai Organisation include Education in Human Values, study circles, and devotional singing.

## **The Sathya Sai Organisation in Australia**

In Australia, the Sathya Sai Organisation has Centres and Groups in every State and Territory. Devotional singing, education in human values, and service activities are conducted by every Sai Centre. The service activities are provided as opportunities to practice the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba and put human values into action.

Service activities include nursing home visits, providing food and blankets to the needy, soup kitchens, homework help, computer classes, blood donation, Youth at Risk, Medical Camps, service to remote Aboriginal Communities, service to the environment, to name but a few. There are several wings in the Sathya Sai Organisation: the Devotional Wing, the Service Wing, the Education Wing, Ladies Wing and Sai Young Adults. The Sathya Sai Organisation takes a leadership role in developing unity of faith programs aimed at bringing a stronger sense of unity and understanding among various religions practiced in our country.

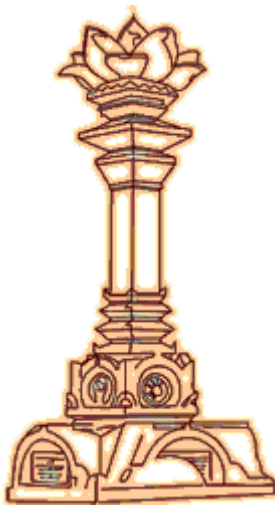
The Sathya Sai Organisation finds its inspiration in Sathya Sai Baba's example and message of unselfish love and service. The Organisation is rooted deeply in an inner urge by members to put into practice the teachings of self-discipline, unselfish love and self-sacrifice for the betterment of society. Activities reinforce the moving away from body consciousness and *selfishness* to God consciousness and *selflessness*.

You can visit the following website for more information: [www.saiaustralia.org.au](http://www.saiaustralia.org.au)

This logo is the logo of the International Sai Organisation.



The logo contains the five human values that form the foundation of Sathya Sai Baba's education-in-human-values program: truth, right conduct, peace, love and non-violence.



Also pictured in the logo is a tall pillar, called the world religions *stupa*, with a lotus flower at the top.

This pillar is near the temple in Prasanthi Nilayam (Sathya Sai Baba's main ashram in India). The pillar, with its concentric rings, represents the unity of faiths, that all are seeking the one and same God. The rising column signifies that humanity rises above differences to the unfolding the 'lotus of the heart', whose petals are at the top of the pillar. The flame of inner illumination is in the centre of the lotus. Just as the lotus plant lives in water without getting contaminated by it, so we should live in the world while being untouched by it. The base of the pillar is surrounded by plaques with quotations from the five main religions emphasising the unity of faiths and mankind's spiritual journey.

IF THERE IS RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE HEART  
THERE IS BEAUTY IN CHARACTER  
WHEN THERE IS BEAUTY IN CHARACTER  
THERE IS HARMONY IN THE HOME  
WHEN THERE IS HARMONY IN THE HOME  
THERE IS ORDER IN THE NATION  
WHEN THERE IS ORDER IN THE NATION  
THERE IS PEACE IN THE WORLD

## The Teachings of Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Baba teaches that man's basic nature is divine and that the purpose of life is the realization of this divinity. This will occur, He says, by leading a moral life, by rendering selfless service to those in need, by engaging in devotional practices, and by developing love, respect, and compassion for all life. As one strives to

transform the worldly life of self-centred desires and attachments into a higher spiritual life of selflessness and devotion, the foundation is built for receiving God's Grace. It is this Grace that will reveal our true nature to each of us.

He reminds us that mankind is unique among all of God's Creation; human beings are capable of recognizing that they emanate from God. We have the capacity to commune with God by turning inward. Ultimately, it is our destiny to merge with God. Sathya Sai Baba teaches that all religions are expressions of these same universal principles.

"All men are of one lineage, of one divine origin.  
Therefore, recognize the divinity in each being and  
banish all limiting thoughts and projections."

"There is only one Caste, the Caste of Humanity;  
There is only one Religion, the Religion of Love;  
There is only one Language, the Language of the Heart;  
There is only One God and He is Omnipresent."

Sathya Sai Baba does not recommend that we become ascetics and retreat from the world. Instead, He teaches us that the world is our school, that the five human values (Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love, and Non-violence) are our curriculum, and that the realization of the unity of Godliness in the diversity of Creation is our ultimate lesson.

"Love in thought is Truth;  
Love in action is Right Conduct;  
Love in understanding is Peace;  
Love in feeling is Non-violence."

Sathya Sai Baba urges all His devotees to comply with the "Nine-Point Code of Conduct" and to practice a "Ceiling on Desires" for their spiritual development, as described below:

## **The Nine-Point Code of Conduct**

1. Daily meditation and prayer.
2. Group devotional singing or prayer with family members once a week.
3. Participation in Sai Spiritual Education by children of the family.
4. Participation in community service work and other programs of the organization.
5. Regular attendance at the Centre's devotional meetings.
6. Regular study of Sathya Sai Baba literature.
7. The use of soft, loving speech with everyone.
8. Not speaking ill of others, especially in their absence.
9. Practicing placing a ceiling on desires "consciously and continuously striving to eliminate the tendency to waste time, money, food, and energy" and utilizing the savings for service of mankind.

## Ceiling on Desires

Sathya Sai Baba teaches that one should not waste time, food, money, or energy. A program called "Ceiling on Desires" has been created to encourage aspirants to practice these principles.

"The object of the program is to prevent waste of money, time, food or other resources and to use all these for the welfare of the people. The money that is saved need not be kept for the Sathya Sai organisations. It may be used in the best way you choose for the benefit of others. Do not waste time. Time wasted is life wasted. Time is God. Sanctify all the time at your disposal by undertaking service (*seva*) activities in a pure and unselfish spirit."

Sathya Sai Baba also emphasizes that man has important obligations to society. He stresses the importance of performing one's duty in society for the benefit of all. It is the society that can provide an environment and a foundation for people to grow spiritually more easily. His teachings on serving society are summarized in His "Ten guiding principles":

## The Ten Guiding Principles

### **1. Love and Serve your country. Do not be critical of others' countries.**

"Have a sense of pride in your motherland. Just as your mother has given birth to you, so too the land has given birth to you. Whatever country you belong to, you should have a sense of patriotism. You should not indulge in criticizing other countries or people belonging to other nations. Having trust and faith in your own country, you won't try to put down any other country. Never bring grief or sorrow to your country. To have pride in one's own motherland is important."

### **2. Honour and respect all religions as pathways to God.**

"Never have hatred toward any religion. Honour and respect all religions equally. Even as you are a citizen of your motherland but respect all countries, also respect all religions equally."

### **3. Love all humanity as part of your family.**

"Develop a sense of the brotherhood of man. Look upon each person as your own brother. There is only one caste, the caste of humanity. All of us belong to the human race, so everyone is equal. Therefore, love each one equally."

### **4. Keep home and surroundings clean.**

"Keep your own house and its surroundings pure and clean. This hygiene will keep you healthy and benefit your worldly life."

**5. Help the needy with food, clothing, and shelter. Help them become self-reliant when possible.**

"Be discriminating when dispensing charity. In the name of charity or philanthropy, we tend to do injustice to this country. Charity does not mean that the land should be full of beggars. We can provide some support and means for the beggars, but provide food, clothing, and other conveniences in such a way that you are not encouraging laziness and begging."

**6. Be examples of honesty. Do not participate in any corruption such as bribery.**

"Never give or take a bribe. Giving bribes, or accepting bribes, is contrary to the very name of the Sri Sathya Sai organizations. Bear this in mind continuously."

**7. Curb jealousy, hatred and envy.**

"We must seek ways to solve difficulties such as hatred, envy, and jealousy. To curb this sense of envy and jealousy, we must develop a broader outlook. Do not differentiate on the basis of race, caste, creed, or country. Follow your cultural and religious customs in your own home, but do not attempt to impose them on society. Rather than this, love each person as your own brother, not seeing him as belonging to another creed, religion, or country."

**8. Develop self-reliance.**

"Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Organizations should do things by themselves; they should not depend on others. You may be very wealthy and have servants and assistants to help in a few tasks, but your own work you must do yourself. If you wish to be of service to society, serve yourself first. One who will not serve society has no right to belong to a Sri Sathya Sai organization."

**9. Observe your country's laws and be exemplary citizens.**

"Never ever go against the law of the land. Follow the letter of the law. The members of the Sri Sathya Sai organizations should follow the law in spirit also, and be models for the government."

**10. Adore God, abhor sin.**

"You must love God and avoid sin. Love God incessantly. As long as you keep committing sins, God will never be yours."

While Sathya Sai Baba teaches that we must find God within our own hearts, many feel drawn to Prashanthi Nilayam to see and hear Him and receive His blessings. He walks daily among the assembled people who come to see Him in an activity called *darshan* (sight of a holy person). During this time, He takes letters, gives advice, and grants personal interviews. He touches the hearts of all who come, some

through personal interactions and others by the powerful impact of simply being in His presence. Often, people come to see Him with doubts and apprehensions and return home with love in their hearts, peace in their minds, and the capacity to live a more giving, spiritual life.

As people are inspired by His love, they seek to emulate the example He sets. In fact, He invites people to study and observe Him as He lives a life of selfless service for all.

"You can observe Me and My activities; note how I adhere to righteousness, moral order, truth, and universal compassion. That is what I desire you to learn from Me ... **My Life is My Message.**"

In addition to His constant service on an individual basis, He has undertaken a number of massive projects for the benefit of mankind.

## **Education Program**

Sathya Sai Baba places immense value on education. In order to demonstrate the Five Human Values and exemplify the practice of His teachings, He has built a number of elementary and secondary schools as well as a complete university system in India for both men and women. The education offered at these schools is provided free of charge. Baba's schools teach standard curricula as well as a character building program called Sathya Sai Education in Human Values, or Sathya Sai EHV. This program stresses the importance of service to society and tolerance for people of other races, cultures, nationalities, and religions.

"Education must impart elevating ideals and kindle the lamp of wisdom. Character is the most precious gift of education."

In Australia there is a Sathya Sai primary school in Murwillumbah in Northern NSW, set up to model the teaching of human values within a standard NSW board of education curriculum. More information on this school can be found here: [www.sathyasaischoolaust.org](http://www.sathyasaischoolaust.org)

"Politics without principle, Education without character, Science without humanity, and Commerce without morality are not only useless but positively dangerous."

## **Medical Services**

Sathya Sai Baba is also demonstrating to us that medical care of the highest quality can also be provided free of charge, even in highly specialized fields such as cardiology, nephrology, and urology. He has established a General Hospital at the *ashram*, which provides free medical care to the residents and visitors. He has also opened two Specialty Hospital, which have with the latest equipment for the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and are supported by teams of highly qualified surgeons, physicians, technicians, and nursing staff. Hospital services are free of charge to anyone in need, especially for the poor. In Australia, Medical services are

provided by the Sai Medical Unit, who also provide service in the region, to Fiji and other South East Asian nations.

## Drinking Water Project

Sathya Sai Baba has also undertaken a number of large project to bring drinking water, the very life source, to millions of people who live in chronically drought-stricken areas in villages and towns of the state of Andhra Pradesh, and to the city of Chennai.

## Who is Sathya Sai Baba?

Sathya Sai Baba is one of the most revered spiritual teachers in the world today. He is quietly transforming the world by re-establishing the eternal values of Truth , Right Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence in everyday living.

He is also known as *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*, *Sai Baba*, *Swami*, *Bhagavan*, or simply as *Baba* to millions of people in the world. His followers come from all faiths and races and meet regularly for devotional singing, to study His teachings, and to engage in service activities in order to practice His message of Love and Peace to unite all mankind.

Sathya Sai Baba was born on November 23, 1926, in Puttaparthi, a remote village in the state of Andhra Pradesh in Southern India. He is the fourth child of a humble and pious couple, who named Him Sathya Narayana Raju. As a child, He demonstrated exceptional qualities of wisdom, compassion, and generosity. When He was seven years old, He composed devotional songs that were sung in religious festivals. At the age of fourteen, He announced that His name was Sathya Sai Baba and proclaimed His mission: to bring about the spiritual regeneration of humanity by demonstrating and teaching the highest principles of Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence. With that announcement, He left His childhood home and began His mission.

From an early age, Sathya Sai Baba began demonstrating extraordinary powers. He quickly became known for the miracles that He performed such as materializing objects, especially a holy ash called *vibhuti*, assisting people in distress, and letting those who came to Him for advice know that He was aware of even the most intimate details of their lives. Yet, He has always maintained that His miracles are to be treated only as His calling cards. They are for the purpose of inspiring and encouraging people to begin their own spiritual journey of personal transformation.

In 1950, His devotees built a temple and residential quarters about a mile away from His birthplace in the village. He named this *ashram* 'Prashanthi Nilayam' (Abode of Peace). Today, this *ashram* can accommodate and feed many thousands of devotees who come to see and hear Sathya Sai Baba. Under His care and guidance, Puttaparthi has evolved to have high quality schools, an accredited university, a spiritual museum, a well-equipped modern hospital, and a jet airport.

Sathya Sai Baba's followers regard Him as an incarnation of God in human form (*Avatar*). He is the ideal of goodness: One who manifests all human virtues in their purity and perfection; One who shows power, wisdom and knowledge beyond the comprehension of humans; and One in whom immense powers lie at His will.

## **Mission of Sathya Sai Baba**

Sathya Sai Baba has come to this world at this time to offer moral and spiritual sustenance and to lead us from the darkness. His mission is best described in His own words:

"I have come to light the lamp of love in your hearts, to see that it shines day by day with added lustre. I have not come on any mission of publicity for any sect or creed or cause; nor have I come to collect followers for any doctrine. I have come to tell you of this universal unitary faith, this path of Love. Believe that all hearts are motivated by the One and Only God, that all names in all languages, and all forms man can conceive, denote the one and only God. Cultivate the attitude of oneness between people of all creeds, all countries, and all continents. This is the message of Love I bring."

Sai Baba is not seeking to establish a new religion or to direct people to a particular creed or religion. He proclaims:

"Let the different faiths exist and let the glory of God be sung in all languages and tunes. That should be the ideal. Respect the differences between the faiths and recognize them as valid as long as they do not extinguish the flames of unity. If each person lives the ideals propounded by the founders of their religion, unaffected by greed or hate, then the world will be a happy and peaceful habitation for mankind."

Sathya Sai Baba says that He has come for all mankind and not for any particular community, religion, country, or interest. His teachings are universal and not sectarian, attracting devotees and seekers of all faiths and nationalities.

# The Sathya Sai Baba Organization

## Objective

The fundamental objective of the Organization as laid down by Sathya Sai Baba is to "Awaken in man the Divinity inherent in him" by propagating, through practice and examples, the basic principles of Love (*Prema*), Truth (*Sathya*), Right Action (*Dharma*), Peace (*Shanti*), and Non-violence (*Ahimsa*).

"The main goal of the Sai Organization is to enable members, workers, and officers to lead ideal, perfect, and happy lives ... Sai Organization should live in Love. Exchange hearts with Love, give Love and take Love, and flourish in Love. Both money and power have no place in our organization."

Until early 1996, the emblem of the Organization was the 'Sarva Dharma' (symbol of Unity of Religions and Basic Values), depicted by an open lotus with six petals and six leaves. There is a lamp in the centre. The six petals show different symbols representing world's six major religions. The 'Om' at the top represents Hinduism, the cross depicts Christianity, the crescent and star are for Islam, the star of David is for Judaism, the fire represents Zoroastrianism, and the wheel is for Buddhism. This is the Sai Emblem to show the unity of all faiths and the common basis for the values of all religions.



At the 6th World Conference of the Sathya Sai Organization, held at Prashanthi Nilayam during 18-21 November 1995, a decision was reached to replace the present emblem of the Organization with a new emblem depicting The Five Human Values: Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence. The new organizational emblem is presented below.



## Sathya Sai Baba Centres

The purpose of a Sathya Sai Baba Centre is to foster and support the spiritual activities of its members. The Centre is a focal point for individuals to learn and practice Sathya Sai Baba's teachings and message of Love and to lead disciplined, spiritual lives.

Centres are accredited by the Central Council. Each Centre has a Chairperson, service coordinator, spiritual coordinator, and education coordinator. The chairperson is responsible for the Centre. Each Centre organises its programs under three areas: service, devotion, and education. The service coordinator promotes and organizes service projects within the Centre and the community. The spiritual coordinator is responsible for organizing and overseeing the devotional meetings, devotional singing classes, study circles and guest events. The education coordinator develops and coordinates a value-based spiritual education for children.

Sai Baba emphasizes the path of devotion (*bhakti*). The following quote by Sathya Sai Baba defines devotion and its importance in our lives.

"We can describe devotion as the promotion of a sacred mind in a selfless manner, in the thought of God. The path of devotion will take along your mind, body and action toward God. As the river flows into the ocean, the river of your life should flow into the ocean of God. Human nature should have this as the sacred objective. Truly, having attained human birth, if we are unable to take ourselves toward God, it is useless attaining this birth."

Devotional activities include study circle, devotional singing, prayer, and meditation, as well as observing spiritual festivals. Schedules for devotional activities vary from Centre to Centre. You are welcome to participate in any of the devotional programs.

At all Sathya Sai meetings, men and women sit separately to reduce distractions. Each individual is on their own spiritual path. When the physical connection with others is reduced it is easier to maintain a focus on the divine. Also footwear is sometimes left outside the room/hall during a Sai activity. This is done to promote physical cleanliness, but more importantly as symbolic of leaving worldly thoughts and unclean habits outside so as to focus on divinity. Also it is a mark of respect towards God to whom the event is dedicated.

Centres hold regular quarterly meetings to plan and discuss various centre and Regional programs. Decisions are made by the members, but non-members may attend with the chairperson's approval. Members are urged to actively participate in these meetings to make contributions toward the Centre objectives.

## Study Circle

This spiritual activity of the devotional program is designed for adult members. It is usually held for one hour either just before or after devotional singing. The spiritual coordinator or a designated member may serve as the moderator to maintain productive discussions. Members read, reflect, and discuss topics from selected books of discourses or writings of Sathya Sai Baba or other spiritual books, together in a group. These discussions are meant to improve members' understanding of Baba's teachings and their meaningful application in daily life and to foster love, peace, and harmony. As with other centre activities men and women sit separately.

"Study Circle is not just reading books. It means taking a point and each person discussing what it means to them. Like a round-table conference... The study circle looks at the different facets ... but, as in a diamond, there is one facet that is flat, and from it all can be viewed. To discover the top facet is the task of the study circle."

"The proper plan of study is reading, reflection and regular application in life."

Hence by sharing thoughts, experiences and teachings with one another, the whole group becomes enlightened and knowledgeable. The purpose is thus reflection, discussion and contemplation, ultimately leading to practise.

## Devotional Singing

Devotional songs in praise of God are sung with love and devotion. The singing of these songs has always been at the heart of spiritual practice for Sathya Sai Baba's followers. At the beginning of each song (called *bhajans* in Hindi), the leader sings a line which is repeated by all participants in unison. This "call and response" format continues until the entire song is finished. Generally, each line is sung twice the first time and once at a faster pace the second time before the song concludes. Other songs of praise to God from any religion may also be sung, and they need not follow the "call and response" format.

The songs are usually sung in English, Hindi, or other languages. Devotional songs can be sung in any language as long as the heart of the singer vibrates with love. Indian language *bhajans* consist largely of the Sanskrit names of the various aspects and forms of God. Deities and saints of all the major religions of the world are also honoured in these songs. The first song is traditionally sung to **Lord Ganesha**, an aspect of God who is regarded as the remover of obstacles and difficulties. Many devotees enjoy the devotional atmosphere arising from the rhythm, vibrations, and spirit of these songs.

"When you dwell on the names of the Lord, His Majesty, His Grace, His Omnipotence, His all persuasiveness, get fixed in your consciousness; and your own capacities and capabilities get eclipsed in the Divine. So, humility develops and a spirit of surrender sprouts in the heart. This takes the devotees nearer to God and prepares him/her to merge in His Glory. The mind is gradually liberated from

all distracting thoughts, desires and imagery that give free play to all the senses. All accumulated impurities that veil the bliss (*ananda*) within are removed, and the latent divinity manifests Itself."

## The Devotional Meeting

A devotional meeting is a gathering where the glory of God is sung by many persons, singing many of the Divine Names from different faith traditions. Songs are sometimes called '*bhajans*' (hence, the meeting is often referred to as "*bhajans*"), and are sung with musical accompaniment with a lead and follow format.

At every devotional meeting, there is a shrine. The shrine may vary from place to place, but the Sathya Sai Organisation requests that these be kept as simple as possible while accommodating the wishes of the members. They may have flowers, a small picture of Sathya Sai Baba and perhaps other different Forms of the Divine. There is usually a candle or oil-lamp on these shrines, signifying honour and devotion to the Deity, and this may be thought of as a 'presence lamp'. Sathya Sai Baba promises those who attend devotional meetings, that wherever the glory of God is sung, and wherever the names of God are sung, there, he is present. In some cases there may also be a chair for Sathya Sai Baba and a footstool, with handkerchiefs and a glass of water, but this is not considered essential.

Shrines in Australia will have two blue-and-gold banners. These depict the symbols of the major religions of humanity, and the five human values.

## Footwear

Sometimes, footwear is removed and left at the entrance to the Devotional Meeting. This is a common practice in many countries, and also signifies a sign of respect for the company of the good and the Godly, by leaving behind the 'dust of the world'.

## Seating

Men and women sit separately. This is needed to minimize distractions arising from curiosity or subtle attractions between members of the opposite sex. This protocol is followed in all Sathya Sai Baba functions throughout the world.

"At *Bhajans* and at other meetings, men devotees should sit apart from women devotees. The rule should be applicable to all members - whether they are Indians or non-Indians, in India or elsewhere. It is part of the spiritual discipline that is necessary for devotees ... mixing freely and sitting together do not promote a peaceful atmosphere. In sitting separately, sensory thoughts do not arise so easily."

## Multifaith Prayers

The Sathya Sai Organisation aims to promote harmony and understanding of all the world faiths. Unity of Faiths, and promoting the oneness of all humanity and all thoughts is our everyday practice and is incorporated in our meetings by reading out Prayers of the World Religions. These are usually read out either at the Beginning of the Devotional Meeting, or after the conclusion of devotional singing.

## Devotional Singing and Meaning of Rituals

The devotional meeting may be preceded by a time of silence.

The Thought for the Day may be read out, and the announcements may be read out, either before or after the conclusion of devotional singing. This practice may vary only slightly from Centre to Centre and simply reflects the devotional wishes and aspirations of the particular Centre you are attending.

There is usually a set format for the meeting, and the Centre may have a handout with the format and prayers for you to follow. You will also be given a song book, and the numbers of the songs to be followed will be on a board or announced.

The number of songs varies from Centre to Centre, and can be anywhere between six and twelve songs. There may be some rituals at the conclusion of the devotional singing.

## OM

*OM* is the primordial sound out of which all other sounds originate. It is the all-pervading Divinity in the form of sound. *Om* is chanted, often three times, at the beginning of devotional singing and at the beginning of study circle or any spiritual program.

## Gayathri Mantra

The *Gayathri* mantra may be sung either at the commencement of the Devotional Singing or with the prayers at the end of the meeting. The *Gayathri* mantra is sung at least three times in unison. The *Gayathri* may be considered as having three parts: praise, meditation, and prayer. First, the Divine is praised; then, meditating upon the Divine radiance in reverence, an appeal is made to the Divine to awaken and strengthen the intellect, which is the discriminating faculty of man. Sai Baba has said that the *Gayathri* reflects the essence of the Vedas, the most ancient scriptures on earth. The *Gayathri* is

followed by chanting "*Om, Shanti (Peace), Shanti, Shanti*". This invocation of peace three times is for the body, mind, and soul.

## **Sarva Dharma Prayer**

The *Sarva Dharma* Prayer honours the many different names and forms of the Divine from the different faiths; Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Taoism, Zoroastrian, all these names by which God is honoured are sung.

## **Arathi**

The waving of the *Arathi* flame, either by using camphor tablets on a plate, or incense sticks, is a form of offering the inner resident within our hearts. This is accompanied by the *Arathi* song, which is sung in either Sanskrit or English. One of the qualities of camphor is that it burns and leaves no residue. The flame represents the burning of all desires in our heart, leaving no residue to prevent us from merging with God.

## **Asatoma Prayer**

*Asatoma* Prayer: This is recited in unison at the end of meditation or prayers. This is an ancient Vedic prayer seeking to be led to Truth, Light, and Immortality. Most Centres recite both the Sanskrit and the English versions.

## **Sacred Ash (Vibhuti) Song**

Sacred ash (*vibhuti*) is distributed at the end of the *Arati* as devotees sing the *vibhuti* prayer. Hold out your right hand and receive the *vibhuti* in it. You may place it on your forehead between the eyebrows and a small portion on the tongue.

## **World Peace Prayer (Loka Samastha)**

This prayer immediately follows the *Asathoma* prayer and is sung in unison three times. *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the beings in all the worlds be happy). This peace prayer, which is closed with "*Om, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti*", generally marks the closing of the Devotional Meeting. Depending on the practice of the local Centre, they may have announcements regarding Centre programs, service activities and other spiritual events..

## Meditation (*dhyana*)

Two forms of meditation are 'light' meditation and 'breath' meditation (**so-hum** meditation).

In starting the light meditation, one focuses first on the flame of a candle and then that image is brought inside the body through the eyes. The flame of light is then mentally taken around the body purifying our five senses by moving it around our whole body from head to toes to fingers to eventually come to rest in our spiritual heart. The light is then taken outside from this spiritual heart to spread love to everyone, to encompass the entire universe.

The breath meditation has the aim of stilling the mind by focusing on our breath and mentally saying **So** - on inhaling, and **Hum** - on exhaling (meaning 'I am that divinity'). This can be done before and after the light meditation.

The purpose of meditation is to experience unity in divinity. As we practise more and more, we will be able to experience this oneness in our daily life without needing to sit down for meditation

## Communications

Information, notices, announcements and releases from the Central Coordinator are announced at our meetings. All our announcements and releases can usually be found in a booklet at the rear of the meeting room. Sometimes these are distributed by the Centre or Group Chair by way of email to centre members.

## Educational Program

Sathya Sai Baba initiated the Spiritual Education Program (**Sai Spiritual Education**, formerly known as *bal vikas*) to facilitate the spiritual growth of children in the ages 6 through 16 who attend the Sathya Sai Baba Centres. This program is designed to teach the children five basic human values (Love, Truth, Peace, Right Conduct, and Non-violence), basic teachings of world's religions, and spiritual lessons based on Sathya Sai Baba's writings. Teachers receive training as set forth by Sathya Sai Baba.

"From the most impressionable years the children should be taught to cultivate love for all. Love leads to unity. Unity promotes purity. Purity leads to Divinity."

"To instil in the minds of the young the values of prayer, humility, and loving service to others, the homes where they have grown should be the first schools. The parents have to be imbued with faith in the basic truths of this Universal Religion."

"Children's minds are innocent and pure. Each child is like a white marble for the teacher and the parents to sculpt the image of God, a bud to be helped to blossom in all its Divine glory so that it becomes a worthy offering to God."

Currently, there are three age groups in the Sai Spiritual Education Program: Group I (ages 6-9), Group II (ages 10-12), and Group III (ages 13-16). Group IV is currently being developed for the 16-17 age group. The teaching techniques and lesson plans are targeted to suit the age of each group. Anyone interested in enrolling children in the Sai Spiritual Education is requested to contact the education coordinator.

## **Service Program**

Sathya Sai Baba strongly emphasizes selfless service to those in need as the highest means for enhancing one's own spiritual growth and development. He teaches that it is not enough to simply do good works but of equal importance is one's attitude during the service activity. The service worker must have an attitude of humility and appreciation for the opportunity to do any service activity. The opportunity itself is a gift from God. One should not dwell on the good that they are doing, or that activity will strengthen one's ego rather than help to reduce it.

"Selfless service is the fragrant flower of altruistic love. It is not to be performed for the satisfaction of the person rendering the service or the person at whose bidding it is done. Man should regard selfless service as the purpose for which he was given life. This feeling should flow through his very nerves and bloodstream and permeate every cell of his body. Whatever the work we do, we should do it as an offering to God for His pleasures. We should take up service activities for the purification of our own hearts."

"When you offer a meal to a hungry child, or a blanket to a shivering brother on the pavement, you are placing a gift of God into the hand of another gift of God."

"God serves; He allows you to claim that you have served! Without His will, no single blade of grass can quiver in the breeze. Fill every moment with gratitude to the Giver and the recipient of all gifts."

## **Young Adult Program**

During the Sixth World Conference, Sathya Sai Baba laid emphasis on the formation of Youth Wings. This was the impetus for launching a formal Young Adults Program. Baba enunciates the challenges and the potential of this critical stage of youth in life:

"Youth is the stage in life when the slightest turn toward the wrong will spell disaster. Thoughts shape the career. You plan to earn much wealth because you imagine that rich people are very happy. The rich have plenty to eat, but they have no appetite. The rich wield power over others, but they are held down by disease. The rich can have many

servants, but they cannot live in peace. So, plan to be rich in virtue, in devotion and dedication to good causes. Be rich in sovereign character. What exactly is character? Steady adherence to truth, renunciation, genuine love, selfless service ó these are the essential components of character."

"Youth should imbibe the right ideals and plunge into society with the thirst for service as a spiritual duty, and this will make their humanness worthwhile. They should cultivate basic human traits like humility, readiness to serve and commiseration at the suffering of others."

The program is designed for young adults (18 to 32 years age) such as those who have participated in Sai Spiritual Education or others, to transition into the Sai Organization. The young adults programs operate on a regional basis, involving young adults from all of the Centres in the region. Two young-adults representatives (one for women and another for men) provide the leadership to plan, develop and direct various group programs relating to service, devotion, and education. The young adults meet regularly, at least once a month, to plan and conduct their activities.

## **Annual Conference**

Weekend retreat/ conferences are conducted by Sathya Sai Baba Centres, in each of the zones across Australia on a bi-annual or annual basis. National conferences are currently held every two years, rotating around the different States. All such conferences and retreats are open for participation to all. This is a good opportunity to meet devotees from other centres, listen to national and international speakers elaborating on Sathya Sai Baba's teachings, and see videos on Sai Baba. Announcements of the annual conferences and details of registration and accommodations are made available at the Centres. While there is no conference fee to attend the meeting itself, some charges may be associated with facility use and for providing room and board.

## **Membership in the Organization**

### **How to Become a Member**

Please attend the program in a Sathya Sai Baba Centre a few times to observe and understand the activities. If these interest you in joining the Centre as a member, please talk to one of the Centre officers or members.

### **Membership Qualifications and Responsibilities**

A member progresses along the spiritual path with faith in their relationship with Sathya Sai Baba, and practicing His teachings will lead to a deepening of spiritual experience. It signifies a willingness to dedicate oneself to a life of good thoughts, words, and deeds, toward the goals of recognising the unity in creation and becoming established in one's true reality.

1. An individual may join a Centre after becoming familiar with its purpose and the guidelines under which it functions. In joining, the individual

acknowledges having carefully read the Guidelines, agrees to honour them, and makes a commitment to work in harmony with other members to achieve the Centre's goals.

2. Members strive to practice 'The Nine-Point Code of Conduct', recommended by Sathya Sai Baba.
3. Members work together to enhance their understanding of, and put into practice, the principles of the spiritual life taught by Sathya Sai Baba.
4. Members are urged to study Sathya Sai Baba books and literature regularly for their spiritual growth and to stay informed on current developments.
5. Members are encouraged to participate in the service and devotion activities. The level of participation is dependent on the individual.
6. Members are expected to render a helping hand to run the Centre smoothly and according to Sathya Sai values.
7. Any questions and disagreements arising in a Centre should be discussed in a spirit of unity, harmony, and cooperation.
8. Membership shall cease if a member resigns, ceases participation in Centre activities, or engages in conduct deemed a discredit to the Centre.

"The qualifications for membership are to be an eager aspirant for spiritual progress, to have full faith in the name that the organization bears... and recognition as a good person. That is all the qualification needed; nothing else counts."

Sathya Sai Baba urges all His devotees to comply with 'The Nine-Point Code of Conduct' for their spiritual development and observe 'The Ten Guiding Principles' to ensure a fruitful and harmonious life in society (please see above section - The Teachings of Sathya Sai Baba).

## **Recommended Books for Reading**

1. *The Vahini Series* (written by Sathya Sai Baba)
2. *Sathya Sai Speaks* - annual volumes of discourses by Sathya Sai Baba
3. *Summer Showers Series* (Summer spiritual talks by Sathya Sai Baba given to college students)
4. *With Love, Man is God*, by Samuel Sandweiss
5. *Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*, by Dr John Hislop
6. *Pathways To God*, by Jonathan Roof
7. *My Baba and I*, by Dr John Hislop
8. *Sai Baba, Holy Man and the Psychiatrist*, by Samuel Sandweiss
9. *Sai Baba, Man of Miracles*, by Howard Murphet
10. *Sai Baba the Ultimate Experience*, by Phyllis Krystal
11. *Loving God*, by Professor N. Kasturi
12. *Sathya Sai Baba and the Universal Reality of Mankind*, by Mata Betty
13. *Man's Journey to Love and Peace*, by Mata Betty
14. *Journey of Grace, The Road is in the Heart*, by Cynthia Harris