



LOVE ALL - SERVE ALL

# OPERATIONS MANUAL

FOR SATHYA SAI CENTRES AND SATHYA SAI GROUPS

JULY 2017



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SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

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**History of the Operations Manual:** The International Sathya Sai Organisation was formed more than five decades ago with the blessings and guidance of Sathya Sai Baba. On 10 July 2014, the International Sathya Sai Organisation was renamed the Sathya Sai International Organisation (“SSIO”).

In 2010, after receiving approval from Sathya Sai Baba, a Guidelines Committee was formed to develop a set of guidelines to apply generally to the whole SSIO. The *Guidelines* and an *Operations Manual for Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups* were published in August 2012. The *Operations Manual for Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups* (“Operations Manual”) is herewith updated to reflect changes in the structure and activities of Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups as of 2017.

Whilst the Guidelines succinctly describe the principles, structure, practices, activities and the duties and responsibilities of officers of the SSIO, including Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups, the Operations Manual describes in detail the programmes and practices of Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups, and the rules and regulations that apply thereto.

**Purpose of the Operations Manual:** The Operations Manual provides for the effective functioning of Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups. It is to be read together with the Guidelines and the obligations stipulated by local laws binding on the national SSIO. It is recognised that local religious and cultural traditions, customs, and circumstances in the country where the Sathya Sai Centre and/or Sathya Sai Group exists need to be accommodated as long as they are consistent with the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba. Sathya Sai Centre leaders may consult their Zone Chair and Central Coordinator through the National Council President if they seek to adopt programmes and practices that vary from those recommended here.

Subject to local traditions, customs and circumstances, the Operations Manual seeks to achieve a level of consistency in the programmes and practices in Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups around the world so that members, devotees and newcomers may experience Sathya Sai Baba’s love and practise His teachings in any Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group. The Operations Manual is to be implemented with love, as love is the source, the path and the goal of all Sathya Sai endeavours.

In reading the Operations Manual, it is important to remember that Sathya Sai Baba did not come to establish a new religion or to advance a particular religion. He did not stipulate elaborate religious rituals to be part of Sathya Sai Centre activities. Instead, He recommended spiritual practices of devotion, selfless service and the study of universal spiritual principles and human values, the integration of which will enable one to progress on the path to realising one’s innate divinity. Every programme and practice in the Sathya Sai Centre should lead to this goal.

### Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups

*The main objective of the Sathya Sai Organisation, which you must always keep before you is to help man to recognize the Divinity that is inherent in him.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 6 January 1975

*It is as a means of spiritual discipline that the Organisation is to be understood. Take it in that attitude. Do not consider the rules as restrictions imposed by Me or as shackles on your freedom of action. They are devised to help you and others in the spiritual practices you have entered upon.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 22 December 1971

**Main Goal:** The main goal of a Sathya Sai Centre is to provide an environment in which individuals may progress along their spiritual path towards Self-realisation. Accordingly, every Sathya Sai Centre has three major components: a Devotion Wing, a Service Wing, and an Education Wing, which correspond to the three major paths toward Self-realisation, which are action (*karma*), devotion (*bhakti*), and spiritual wisdom (*jnana*). Though administered separately, these three Wings work together under the guidance and direction of the Sathya Sai Centre President.

*Three paths are laid down for the awareness of the Immanence of the Divine: action (karma), devotion (bhakti), and spiritual wisdom (jnana). These three are not distinct and diverse; they are composite and complementary.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 21 May 1970

*Feelings and activities move along three courses: The emotional, action, and rational, otherwise denoted as the devotion (bhakti), action (karma), and spiritual wisdom (jnana) paths. The first type does everything in a dedicatory spirit of worship ... The second type does actions that are service-oriented ... The third type is moved by the spirit of inquiry into the basic principles governing life and nature. ... These three types are actually three strands intertwined into one rope. They cannot be untwined. For the mansion called human life, devotion, selfless service, and spiritual wisdom are essential, just as heart, hand, and head.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 31 August 1981

**Oversight of Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups:** Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups in a country are overseen by a National Council, or a Coordinating Committee in the event there is no National Council. References in this document to the National Council include the Coordinating Committee. In some countries, Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups are part of Subregions which are led by Subregional officers appointed by the National Council.

### Formation of Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups

**Formation:** A group of persons interested in forming a Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group may obtain a copy of the Guidelines and the Operations Manual and submit an application to the National Council to seek accreditation and affiliation (where there are Subregions, the application is submitted through the President of the Subregion for review and onward transmission). If the group is meeting regularly and has followed the principles, structure, practices and activities of



the SSIO and the Guidelines (where applicable) for a period of six months, the National Council may recommend to the Zone Chair and Central Coordinator that the group be accredited as a Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group.

**Names of Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups:** Sathya Sai Centres generally carry the name of the local community in which they are located. In English-speaking countries, the standard convention is “Sathya Sai Centre of (town or city in which it meets)” (the same in the case of Sathya Sai Groups). The same naming practice should be adopted in other languages.

**Cancellation of affiliation:** The Zone Chair may, in consultation with the Central Coordinator and National Council, cancel the affiliation of a Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group with the SSIO. This may be required because of persistent and/or flagrant violations of the rules and regulations of the SSIO, financial dealings that are against the principles of Sathya Sai Baba and the SSIO, actions that tarnish the name of Sathya Sai Baba or actions that are against the interests of the Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group, its members, and the SSIO.

A Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group whose affiliation has been cancelled should apply for its dissolution or de-registration according to the laws of the country in which it exists and should disburse any property and funds held to discharge any obligations. Remaining funds are to be transferred to other units of the SSIO at the direction of the Zone Chair.

## Membership

**Membership:** The Guidelines establish the requirements for membership of a Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group. A member may visit and take part in the activities of other Sathya Sai Centres but should be a member of only one Sathya Sai Centre. Membership will cease if the member resigns, declines to participate in Sathya Sai Centre activities, or engages in conduct that discredits the Sathya Sai Centre.

**List of Members:** The Sathya Sai Centre should maintain a list of members. The list is private and not for distribution, and will be used solely for administrative purposes and to facilitate communication with members about Sathya Sai Centre events. This list will contain the member’s name, gender, whether they are a young adult, and their address and contact details (phone and email). This list should be maintained by the National Council for reporting on membership status.

**Non-Members:** Those who do not actively participate in the core activities of the SSIO and/or Sathya Sai Centre and who only attend Sathya Sai Centre events irregularly do not qualify as members. They may only take part in discussions at Sathya Sai Centre meetings when invited by the Sathya Sai Centre President. They are not entitled to participate in decision-making in relation to the administration of the Sathya Sai Centre or to be selected as officers.

## Officers in a Sathya Sai Centre

*Choose men and women who have unshaken faith in this present Avatar, with this Name and Form. The leaders of these units lead because they have the vision and the yearning, not because they have the votes or the purse. The bliss they derive is the only reward they are after.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 13 January 1970

*Offices should not be regarded as positions of authority or as ‘prizes’ for devotion. They should be accepted with humility and exercised with love.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 18 May 1968

**Committee of the Sathya Sai Centre:** As mentioned in the Guidelines (page 27), a Sathya Sai Centre has five officers: President, Vice President, and a coordinator for each Wing of the Sathya Sai Centre: Devotion Coordinator, Education Coordinator, and Service Coordinator. The duties of the five officers are listed in the Guidelines (pages 27-28). A Sathya Sai Group may have fewer officers, the exact number is to depend on the makeup and needs thereof.

The Committee of the Sathya Sai Centre consists of these five officers, and also the Young Adult Coordinator(s) (if there is one), the Ladies' Section Coordinator (if there is one) and the Treasurer (if the Sathya Sai Centre has appointed one). The Committee is responsible for all aspects of operating and administering the Sathya Sai Centre. Decisions should ideally be made by consensus. If a consensus cannot be achieved, the President makes the final decision. If necessary, the National Council may be consulted.

**Restrictions on Officers:** Please refer to the Guidelines under Duties of Sathya Sai Centre Officers (page 27).

**Term of service:** Please refer to the Guidelines under Term of Service (page 28). In case an officer vacates an office, the position may be filled for the rest of the term by the selection process or by interim appointment, after consultation with the National Council.

**Officer Selection Process:** Selection of officers is not a political event and there should be no lobbying. Discussion among members is appropriate and desirable where this promotes active and constructive engagement in Sathya Sai Centre affairs and is conducive to the best interests of the Sathya Sai Centre. Members should work together in a spirit of unity to select officers who are willing to selflessly serve together for the good of the Sathya Sai Centre. The President, Vice President, Devotion Coordinator, Education Coordinator and Service Coordinator will be selected by the Sathya Sai Centre using the Officer Selection Process (see page 26 of the Guidelines). One or two weeks before the selection process begins, a study circle to discuss the duties of the officers and the selection process may be held. The qualifications stated by Sathya Sai Baba and the duties and responsibilities of the office should be discussed. Only those eligible may be considered for selection (see page 26 of the Guidelines).

The process contained in the Guidelines and below may be used to select all officers at one time or individually. Only members who are actively participating in Sathya Sai Centres may participate in the Officer Selection Process and be eligible for selection.

It is important that the meeting is conducted according to the procedure stipulated in the governing documents of the Sathya Sai Centre, e.g. its articles of association or constitution (if one exists), the Guidelines, the Operations Manual, and is in accordance with the law of the land. Most importantly, it should be conducted in peaceful cooperation to select the people best qualified to serve the Sathya Sai Centre selflessly.

In exceptional cases, the National Council may, with the approval of the Central Coordinator and Zone Chair, alter the procedure for selection. If it is impossible to obtain at least one nominee for each position, the Sathya Sai Centre should consider becoming a Group or merging with a neighbouring Sathya Sai Centre.

**Duties of Officers:** It is the responsibility of the officers of a Sathya Sai Centre to ensure that the Sathya Sai Centre is run in accordance with the Guidelines and the Operations Manual.

Unity, harmony, and cooperation form the basis of a properly administered Sathya Sai Centre. Differences of opinion should be resolved by dialogue and making compromises, where these are possible. The President of the Sathya Sai Centre has the final decision. Where necessary, the Subregional President (where applicable) and the National Council President should be consulted for guidance where differences persist. On receiving guidance, or the directive of the Zonal Chair and Central Coordinator, officers and members should accept the guidance or directive. Officers are expected to be of high moral character with love in their hearts to set an example by practising Sathya Sai Baba's teachings in their daily lives.

**Resignation or removal of officers:** Officers who fail to meet the obligations of their office may be removed by or on behalf of the National Council or Coordinating Committee with the approval of the Central Coordinator or Zone Chair. A special selection process will be held to replace officers who resign or are removed.

## Cultural Relevance

**Universal SSIO:** Ideal Sathya Sai Centre meetings provide spiritual upliftment to members and are welcoming to people in the community in which the Sathya Sai Centre exists. To be welcoming, Sathya Sai Centre meetings should have a spiritual basis and not be oriented towards set rituals or to any one religion or language. It is important to remember that Sathya Sai Baba came for all people, so the Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group should not be identified with one particular religion.

It is essential to remember that the SSIO is universal, spiritual, and non-religious. It is, therefore, strongly advisable to display only the *Sarva Dharma* logo at the Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group meeting, and a picture of Sathya Sai Baba in the devotion area. A flame is optional. Multiple images and symbols of any particular religion should be avoided. Where local customs and circumstances require, quotations/symbols of the local faith traditions may be placed in Sathya Sai Centres after consultation with the National Council President and, where necessary, the Zone Chair and Central Coordinator. The altar and the whole Sathya Sai Centre should not be elaborately decorated but should reflect the purity and simplicity expected in our devotion.

**Festivals to be celebrated:** The festivities recommended to be celebrated are Sathya Sai Baba's Birthday, *Akhanda Bhajans* (Global Continuous Devotional Singing), *Guru Poornima* (Day of the Spiritual Preceptor), *Aradhana Mahotsavam* (Offering Love and Devotion to Sathya Sai Baba) and festivals of the predominant local religions, e.g. *Buddha Poornima* (Buddha's Enlightenment Day), Christmas, Easter, etc. These festivities are open to the public.

**Open to All:** The Sathya Sai Centre should be open to the public whenever there are devotional group singing sessions, suitable study circles, service activities, periodic public information meetings or other public events that have been approved by the Committee of the Sathya Sai Centre. The Sathya Sai Centre should seek to answer the queries of each newcomer who approaches the SSIO in accordance with the universal teachings of Sathya Sai Baba. Remember that Sathya Sai Baba came "to nourish the roots of all religions" without any distinction.

To meet the needs of participants and/or local customs, traditions and circumstances, it is not obligatory that a Sathya Sai Centre meeting:

- has any Sanskrit prayer or song;

- has an altar with pictures or statues;
- requires people to sit on the floor with shoes off.

**Types of Meetings:** Sathya Sai Centres may organise different types of meetings so long as they are consistent with the teachings and practices approved by Sathya Sai Baba. For example, the following are permitted:

- A meeting that is simply a study circle on some aspect of Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings, with people sitting in a circle, either on chairs or on the floor.
- A group devotional singing session in one or more languages.
- A meeting for newcomers with people sitting on chairs being introduced to some aspect of Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings.
- A meeting in which devotees talk about their spiritual experiences that drew them to Sathya Sai Baba, etc.
- A meeting to organise service activities at the Sathya Sai Centre or in the community.
- A meeting to teach the SSEHV and/or SSE programmes and how these may be implemented.
- A meeting to study and practice the *Jyoti* (Light) Meditation recommended by Sathya Sai Baba.

The possibilities for meetings that focus completely on spiritual practices consistent with the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba and not religious rituals or practices are endless. We start with the conviction that Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings are universal.

Appendix I makes this clear by outlining a devotional programme that allows alternatives.

## Education Wing

The primary task of the Education Wing is to promote the study and practice of the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba through study circles, publication of His teachings, and producing audio-visual material on His teachings. As to its role in carrying out SSEHV programmes in the community, see the Guidelines on the Education Wing (page 21).

## Study Circles

*Knowledge about what this author says or that sage teaches is not what your study circle must aim to acquire. Not information but transformation, not instruction but construction should be the aim. Theoretical knowledge is a burden unless it is practiced, when it can be lightened into wisdom and assimilated into daily life.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 3 March 1974

Sathya Sai Baba tells us that spiritual growth is best achieved through an integrated practice of devotion, study, and service. He says that the proper study is: reading, reflection, and regular application in daily life.

The study circle is an important group activity in the Sathya Sai Centre and Sathya Sai Group. The link <https://sathyasai.org/organisation/guidelines/study-circle> contains useful information on study circles, as does the book *Pathways to God* by Jonathan Roof. Additionally, as pointed out above, Love is the source, the path and the goal of all Sathya Sai endeavours and so the teachings contained in the Love Guide, developed for the SSIO’s Tenth Pre-World Conference,

are fundamental to the SSIO and should be made studied by all members: <http://sathyasai.org/sathya-sai/teachings/study-guides/love>.

Some important points about study circles in a Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group are:

1. Ideally, there should be weekly study circles. Study circles may range from 30-60 minutes. So that everyone may make substantial contributions, it is best to limit the size of the study circle group to 15 persons and to arrange more study circle groups if necessary.
2. The study circle may be held on the same day as the devotional group singing session or it may be held on a separate day.
3. Study circles are open to visitors. A Sathya Sai Centre may also have “public study circles”, which are designed to educate the public about some topic.
4. The resource materials for study circles are generally (1) the writings and discourses of Sathya Sai Baba, (2) the *Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram* series, and (3) material developed by the Organisation. The teachings of the major religions of the world may be considered, especially where these complement the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba.
5. A Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group may devote a series of study circles to reading a discourse or one of Sathya Sai Baba’s *Vahinis*, spending one session on a page or a number of paragraphs, if necessary. Alternatively, a study circle may be about a specific topic, drawing from many resources. Examples of topics are:
  - The purpose and transformational effect of belonging to a Sathya Sai Centre or Sathya Sai Group.
  - Understanding some aspect of the rules and regulations of the SSIO.
  - The relevance of the Nine-point Code of Conduct and the Ten Principles.
  - The spiritual significance of and benefits of practices such as silence, vegetarianism, avoiding alcohol, ceiling on desires, meditation and repetition of the Name of the Lord.
  - The meaning and effect of various mantras, like *So-Ham* and the *Gayatri Mantra*.
  - Themes of different religions, with the aim of understanding the unity of faiths.
  - What Sathya Sai Baba says He has come to give, liberation (Self-realisation, *moksha*).
6. It is best to appoint a *facilitator* for study circles to be responsible for the overall function of the study circle, coordinate the choice of topics and study material, encourage attendance, ensure that participants know the rules, moderate the study circle (if several study circle groups are needed, each may have its own moderator), etc.
7. Each week, a *presenter* may make a short introduction of the topic, in 5 – 10 minutes, to act as a catalyst in sharing thoughts and opinions. The presenter must come prepared with the reading for the topic and may also have a few questions prepared to stimulate discussion. It is best if each member takes a turn at being the presenter.
8. During discussion, each member in the circle (say, in clockwise fashion) has a chance to speak for a few minutes, if they wish to. All should feel open to provide their sincere comments and there should be no judging of any member or their views. Criticism of others’ viewpoints is not permitted. Debates or lengthy exchanges of different views are

discouraged – an unresolved point may be held over for further reading and subsequent discussion.

9. Individual discussions on the effect of the topic on personal daily life is a good way to emphasise Sathya Sai Baba's point that study circle is meant for personal transformation, not just for gathering information.

### **Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) Programme**

*Sai Spiritual Education (previously called Bal Vikas) is the primary basis of the great movement to restore right action (dharma) in the world.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 6 June 1978

**History:** The original SSE programme started with the Bal Vikas programme from India. Since then the SSE programme has evolved at a varying pace in different countries around the world. While some countries maintain the original Bal Vikas programme, other countries are more oriented towards the SSEHV programme. This has created the need to define the SSE and SSEHV programmes in a clear and actionable manner.

**S.A.I.:** Sathya Sai Baba is at the centre of the SSE programme. In a discourse, Sathya Sai Baba once said the word "SAI" stands for Service, Adoration, and Illumination, namely:

- Service (of God resident in one and all)
- Adoration (of God embodied in Form)
- Illumination (of God embodied in His teachings)

The SSE programme emphasises all three aspects of S (Service), A (Adoration), and I (Illumination) and aims to provide students an all-round training, including the devotional aspect (adoration of the Form).

**SSEHV:** The SSIO also has programmes for Education in Human Values in the community and schools called Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV). The SSEHV programme is focused on drawing out the innate divinity within each human being through the five universal human values and the five teaching techniques, and the practical application of these human qualities in daily life. The programme acknowledges all forms of God, the formless aspect of God, and acknowledges that some may not believe in either.

**Objectives:** The underlying objective of both programmes is the development and practice of the innate qualities that produce good human beings. The SSE programme embraces Adoration (a devotional approach) of the form of Sathya Sai Baba and all forms of God and the SSEHV programme mainly focuses on the five universal human values.

**Cultural Background:** The Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) programme seeks to provide spiritual education to the children and parents who register for it. Students coming to the SSE programme are from the following family backgrounds:

1. Devotee Families:
  - a. Origin: Of Indian heritage. This is a primary segment of the SSE programme. The majority of students are children of Sathya Sai devotees who have their origin in the Indian subcontinent. Often the teachers are also of the same origin and draw their teaching content from familiar sources.

- b. Origin: Of local heritage (not from the Indian subcontinent). These are children of parents who originate in the country of residence. In a few countries (e.g. Croatia, Russia, Germany and Brazil), the majority of the children are in this group. However, overall they represent a small percentage of the total number of children in the SSE programme worldwide.
2. Families in the community from other faiths:
    - a. Origin: Of Indian heritage. In some countries the SSE programme includes children from families of Indian heritage that are not Sathya Sai devotees but who are interested in the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba and in Indian culture. These children come for classes but their families may not attend the Sathya Sai Centre’s devotional or service activities.
    - b. Origin: Of local heritage (i.e. not from the Indian subcontinent). These are families who are from different religious backgrounds (e.g. Christian, Buddhist, Islam). Some Sathya Sai Centres reach out to these families through a combination of SSE and SSEHV classes.
  3. Combination of the two types of families above:

The original SSE programme had children mainly from devotee families (Sathya Sai Centre members). In recent times, Sathya Sai Centres have attracted a combination of devotee families and families from other faith traditions. The latter group may not be Sathya Sai devotees but they have faith in God and may be from various religious or spiritual backgrounds. Some of these parents may enroll their children to gain an understanding of the SSE programme, while others may send them for basic cultural and spiritual training.

Therefore, it is important that teachers and coordinators properly differentiate the original Bal Vikas programme (from India), the SSE programme (adopted in Sathya Sai Centres around the world), and the SSEHV programme (adopted in Sathya Sai Centres or in public venues for non-devotee families). It is important that the programme chosen in any Sathya Sai Centre is properly communicated to the families, and that the SSE programme is dedicated to all aspects of Service, Adoration, and Illumination so that the children are given an all-round education, including Sathya Sai culture and spirituality.

The families from other faith traditions who send their children to attend SSE classes may be invited to attend the Sathya Sai Centre’s devotional and service meetings, although this should be optional. The teachers should not differentiate children by whether their families attend Sathya Sai Centre meetings or not.

**Oversight:** The SSIO’s SSE programme is overseen by the Education Committee of the SSIO and follows the recommendations of the International SSE Conference that was held in Prasanthi Nilayam from 1-3 August 2015. The Conference summary and recommendations may be found at <http://sathyasai.org/education/2015-sse-conference>.

### The SSE Programme Operation

**Logistics:** The SSE programme is conducted by the Sathya Sai Centre at a place and time suitable to the local participants and in accordance with the Guidelines. Classes for students are

generally conducted weekly, for one to two hours. The Education Coordinator of the Sathya Sai Centre leads the SSE programme as a cooperative effort between the Education Coordinator, SSE teachers, the Committee of the Sathya Sai Centre, parents and the Education Coordinators at the Subregional and National levels.

**Training:** SSE teachers and coordinators play a critical role in the development of the students' character. They must undergo regular and ongoing training, conducted by the National SSE Coordinator in conjunction with the National Council. The training should also follow the recommendations of the International SSE Conference, referred to above. If the region or country has an Institute for Sathya Sai Education (ISSE), the ISSE may be involved in this training. A certificate of participation may be given at an appropriate time.

**SSE Groups:** The SSE programme enrolls students in four age groups:

Group I: ages 6, 7, 8 (Grades 1-3)

Group II: ages 9,10,11 (Grades 4-6)

Group III: ages 12,13,14 (Grades 7-9)

Group IV: ages 15,16,17 (Grades 10-12)

Each region or country may adjust these four groups with the approval of the Zone Chair and the National Council to take into account local needs and cultural circumstances.

**Parents:** Sathya Sai Centres are encouraged to provide a programme for parents that involves the parents with their children's education in the SSE programme. The aims of such a programme are to:

1. Provide a meaningful channel of communication and encourage mutual support between parents and teachers.
2. Enhance, reinforce, and integrate at home what the children are experiencing and learning in the SSE class.
3. Build a strong sense of family and community within the Sathya Sai Centre, encouraging activities in which children, parents, and members may participate.
4. Assist parents to incorporate Sathya Sai Baba's teachings into their parenting practice.

**Essentials:** Some important points about the SSE programme in Sathya Sai Centres are:

1. The goals of the SSE programme are to help children manifest their innate Divinity, to draw out the universal human values that are inherent in them, and to help them put these into practice in their daily lives.
2. The life and teachings of Sathya Sai Baba, the five universal human values, and the essential unity of all faiths comprise the substance of the SSE programme. The purpose is to enable children to live a spiritual life in this world.
3. An SSE manual may be developed for a Country, Region, or Zone of the SSIO. Alternatively, the Country may adopt a suitable manual from another Zone. The SSE manual provides information, training, curriculum and other details catering to local needs.



4. The philosophies and unity behind the teachings of many religions are taught in the SSE programme. The practices of any one specific religion should not be emphasised over the others as the universality of faiths should be imbibed in the children. Parents wishing to strengthen their children's faith in the family religion may find another suitable avenue for this in their community.
5. The Sathya Sai Centre Officers and teachers must work together in harmony to create a conducive and positive environment.

### **Children and their Parents**

*To instill in the minds of young the values of prayer and of humility and loving service to others, the homes where they have grown have to be the first schools. The parents have to be imbued with faith in the basic truths of this Universal Religion.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 3 April 1967

1. It is strongly recommended that Sathya Sai Centre members enroll their children in the SSE programme. For maximum benefit, members with children in the SSE programme should participate in Sathya Sai Centre activities.
2. There is no SSE class for children under the age of 6. Where there are many children age 5 or below, a young children's activities group (Sai Nursery) may be a service to the community.
3. Annual orientation meetings should be held for parents to share concerns and ask questions. Establishment of a parent group, which meets monthly, can help parents to learn about the education their children are receiving and provide support for the education at home.
4. SSE classes are open to children of non-members, regardless of their faith and the religious / spiritual Master they worship – the teachings in SSE are (and always must be) universal. It may be necessary to hold special orientation sessions for non-members. In special cases, separate classes for non-members' children may be established after consulting the presiding education officer (e.g. a Regional or National Education Coordinator).

### **SSE Teachers**

*The first task of the teacher is the cultivation of virtue in the hearts of the pupils. This is much more vital than the promotion of learning.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 20 November 1979

1. The Education Coordinator appoints SSE teachers in consultation with the Sathya Sai Centre President and the National Education Coordinator (or the Education Coordinator for the Subregion, if one exists).
2. Before assuming the role of teacher, a Sathya Sai Centre member must receive training sponsored by the National Council.
3. The SSE teacher agrees to make a commitment to the ideals of Sathya Sai Baba and to be an exemplar by practising His teachings. The teacher will work cooperatively with the Education Coordinator and fellow teachers, sharing ideas, concerns, and problems, and will communicate regularly with the parents of the children they are teaching.
4. The SSE teacher will work with the Education Coordinator (and perhaps the ISSE) on seminars / workshops / meetings on SSEHV for parents, young adults, and adults as appropriate.

## **SSEHV in the Community**

The SSIO has programmes for Sathya Sai Education in Human Values in the community and schools. Called SSEHV, these programmes are carried out under the auspices of the ISSE and not the Sathya Sai Centre, although both work together as partners in these community initiatives. Before assuming the role of an SSEHV teacher, a Sathya Sai Centre member must receive training sponsored by the SSIO or an ISSE.

## **Devotion Wing**

*Devotion has been defined as supreme single-pointed intense attachment to the Lord.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 8 April 1972

*It is the easiest way to win His Grace and to realise that He ... is, in fact, everything.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, Mahasivaratri 1955

*Devotion is the easiest and most effective path, for it is a spiritual discipline of the heart.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 14 November 1976

Typically, a Sathya Sai Centre should have a weekly devotional meeting that includes devotional group singing, prayers, and meditation (or silent sitting). The Sathya Sai Centre should also have a weekly study circle, which may be combined with the devotional meeting – the combined meeting could last for 1.5 to 2 hours. The format of a devotional meeting is discussed in Appendix I.

The Devotion Coordinator has overall responsibility for the various elements of the Sathya Sai Centre's devotion programme, including the following (various aspects may be delegated to others):

1. Maintaining Sathya Sai Centre premises and an altar that is simple, universal, and in accordance with the Guidelines;
2. Coordinating devotional meetings (page 14) and practice sessions of devotional singing (page 15);
3. Establishing and maintaining a programme of newcomer welcome and orientation (page 16);
4. Maintaining a library of literature, audio-video recordings — in some Sathya Sai Centres, this task may be the responsibility of the Education Coordinator.

## **General Principles**

1. A Sathya Sai Centre is a spiritual organisation where the unity of faiths and practice of the five universal human values are emphasised. Sathya Sai Baba's teachings are universal; He did not come to start a new religion but to tell us of:

*This universal unitary faith, this spiritual principle, this path of Love, this virtue of Love, this duty of Love, this obligation of Love.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 4 July 1968

Accordingly, we conduct Sathya Sai Centre activities, especially our devotional programmes, to make spiritual seekers from all faiths and all walks of life feel welcome.

2. As a spiritual organisation, the layout and arrangement of Sathya Sai Centre premises should be simple and reflect the inclusiveness of Sathya Sai Baba's teachings, so that

members and newcomers understand that no one religious tradition is favoured. Quotations from Sathya Sai Baba may be placed on the walls, together with universal quotations from the major world religions. Sathya Sai Baba has said that no picture of Him is necessary in the Sathya Sai Centre, but one may be placed at the altar if the Committee of the Sathya Sai Centre so decides.

3. Sathya Sai Centres should emphasise universal spiritual practices in keeping with the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba and the unity of faiths, instead of focusing on the rituals or practices of any one particular faith or religion. The aim should be to create harmony between Sathya Sai Baba's teachings and local traditions.
4. The excessive use of Sanskrit terms may distract from the fact that Sathya Sai Baba's message is universal and is to be shared with all, regardless of one's religious orientation. It is strongly recommended that the Sathya Sai Centre's devotional meeting be conducted in such a manner that people from different faith backgrounds can easily understand and relate to it. The focus is on unity, with appropriate consideration given to cultural relevance (see below).
5. As Sai Baba's devotees, we study and respect all religions. Study circles on other faiths are encouraged to emphasise the unity of all faiths.
6. Sathya Sai Baba required that men and women should sit separately at all Sathya Sai Centre activities.

*At devotional singing and other meetings, men devotees should sit apart from women devotees. The rule is applicable to all members — whether Indians or non-Indians, in India or elsewhere. It is a part of the spiritual discipline that is necessary for devotees.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 22 November 1980

7. All Sathya Sai Centre devotional, study, and service activities, including devotional group singing sessions, are open to all, members, newcomers, and visitors.
8. The section on Cultural Relevance (on page 5) and Appendix I on Devotional Meetings (on page 28) contain material relevant to the Devotion Wing.

## Devotional Meeting

*Where my devotees sing, there I install Myself.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 27 September 1960

*Group devotional singing has a different purpose from silent individual prayers. It is a mutual effort of spiritual practice to overcome the six foes of man: lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride, and hatred.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 1 April 1975

*Singing the name by a group of people can help the process of liberation not only for the members of the group. It will benefit those who listen and even those beyond the circle of listeners — the whole world can benefit from the vibrations.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 26 January 1982

The weekly devotional meeting with its devotional group singing is the highlight of the week for many devotees. It can be an intensely spiritual activity, in which the focus on each song and its meaning brings one closer to the Lord. Achieving this state requires cooperation from all – those preparing and coordinating the session, the lead singers, the musicians and the participants. It should be kept in mind that:

1. Cooperation is essential for the most spiritual benefit. The aim is to experience unity.
2. Singers, musicians, etc. must consider devotional singing as selfless service and set aside any idea that their performances are an opportunity for personal aggrandisement.
3. Knowledge and wisdom can also be achieved by understanding the meaning of the words and ideas in the songs.
4. *Bhajan* leaders should observe discipline and punctuality. They need to observe rhythm, melody and sing with devotional feeling (*bhava, raga, and tala*). Mutual respect must be observed.
5. Devotion involves offering our best efforts to the Lord. Choose songs that are familiar and can be easily followed.

The Sathya Sai Centre may develop its own format for the devotional meeting. A recommended format for a devotional meeting is given in Appendix I. A typical devotional meeting will be 60 to 90 minutes (perhaps up to 2 hours if there is a speaker and a study circle). Generally, devotional group singing (*bhajans*) forms the heart of the devotional meeting.

The Sathya Sai Centre (the Devotion Coordinator and President together) may appoint a person to coordinate all aspects of devotional meetings. It may also be appropriate to appoint a Devotional Singing Coordinator to handle all aspects of devotional group singing, including practice.

Below are some points about the meeting and about devotional group singing:

1. Completely prepare the meeting hall at least 15 minutes before the devotional meeting starts. Keep the altar simple – some flowers, the *Sarva Dharma* symbol, perhaps a picture of Sathya Sai Baba. There should be plenty of chairs for those who do not want to sit on the floor. If there is a consensus among members, an image or symbol of the main religions in the community may also be placed in the devotional area. Guidance on these issues may be requested from the National Council or Coordinating Committee.
2. If it is so desired, a devotional song may be led by more than one singer.
3. Microphones are recommended for the leading voices and the main instruments (instruments of the local culture, as well as traditional Sathya Sai devotional singing instruments, such as *tabla* or harmonium, may be used). There should be at least one microphone for the women lead singers and another for the men.
4. The complete programme should be available to all, with words and meaning of the songs to be sung. A white board or electronic device may be used to display the programme and the numbers of the songs in song books (available to all). Alternatively, a computer-projection system by which the words and meaning of songs can be projected on a large screen may be used, obviating the need for song books.
5. Devotees should take their seats several minutes before the meeting starts and may use this time to observe silence that precedes the devotional meeting.
6. Ladies sit on one side of the hall and men on the other.
7. In Prasanthi Nilayam, *Arathi* (the flame offering to Sathya Sai Baba) and *Samastha Loka* (the prayer for peace) are sung at the end of the meeting. A Zone, Region or Country

may decide to sing or not to sing them or to sing them in the local language. With the guidance of the Zone Chair, Central Coordinator and National Council President, a Sathya Sai Centre may sing the *Arathi* in the local language, with or without offering the flame.

8. *Vibuthi* (holy ash) may be made available to all, either by distributing it after the devotional group singing or by making it available as people leave the hall.
9. After the devotional meeting, it is best that people leave quietly to allow the joy and peace experienced during the meeting to be retained in everyone's heart.
10. Devotional group singing:
  - The devotional group singing session is normally between 30–45 minutes, depending on the Sathya Sai Centre and the total length of the devotional meeting and its contents.
  - The most gifted singers should be lead singers so that participants get the most spiritual benefit from the session. The larger the Sathya Sai Centre, the more important is this guideline. However, wherever appropriate, chances should be given to people who are aspiring to lead and who are attending practice sessions. Lead singers should sing in tune and with harmony. In small Sathya Sai Centres, this guideline may be relaxed depending on circumstances.
  - Some Sathya Sai Centres reserve a song or two for SSE children or Young Adults to lead. It is also permissible to have a session in which only Young Adults lead.
  - When singing, alternate between men and women lead singers, where possible.
  - Maintain continuity between songs – reduce the interruptions to a minimum.
  - Songs may be sung in lead-repeat style or in unison. In the lead-repeat style, the song is generally repeated twice, the first slow and the second faster. The first time, repeat each line twice; the second time, repeat each line once. For long songs, do not repeat each line twice during the first time.
  - Sing songs that most participants are familiar with and can join in. Sing songs that reflect the local culture (e.g. sing in the local language) and encourage singing songs from different religions.

### **Devotional Group Singing Coordination and Practice**

The following points may be observed:

1. A Devotional-singing (*bhajan*) coordinator, appointed by the Devotional Coordinator and Sathya Sai Centre President, oversees all aspects of devotional singing, including selection of songs, selection of singers and musicians, and arranging devotional singing lessons. This responsibility could be rotated among several people.
2. Practice sessions for devotional singing may be held on a regular basis (e.g. monthly), depending on the need. Anyone may attend. The lessons could focus on whatever is needed – singing in tune, learning about rhythm, learning new songs, training in singing with a microphone, instruments, etc.
3. In a large Sathya Sai Centre, musicians and lead singers should practice the songs beforehand to make sure that there is agreement on the key in which a song is to be

sung, how often the lines may be sung, etc. This practice session may be held one-half hour before the devotional meeting starts.

4. Do not introduce more than one new song in a devotional meeting. This song should be practiced beforehand with a substantial number of members so that it can be followed easily.

## **Welcoming Newcomers and Visitors**

We welcome visitors and newcomers from all faiths and religions, and we respect all spiritual paths.

Visitors to the Sathya Sai Centre should perceive universality and a loving environment. The meeting place, the meeting itself, and the way each person is welcomed should reinforce that understanding. Here are some important points about welcoming visitors:

1. Visitors may attend any activity of the Devotion, Education or Service Wings.
2. Have certain people assigned the task of welcoming visitors, perhaps a Welcoming Committee. Members chosen for this task should be open minded, have a broad vision of religious and spiritual subjects, have relevant knowledge of Sathya Sai Baba's message, teachings, and works, have good knowledge of the workings of the SSIO and have a welcoming, positive demeanour.
3. The Welcoming Committee or Centre Officers should cordially welcome newcomers and provide information about the programme and the rules and conventions of the Sathya Sai Centre. Essential information about the structure and aims of SSIO may also be provided. It is very important that newcomers should be welcomed with a smile, an open heart, and gentleness in our speech and actions.
4. Members of the Sathya Sai Centre should welcome visitors and help them — where to sit, how to find devotional songs in the songbook, the nature of a study circle, etc. — or answer any question they may have.
5. A Newcomers' Booklet that should be available for distribution to visitors, along with other appropriate booklets, pamphlets, and videos.
6. Depending on the number of visitors, the Sathya Sai Centre may establish a weekly, fortnightly, or monthly visitors' session, perhaps one-half hour before or after a devotional meeting, in which the fundamental principles of Sathya Sai Baba's teachings and the purpose and structure of the SSIO may be discussed.
7. Members should avoid proselytizing, any mention of money, and forcing a visitor to become a member.

## **Service Wing**

*Selfless service is the very essence of devotion.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 29 March 1967

*Service is the best cure for egotism.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 13 January 1968

*Consider selfless service as the best spiritual discipline. ... But do not believe that you can by means of service reform or reshape the world. You may or may not; that does not matter. The real value of selfless service, its most visible result, is that it reforms you, reshapes you. Do selfless service as a spiritual discipline; then you will be humble and happy.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 29 March 1967

The path of action (*karma*) embodied in selfless service is one of the three paths to Self-realisation advocated by Sathya Sai Baba. Sathya Sai Baba emphasises that small or large acts of selfless service, performed with the attitude of serving God residing in those being served, confer immense spiritual benefits upon the aspirant. Sathya Sai Baba has said that selfless service is the best form of spiritual discipline. Accordingly, from the beginning of the Sathya Sai Organisation, the Service Wing has been an important Wing of the Sathya Sai Centre. The Service Coordinator leads this Wing.

## General Principles

Selfless service can become a spiritual activity resulting in spiritual transformation when it is offered with the attitude that one is serving God in the other person, having no expectation of any reward whatsoever. Such selfless service should be performed according to the following principles:

1. **Unity:** The essential message of Sathya Sai Baba is the fostering of unity, including unity of purpose and unity in our actions, and therefore all participants are encouraged to work together in a spirit of oneness.
2. **Detachment:** By overcoming our likes and dislikes and eliminating judgments about others, particularly the ones we serve – it is sufficient if one has an inclination to do good work and a compassionate heart.
3. **Love and gratitude:** Since God is resident in all beings and what we offer reaches Him, we should approach everyone with love and also with gratitude for the opportunity to serve them, particularly since we are transformed by our selfless service and we benefit from the service.
4. **Reliability:** Toward the beneficiaries (our service is a commitment to them and to God resident in them) as well as the people with whom we serve.
5. **Amicability:** Expressed through simplicity, pleasantness, empathy, nonviolence and respect for the beneficiaries.
6. **Safety:** Undertake each service activity only after a sufficient safety assessment has been carried out to ensure that no participants are at risk of personal injury or harm.

The first aspect of selfless services is to take care of one's own body, for it belongs to God. Following that, in order, are one's parents, one's family, and then the poor and needy. One may also serve animals, the environment, and society. In this service, do not neglect service to members of the Sathya Sai Centre itself.

Selfless service must not be restricted to mere social work. Any interaction with others will become selfless service when done with the right attitude.

*The core of the spiritual discipline of selfless service is to see everyone as yourself and yourself in everyone.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 14 November 1975

Sathya Sai Centre members may perform their own individual selfless service projects. In some situations, and for some people, this may be the best way to serve. But the effectiveness of selfless service as a spiritual practice can increase when pursued jointly with others. In keeping with the SSIO's goal to provide an environment in which individuals may progress spiritually, the Service Wing develops and carries out service projects in the community.

Sathya Sai Centre members working on service projects should understand the significance of selfless service. Accordingly, it will be useful to have study circles on selfless service from time to time. One may organise several study circles on the material provided in the Selfless Service Guide, developed for the SSIO's Tenth Pre-World Conference (<http://sathyasai.org/sathya-sai/teachings/study-guides/selfless-service>). It may also be useful to develop Study Circle Guidelines in a Country or Zone, which goes into more depth on the benefits of selfless service.

### **Guidelines for Service Projects**

1. Service performed in the name of the SSIO should be an individual's choice. It may be encouraged, but it must never be imposed. It may be carried out individually or in groups.

*Not force but the Source (the Divine) should inspire you.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 4 October 1989

2. Work done within the SSIO, including administrative activity, is a service, and all members should be encouraged to take part.
3. In compliance with the principles of the SSIO's Guidelines, publicity, proselytising, and fund raising must be avoided. Service activities must be self-financed. Donations may be accepted but only in accordance with the regulations of the SSIO.
4. A Sathya Sai Centre service activity must be led by a member of the Sathya Sai Centre (perhaps assigned by the Service Coordinator).
5. Volunteers working on Sathya Sai Centre service projects do not have to be members of the Sathya Sai Centre or the SSIO. However, they should be authorised by the Sathya Sai Centre President and they must follow the instructions of those in charge of the project.
6. The Service Coordinator must continually oversee the service projects of the Sathya Sai Centre and make sure that (1) they are serving a real need, (2) the Sathya Sai Centre has the resources – in terms of time, funds, energy, appropriately trained volunteers, etc. – to carry out the projects successfully, and (3) they are done with the right attitude and in accordance with the practices of the SSIO.
7. Service projects that satisfy a local community need and require hands-on volunteer time are best. A project that consists mainly of donating money or items to some cause may not be as effective a spiritual activity because the volunteers are not engaging the people being served. With proper research, the Service Coordinator should identify the poor and neglected, or those with urgent needs that the local government or other organisations are not sufficiently serving. Planning of service projects should be carefully carried out beforehand. Sathya Sai service should meet a need, not the convenience in offering service.
8. Depending on the country, the Sathya Sai Centre may be required to have insurance against possible loss and damage caused to people or things during the service activity. This may be arranged through an insurance policy that has been suitably stipulated by the National Council. All volunteers, whether Sathya Sai Centre members or not, should be covered by the insurance policy. In some countries, the insurance policy may require the Sathya Sai Centre to keep lists of those participating in each service project.
9. To guarantee the effectiveness of service activities, especially when performed by several Sathya Sai Centres within local and national institutions, an internal code of conduct may



be issued by the National Council or the Sathya Sai Centres themselves. All volunteers will abide by the code.

10. Ideally, Sathya Sai service projects are done independently of the government and other organisations. Sathya Sai Centres may collaborate with other organisations where necessary, e.g. singing at a nursing home, providing meals to the homeless with an NGO experienced in such activities, holding a medical camp at a church, etc., so long as the guidelines on service activities given by Sathya Sai Baba and the SSIO are not compromised and are conscientiously followed. A Sathya Sai Centre desiring to participate in a service project with some other organisation should obtain approval from the National Council.

### **Developing and Maintaining Service Projects**

The Service Coordinator will oversee the service projects of the Sathya Sai Centre (although leadership of particular projects may be delegated to others). In deciding on a new service project, the following aspects should be considered:

1. Does the Sathya Sai Centre have sufficient funds?
2. Are the Sathya Sai Centre members enthusiastic enough to support the project?
3. Does the Sathya Sai Centre have the necessary knowledge, skill, and expertise to carry out the project? For example, in some countries, any serving of food requires oversight by someone professionally trained in food safety.

To review these points, the project may be proposed and discussed at a membership meeting. The required costs should be mentioned and members may contribute of their own free will in accordance with the instructions of Sathya Sai Baba. Where appropriate, small projects may be started and expanded later when more resources are available. Encourage people to participate in the service activity – without being asked, some may be moved to contribute to the costs. Welcome newcomers and non-devotees to participate in our service activities.

Similarly, as projects continue, the Service Coordinator should see to it that the project continues to serve a need and that it is well supported by the Sathya Sai Centre:

1. Is the Sathya Sai Centre providing what it committed to provide?
2. Is there still a need for this service project?
3. How can the service be of greater service to those being served?
4. How are members reminding themselves that this is more than a community service project and that it is a selfless service project with a spiritual foundation?

### **Types of Service**

A Sathya Sai Centre could engage in several different kinds of service. Examples of common service projects by Sathya Sai Centres are:

1. Projects that help the aged, youth, and homeless who suffer from loneliness and neglect. We must be ready to give our most valuable resources – our time and energy. Doing so, we can make them feel the love they lack.
2. Projects that protect Mother Earth – recycling, reusing, planting trees, cleaning beaches, etc.

3. Programmes that promote knowledge of good hygiene, a vegetarian diet, healthy life styles and abstinence from drugs, alcohol, and smoking, etc.
4. Service activities for the elderly, orphans, disabled, destitute, homeless, prisoners and others in need – providing food, education, or just singing and caring for them. This could be done in hospitals, public and private institutions, in their homes or wherever such needy persons are found.
5. Computer and vocational training programmes and after-school courses.

In communities with two or more Sathya Sai Centres, sharing service projects can develop an effective spirit of cooperation and greater efficiency in the use of resources. This allows larger, long-range service projects to be undertaken. It also allows members of smaller Sathya Sai Centres to take part in large projects without feeling overwhelmed and it increases the pool of volunteers available for an ongoing service project.

### **Young Adults Programme**

*Seventy percent of the world's population consists of 'youth', who are the potential leaders of tomorrow. Unless they are properly trained to take up their role in the future, society, the nation, and the world will not progress in peace.*

- Sathya Sai Baba, 25 January 1985

The Sathya Sai Young Adults (YA) programme encourages men and women between the ages of 18 and 40 to lead purposeful lives in service of their families, communities and countries by learning and practising the spiritual principles revealed by the life, teachings, and work of Sathya Sai Baba. Primary importance is given to holistic character development through spiritual practices, especially selfless service, and keeping in mind that the primary purpose of the YA programme is to realise and manifest one's innate divinity. The YA programme provides a forum to discuss practical issues young adults face in leading a spiritual life following Sathya Sai Baba's teachings.

A flourishing YA programme that harnesses the energy and vitality of the young adults can help the Sathya Sai Centre thrive. The Young Adults may help the Sathya Sai Centre promote initiatives that enable the SSIO to better serve the country's needs in accordance with its traditions and customs. In fact, everyone gains from a well-run YA programme.

**Unity:** The YA programme is an integral part of the SSIO and not a separate organisation. The YAs are to be given opportunities to lead spiritual and service programmes for young adults. They are also expected to participate in Sathya Sai Centre activities, contributing actively to them. The Sathya Sai Centre leadership can nourish the YAs by being mindful of their needs and supporting their service and spiritual programmes with other young adults.

**Coordinators:** The YA Coordinators are selected by the YAs using the same process for Sathya Sai Centre Officer Selection, except that in the absence of agreement the National Council President shall be consulted by the Sathya Sai Centre President. YA Coordinators serve a two-year term and may be selected for another two years. The criteria for selection include demonstration of selflessness, dedication to Sathya Sai ideals, and competence to perform a leadership role in the SSIO.

**Leadership:** The SSIO offers YAs the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through a structured programme, the Sathya Sai International Youth Leadership Programme (SSIYLP).

The SSIYLP presents a unique opportunity to YA leaders to learn key leadership qualities for improving their life skills and serving mankind by taking greater roles in the SSIO and becoming instruments of the Divine Mission. With spirituality at its core, the SSIYLP aims to inspire, motivate and train YA's in Sathya Sai Baba's teachings about ethical and moral leadership based on human values in today's world.

The YA leaders are required to observe the SSIO Guidelines. Although the YA age range is from 18-40, it is preferred that the Sathya Sai Centre, Subregional and National YA Coordinators be under the age of 35. This helps with experience transfer and further progress of the YA after any one person's leadership term finishes. In larger Sathya Sai Centres, Subregions and Countries, where there are more than 10 young adults, a male and female YA Coordinator may be appointed.

YA Advisors over 40 years of age are selected by the YAs using the same process for Sathya Sai Centre Officer Selection, except that in the absence of agreement the National Council President shall be consulted by the Sathya Sai Centre President. A YA Advisor serves initially for two years and may continue in the position upon agreement of the Sathya Sai Centre President and the YAs. Ideally, the YA Advisor will have previously served as a YA Coordinator and remains an active participant of Sathya Sai Centre programmes. The YA Advisor provides mentorship and support to the YA Coordinator at the request of the YA Coordinator and Sathya Sai Centre President. The YA Advisor may assist with the development of the YA Group but not necessarily lead YA projects and activities.

YA Coordinators submit regular reports on YA activities as requested by the Sathya Sai Centre Committee. They work with the YAs who sit on the National Council and are responsible for the distribution of information and materials that come from the National Council or Sathya Sai Centre Committee to the YAs in the Sathya Sai Centre.

### **YA Programme Activities**

YAs should develop activities suitable for their age to bring forth and develop their talents and self-esteem. YA meetings and programmes should include educational and devotional activities, with a strong emphasis on selfless service, including:

- Devotion: prayer, meditation, devotional singing, study of Sathya Sai Baba's teachings
- Retreats/conferences: workshops for personal enrichment, motivational speakers
- Education: computer literacy, education in human values, vocational training, mentoring
- Service: soup kitchen, disaster relief, blood donation, medical camps, Serve the Planet, Public Outreach engagement
- Culture: music concerts, drama, poetry, devotional songs album, radio programmes
- Young Adult development: international leadership training, YA Development programme, LASA project, *Sadhana of Love* programme
- Miscellaneous: Go-Green initiatives, YA sports day, media training
- Participation in SSE Programmes: provide inspiring, creative ideas to enhance the understanding of what is being taught and help those in SSE Group 4 to transition to the YA programme.

The YAs are encouraged to develop new programmes and activities. These programmes and activities should be compatible with Sathya Sai Baba's teachings and inspire the YAs into action,

and reflecting on their spiritual journey. Furthermore, the YAs may initiate activities that better align the SSIO to the country's traditions and customs, for example, composing devotional songs in the local language, arranging debates and study circles about cultural relevancy, studying and discussing the biographies of exemplary leaders to evaluate their teachings and contributions, and studying and discussing the national literature to draw out its positive values.

Discipline, modest attire, and the separate seating of the young men and women should be features of the meetings since the gatherings are for spiritual purposes.

The YAs must consult with and receive guidance from the ISSE of the Country or Subregion before embarking on SSEHV-oriented programmes.

## **Ladies' Section**

*I have proclaimed November 19 as Ladies Day, which is very auspicious. The importance of this day lies in propagating and realising the sanctity of motherhood, which is founded on the principle of selfless love. Children should be fostered on the principles of piety and virtue. This day will be celebrated by posterity for aeons.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 19 November 2001

In Prasanthi Nilayam, 19 November is celebrated as "Ladies Day", when the women arrange and carry out programmes, festivities, etc. This has inspired ladies' activities and even Ladies' Sections in Sathya Sai Centres in some Countries or Subregions. These activities include organising study circles on the role of women as mother, wife, worker and Sathya Sai Centre member; arranging service activities to help women, in particular; and hosting cultural programmes. In some places, the 19th day of each month is dedicated to the ladies, with various devotional, service and education activities being carried out. It is not mandatory to have this Section.

A Sathya Sai Centre should feel free to carry out spiritual activities initiated by ladies for ladies and to appoint someone with overall responsibility for the activities or Section. Before starting the programme, the Sathya Sai Centre President should contact the Subregional President (where one has been appointed) or the National Council President for the guidelines and support that have been instituted to support ladies' activities within the Subregion or country.

## **Inviting Speakers**

Use local speakers as much as possible during the regular and special devotional meetings – speakers from neighbouring areas may be used as well.

Invitations of local (intra-country) speakers should be approved by the speaker's Sathya Sai Centre President and the Subregional President (where one has been appointed) or the National Council President.

The National Council President and Central Coordinator should be consulted when speakers are invited from other countries within the Zone. Before a speaker from another Zone is invited, consultation must take place between the Sathya Sai Centre President, Subregional President (where one has been appointed) and the National Council President. If there is agreement that the speaker is appropriate, approval is sought from the Zone Chair, who will in turn confer with those who preside over the speaker's country (Zone Chair or Central Coordinator), who will seek the approval of the Prasanthi Council. If all agree, the speaker may be invited.

Generally, speakers, both domestic and international, pay their own travel expenses, but the inviting Sathya Sai Centre or country may pay these if the speakers are unable to do so.

Where it is hoped to invite speakers from Prasanthi Nilayam, the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSIHL) or the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of India (SSSSO), this should only be done by the Zone Chair seeking permission and assistance from the Prasanthi Council. This is necessary to ensure that the relevant protocols and procedures of Prasanthi Nilayam, the SSIHL and the SSSSO are respected and duly followed.

## **Dissemination of Information / Communications**

It is important that communications from the SSIO (i.e. the Prasanthi Council, the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, Zone Chairs, Central Coordinators and the National Council) be delivered immediately to all members of the Sathya Sai Centre. See the Guidelines at page 12.

There is always scope for improvement of prompt and proper communications. Dissemination of communications should be done in several ways, viz. (1) through email, (2) placing on the password protected Sathya Sai Centre website, (3) handing out copies at a Sathya Sai Centre meeting (although a proactive approach towards environmentally-friendly alternatives is highly encouraged) and (4) reading the information and communication at a Sathya Sai Centre meeting.

It may be advisable to appoint a Communication Coordinator to be in charge of disseminating all information and communications within the Zone, whether at Country, Regional or Zonal levels. The Communication Coordinator may have a team of translators for the benefit of any Country in the Region or Zone that is not English speaking.

## **Incorporation**

Matters of incorporation are determined by the laws of the country in which a Sathya Sai Centre operates. In some countries, some form of incorporation is required by law; in others, it is not. A Sathya Sai Centre may have to incorporate if it owns a building and/or operates a bank account, and in these circumstances incorporation allows ownership to be in the name of the Sathya Sai Centre and not in the name of any individual(s), which can create difficulties when people move away, pass away, etc.

Incorporation may be advantageous to obtain tax exempt status, to receive tax deductible donations, and for administrative reasons, e.g. obtaining favourable prices when ordering supplies for large service activities, renting rooms for Sathya Sai Centre meetings or public programmes, operating a counter for the sale of books or devotional articles with a proper system for stock checking and accounting, etc. However, there are legal and financial responsibilities that arise with incorporation, e.g. preparing and filing audited accounts, but these may be an incentive to greater discipline and transparency in financial matters. There is no hard-and-fast rule on incorporation of Sathya Sai Centres throughout the world.

A Sathya Sai Centre that wants to incorporate must first get the approval of the National Council (and ultimately the Zone Chair). Incorporation will involve legal requirements, such as keeping financial records, reporting to the government, etc. Copies of all such requirements must be forwarded to the National Council for oversight.

## Finances

*Fund collection is as much opposed to this movement as fire is to water. If you yield on this point, spiritual advance will perish.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 14 May 1971

Fees are never charged for any Sathya Sai Centre activity, nor are donations solicited from members or the public. Sathya Sai Centres pay no fees to the SSIO at any level. Sathya Sai Centres may meet their expenses by allowing members to make voluntary, anonymous contributions. Generally, officers in the SSIO use their own funds to cover personal expenses incurred in carrying out their duties. Exceptions to this rule may be made by the Zone Chairs.

Special projects must be discussed and approved by the officers in conjunction with the members and acted upon only after sufficient funds are available. If the amount is insufficient, the officers may either make up the shortfall among themselves or cancel or modify the project. Sathya Sai Centres should never embark on projects for which there are insufficient resources of money, time, personnel, energy or skills.

Any financial considerations will be the collective responsibility of all the Sathya Sai Centre officers under the direction of the President. Careful records of all financial transactions (e.g. sale of books, rental of rooms, retreat accounts) will be kept and reviewed by the Sathya Sai Centre officers on a quarterly basis and may be reviewed by the National Council. Those assigned to deal with book sales at Sathya Sai Centres or conference accounts should be rotated on a regular basis, like officers. A Treasurer may be appointed if the volume of work dealing with finances warrants it.

If someone requests information, details may be given about donations to the Sathya Sai Centre, a National Trust in the country, to the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, or to any funds that have been set up to help with emergency or natural disaster relief.

These rules are in keeping with Sathya Sai Baba's injunction that Sathya Sai Centres should have as little to do with money as possible, since it draws attention away from the members' spiritual focus.

## Publications

The Sathya Sai Centre may publish and distribute a "Sathya Sai Centre Bulletin (or Newsletter)", containing a calendar of events, announcements giving information about an upcoming programme, etc. The officers of the Sathya Sai Centre must approve the content. Copies should be sent to the Subregional Council (where one has been appointed) or the National Council for oversight.

Where appropriate, an electronic version may be the best way to disseminate such information.

## Sathya Sai Centre Library

The maintenance of the library is the responsibility of the Devotion or Education Coordinator, depending on the Zone in which the Sathya Sai Centre exists. The following points should be considered:

1. The library should contain at least one copy of the *Guidelines for the Sathya Sai International Organisation* and the *Operations Manual for Sathya Sai Centres and Sathya Sai Groups*.
2. All literature, media and materials displayed, provided or sold at the Sathya Sai Centre must be from an official SSIO source or published by the Sri Sathya Sai Books & Publications Trust.

3. The Sathya Sai Centre should subscribe to *Sanathana Sarathi* and other newsletters of the Subregion, Country, or Zone. Current issues and subscription information should be available.
4. Provide and circulate copies of books on the life of Sathya Sai Baba (*Sathyam Shivam Sundaram*), His teachings and writings (*Vahini series*), His discourses (such as *Sathya Sai Speaks* or *Summer Showers*), and a variety of other literature on Sathya Sai Baba and the Sathya Sai Centre's programmes (including reprints of appropriate articles and discourses). These should be available at all meetings.
5. The Sathya Sai Centre is encouraged to have a selection of books, audio and video recordings, and photos available for loan and, when appropriate, for sale. Approval should be obtained from the Subregional or National Council President for any other items to be made available.
6. Besides the items mentioned above, the library may include important texts of the major religions with versions from mainstream and widely-accepted sources.
7. Items to be sold should be available at cost or at the lowest possible price. Sales should not override or dilute the spiritual activities of the Sathya Sai Centre. The Sathya Sai Centre must comply with all relevant laws of the country regarding sales of such items.

### Important Resources

The Guidelines (at pages 14-15) may be referred to for the official sources of information about Sathya Sai Baba's life and teachings and the SSIO.

A Sathya Sai Centre may have a website upon approval of the National Council. There are essentially two reasons for having a website:

1. Let the public, as well as members, know about the Sathya Sai Centre (when and where it meets, etc.)
2. Provide for communication among members. This part of the website should be password protected (one password for all is sufficient) and made accessible only to members.

### Public Outreach, Media, Archive and Humanitarian Relief

The Guidelines (at pages 29-30) may be referred to for a detailed explanation of the nature of these activities. Sathya Sai Baba did not come only for His devotees, He came for all mankind – to teach and to serve all. Working together, we can all be His instruments. We do not seek publicity but to create awareness and to share, by our actions and words, the divine message and teachings of Sathya Sai Baba.

**Public Outreach:** All public outreach committees at national and Sathya Sai Centre levels are the interface between the SSIO and the local communities, governments, media and religious establishments.

1. All Zonal, National, and Sathya Sai Centre officers, working in coordination with their respective Public Outreach Coordinators should devise local strategies and initiatives in accordance with the guidance of the SSIO's Public Outreach Committee so as to ensure consistency globally. These should be in four areas: Interfaith Programmes, Public

Meetings, Community Engagement and Walk for Values. This will ensure consistency globally.

2. Respect and follow local traditions, customs, and circumstances in the country so that people embrace our outreach and join in. It is important that Sathya Sai teachings are conveyed as a universal message for all humanity. Our attitudes and practices must reflect this universality.
3. All office bearers and active members should understand and cooperate in implementing these strategies and initiatives.
4. Encourage Young Adults to participate actively in outreach activities, especially towards other young people.

**Media:** (See Guidelines, page 30). It is important that all material that Sathya Sai Centres disseminate, in whatever form or by whichever media platform, succinctly and accurately state and reflect the teachings and actions of Sathya Sai Baba and the SSIO. It is important to remember:

1. The SSIO is a spiritual-cum-service organisation, so all media platforms (e.g. audio-video, internet, websites, social media) must reflect the sacredness of its name, spiritual philosophy and work. Be careful of commercial marketing and public relations strategies and language.
2. There needs to be discipline to ensure that our message as a Sathya Sai organisation always remains focused on the teachings and work of Sathya Sai Baba.
3. In no circumstances should there be any public solicitation of funds, even for good projects.
4. Our media work is sometimes focused on public outreach and accordingly the language, text and nuances must suit the purpose of our work. Sathya Sai Baba is a great spiritual teacher and educator, and sometimes it is sufficient to describe Him in this way.

**Archive:** (See Guidelines, page 30).

**Humanitarian Relief:** (See Guidelines, page 30).

## **Websites and Social Media**

The website should follow guidelines given by the SSIO for Sathya Sai Centre Websites. The Guidelines at page 31 may be referred to.

## **Intellectual Property Rights**

The law and procedures regarding intellectual property rights can be quite technical. Where possible, obtain local legal advice regarding this issue. Refer to the Guidelines, page 35. The National Council President and any assigned officer(s) should take special interest in protecting these rights.

The protection of the Divine name is a sacred duty of the SSIO. One means to achieve this is by the trademark registration of the name “Sathya Sai Baba” in several international classes. Also,



where possible, register the name “Sathya Sai Education in Human Values” and the old and new logos of the SSIO. Finally, protect the copyrights in publications and audio/video recordings of the SSIO.

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## Appendix I: Devotional Meetings

A recommended format for a devotional meeting is:

1. Welcome and Introduce Newcomers
2. Announcements
3. Chanting *Om* (the Primordial Sound) three times
4. Devotional songs
5. Prayers, including the Lord's Prayer given by Sathya Sai Baba (see Guidelines)
6. Meditation
7. Spiritual talk/sharing
8. *Arathi*, *Vibhuti mantra*, and *Samastha Loka Sukhino Bhavantu*

The meeting should be arranged to help Sathya Sai Centre members on their spiritual journey. So long as this is not inconsistent with the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba, the meeting is arranged to accommodate the needs of the members and takes into account the culture and traditions of the country. The meeting is universal in nature and not oriented to any particular religion.

Notes:

1. The altar should be simple and elegant. Swami has said that His picture is not necessary. If the committee of the Sathya Sai Centre wishes, then have one picture of Him.
2. Men and women should sit separately. This directive comes from Sathya Sai Baba. Chairs should be available for those that need them.
3. The meeting format is flexible. A Sathya Sai Centre may adopt any format it feels comfortable with, considering the culture and traditions of its members and the local community.
4. In the group singing session, emphasise devotional songs (*bhajans*) in the language of the local culture. Sanskrit, English or any other songs dear to the membership may also be part of the session. The Sathya Sai Centre should arrange and balance its programmes so that newcomers and locals relate to it and join in. Devotional songs should reflect the universality of Sathya Sai Baba's teachings.
5. Tradition in Prasanthi Nilayam (Sathya Sai Baba's ashram) may call for a *Ganesh bhajan* (song dedicated to Lord Ganesha, who removes obstacles), a *Guru bhajan* (song dedicated to the Spiritual Preceptor), and then others, but this is not mandatory at the Sathya Sai Centre meeting. The make up of the participants in the Sathya Sai Centre may be entirely different from that in Prasanthi Nilayam. Any sequence of devotional songs will do, as long as attendees focus on the inner meaning of the songs to establish a connection with the Divinity within.
6. Songs may be sung in the leader-response style, in unison, or a mixture of both.
7. Prayers in a language foreign to the country should be kept to a minimum. If a *Sanskrit* prayer is said, it may be recited in the language of the country, with the written translation available to all.

8. Practices that are not part of the culture of most Sathya Sai Centre members and are foreign to visitors should be kept to a minimum. Depending on the culture and the Sathya Sai Centre, shoes may be worn.
9. The optional meditation may be a silent meditation or Sathya Sai Baba's Jyoti (Light) Meditation. The length depends on the Sathya Sai Centre members, probably no more than 5–10 minutes.
10. The spiritual talk, 10 minutes or less, may be a reading of and discussion of some paragraph from Sathya Sai Baba's discourses or the Vahinis. Alternatively, it may be a reading from the text of some religion and then a discussion of how it is similar to some teaching of Sathya Sai Baba. Talks may share an inspirational or self-transformational experience.
11. Study circle is an important part of devotion. The study circle can be held on the same day as the weekly devotional meeting or on a separate day.

*A study circle does not mean only just reading and discussing and taking information into the head but also putting into practice what is learnt. ... What is eaten should be digested, and then only should you eat again. In the same way, you should listen (eat) in the study circle and put into practice (digest) what you have learnt.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 30 January 1985

12. The *vibuthi* (holy ash) prayer is optional; consider singing it in the language of the country. *Vibuthi* may be distributed during the meeting or when the devotees leave.
13. *Arathi* (flame offering to Sathya Sai Baba) is optional, and if it is sung consideration should be given to singing it (also) in the language of the country. As stated above (page 14) *Arathi* need not be sung, and if it is sung, it may be sung in the local language with or without offering the flame.
14. In Prasanthi Nilayam, after *Arathi*, *Samastha Loka* is sung three times. The following song illustrates how this may be adapted to fit a different culture. Some Sathya Sai Centres sing this as the last item in their devotional meeting:

MAY THE LOVE WE'RE SHARING:

May the Love we're sharing spread its wings, fly across the Earth, and bring new joy to every soul that is alive. 2X

*Samastha loka sukhino bhavanthu* (may all the worlds be happy).

*Samastha loka sukhino bhavanthu.*

## Appendix II: Sathya Sai Baba's Teachings on Selfless Service

In Sathya Sai Centres, selfless service is just as important a spiritual activity as devotional singing. The purpose of this appendix is to explain why. As a start, we see that Sathya Sai Baba Himself spent His life in service.

*You should follow Swami, the leader. This is because from morning to night, Swami performs even the smallest task Himself, and all His work is for the good of the world. It is in this context that I often say, "My Life is My Message."* [Summer Showers 1979, discourse 2]

*Avatars of God are engaged in service; that is why Avatars come. Hence, when you offer service to humanity, the Avatar will naturally be pleased and you can win grace.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 3 June 1977

### Selfless Service and the Sathya Sai Organisation

*The members of our Organisation must be ready and eager to help students, the sick, and the poor. Feel that this is work that pleases Me ... Spend your days and years in activities that help those in dire need, and thus make this human existence of yours worthwhile and fruitful.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 23 November 1974

*Let me tell you that nothing is impossible of achievement if an organised society is set on achieving it. Even liberation from material entanglement can be won through serving and promoting the progress of society. Through the sense of unity, the willingness to sacrifice, and the softness of compassion, all objects can be gained. So, the Sai Organisation must move forward with hearty enthusiasm in the field of service to society.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 19 November 1981

But do not limit your service to Sathya Sai Centre activities. Make service a lifetime activity, which begins with oneself and one's family. Service to those in need, whether it is done at home, at work, or in the community, offered selflessly with a loving attitude, while recognising the divinity in those being served, is selfless service. Love and selflessness is the foundation of service in the SSIO.

*The first lesson in selfless service has to be learnt in the family circle itself.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 19 November 1981

*I do not attach any value to the turning of rosaries by hands that know no help.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 9 March 1967

*Do not keep yourself apart, intent on your own salvation through meditation; instead, move among your sisters looking for opportunities to be of help, with the Name of God on your tongue and the Form of God before the mind's eye.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 1 February 1970

*Service is a lifetime programme; it knows no rest or respite. This body has been given to you so that you may devote its strength and skills to the service of brother-man. Serve humanity until you see God in all people; then, what you do will be elevated to worship.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 14 June 1975

### The Effect of Selfless Service

Naturally, in the service we do we want to help others, and that is the intent of selfless service. But Sathya Sai Baba says that we are doing selfless service for our own sake. The real value of the service, He says, lies in helping us along the spiritual path in various ways – provided we do it

with the right attitude, as a spiritual discipline. He says that selfless service helps us to:

- Control and purify the mind
- Bring love into our lives
- Put a ceiling on our desires
- Experience the unity of all
- Erase our karmic burden
- Become aware of God in all
- Remove the ego
- Win the Grace of God

*You are doing selfless service for your own sake. You are engaged in service in order to become aware of the divine Spirit in you, in order that you may discard the allurements of your ego, in order to know yourself and to get the answer to the question that torments you, namely, "Who am I?" You do not serve others, you serve yourself; you do not serve the world, you serve your own interest.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 6 March 1977

*Selfless service is the best spiritual practice for eliminating the nefarious pull of the mind toward desires.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 4 October 1970

*To remove the evil of egoism, service is the most efficient instrument.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 28 August 1976

*By saturating with love, work can be transformed into worship. When it is offered to God, it gets sanctified as worship. This makes it free from ego. It is also freed from the earthly desire for success and the earthly fear of failure.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 3 June 1977

*When a devotee seeks with humility and purity to give service and love to My creatures who are in need of such selfless service, as his beloved brothers and sisters, as the blessed manifestations of My Immanence, then in fulfillment of my role as Sathya Sai, I descend to help, accompany, and carry that yogi. I am always near such a yogi to guide him and to shower My love on his life.*

[Hislop: My Baba and I]

So, while selfless service helps to meet the needs of the under-privileged, it helps our worldly self. But at another level, we are serving the One God that is within us all, the supreme, absolute SELF, and this will help us become aware of the unity of humanity.

*The core of the spiritual discipline of selfless service is to see everyone as yourself and yourself in everyone.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 14 November 1975

*You are not doing service to others, you are doing service to yourselves, to the God in you, the God who is equally present in others.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 21 June 1981

*Service will also impress the unity of all mankind on the person doing service.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 28 August 1976

### **Our Attitude when doing Selfless Service**

*God will not ask you when and where you did service; he will ask what your motives and intentions were.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 19 November 1981

*The attitudes of mutual help and selfless service develop the "humanness" of people and help unfold the Divinity latent in them.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 19 November 1981

Our attitude during a selfless service activity determines whether the service helps us grow spiritually. Service performed with a sense of pride or superiority will hinder our spiritual growth.

*Do not pollute your service with the poison of pride.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 21 February 1971

*Feel that you are serving yourself, curbing the ego.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 21 April 1967

*Engage in humble service, and egotism will fade away.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 25 July 1978

Also, selfless service should be performed without expectation for results.

*Do not serve for the sake of reward; serve because you are urged by Love.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 19 May 1969

*Service is its own reward.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 28 August 1976

*Do not worry about the result. Help as much as you can, as efficiently as you can, as silently as you can, and as lovingly as you can; leave the rest to God, who gave you a chance to serve.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 6 November 1967

*Do not believe that you can by means of selfless service reform or reshape the world. You may or may not. That does not matter. The real value of selfless service, its most visible result, is that it reforms you, reshapes you.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 29 March 1967

Sometimes, members try to do what they want to do rather than what needs to be done. They may perceive some task as more important and others as "less desirable". For example, some would rather serve the food rather than purchase it from supermarkets and bakeries, or clean up afterwards. This attitude is not correct.

*Do not consider any act of service as demeaning. Sweeping the streets, for example, is not below your dignity. Do you not sweep the floor at home, do you not scrub and wash off dirt?*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 1 December 1982

*Serve people with no thought of high or low; no service is high; no service is low; each act of service is equal in the eye of the Lord. It is the readiness, the joy, the efficiency, the skill with which you rush to do it that matters.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 4 October 1981

Engage in all service projects willingly and with love. If one has a constructive suggestion, discuss it with the Service Coordinator when the opportunity arises.

### **Selfless Service and Repeating God's Name**

We worship God in different ways – prayer, meditation, devotional singing, repeating His name, selfless service, etc. These ways are helpful to different degrees, at different times, and for different people. Sathya Sai Baba Himself emphasises different forms of worship from time to time. However, two forms of worship stand out in Sathya Sai Baba's teachings: service and repetition of a Name of God. These two spiritual disciplines reinforce each other, one being an outer activity in the world and the other being an inner activity that helps us continuously to remember that God is resident in all beings.

*Heads in the forest, hands in society.* – Sathya Sai Baba, 22 November 1978

One can see the same message in Sathya Sai Baba's statement, "Love All, Serve All." The service aspect is clear in the second phrase, and the first phrase cannot be achieved unless we constantly remember that God resides in every person. Our selfless service is an offering of love for the God who resides in every person.

*You must be engaged in constant remembrance of the Name of God, so that you remain a true servant of God while claiming to serve humanity, or rather, so that you may see in people the God that is their real nature.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 21 February 1971

*Move among your sisters looking for opportunities to be of help, with the Name of God on your tongue and the Form of God before the mind's eye. That is the highest spiritual practice.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 1 February 1970

## Appendix III: Guidelines for Sai Spiritual Education (SSE)

*Sai Spiritual Education (Bal Vikas in Sanskrit) is the primary basis for the great movement to restore righteousness (dharma) in the world ... The ideal is to raise a generation of boys and girls who have a clean and clear conscience. The actual syllabus is not as important as the creation of an atmosphere wherein noble habits and ideals can grow and fructify.*

(Bal Vikas Teachers' Training Camp) – Sathya Sai Baba, 6 June 1979

### Basis and Definition of the Sai Spiritual Education Programme

1. Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) is the spiritual heart of Sathya Sai Education.
2. The five universal human values (Love, Truth, Righteous conduct, Peace and Nonviolence), the essential unity of faiths, and the life and teachings of Sathya Sai Baba are foundational aspects of the SSE programme. These five universal human values are the essence of all faiths.
3. SSE is the vehicle through which the students nurture and express their devotion to God.
4. The programme is based on the precept that true education is spiritual education that culminates in good character.
5. Spiritual education ennobles life through the realisation of one's Divinity.
6. The realisation of Divinity is expressed through one's thoughts, words, and deeds.
7. SSE nurtures the innate goodness of the child by creating an environment that is devotional, loving, and experiential.
8. The Ten Principles from Sathya Sai Baba (see the Guidelines) are used as a guide for students, teachers, and parents; they support all aspects of the curriculum.

### Curriculum Overview – Educare

*The word Educare means "to bring out that which is within", namely, the human values hidden in every human being: truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence. One cannot acquire them from outside; they have to be elicited from within. However, people have forgotten their innate human values, so they are unable to manifest them. Educare means to bring out the human values. To bring them out means to translate them into action.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 26 September 2000

The SSE programme follows the Primary and Secondary programme elements and the International SSE Framework as specified in the recommendations of the SSIO International SSE Conference.

The Primary elements include:

- Faith in God.
- Communication with God.
- Expression of love for God.
- Living with God.



The Secondary elements include:

- Syllabus or curriculum.
- New pedagogy/teaching techniques.
- Ethics and discrimination.
- Engaging and retaining SSE alumni and Sai Youth.
- Teacher / Parent / Coordinator training.
- Parent and family empowerment.
- Unity and cooperation between SSE and other Wings of the SSIO.

The curriculum contains the following topics:

1. Five Universal Human Values: Love, Truth, Righteous conduct, Peace and Nonviolence.
2. Brotherhood of man, Fatherhood of God.
3. Ceiling on Desires programme.
4. National and religious holidays.
5. Stories and accompanying lesson plans from the childhood of Sathya Sai Baba.
6. Annotated bibliography of children's literature.
7. Stories of saints and role models of heroes and unsung heroes.
8. Service activity suggestions and guidelines.
9. Biographies.

The objective of all lessons is to nourish the spiritual principle within the child, i.e. the child should be able to understand and manifest the five universal human values in thought, words, and deeds during interaction with others, so as to transcend a purely secular life. The ideal lesson should raise the students' awareness about the spiritual principle and inspire them to directly experience the spiritual principle through group activities, and not just through moralising and memorising. The practice of the human values in daily life is essential to manifesting Divinity from within. Service activities and field trips are recommended to enhance experiential learning. Students should be encouraged to share their experiences.

### Components used in SSE Classes

Conduct SSE classes in an engaging and dynamic manner to inspire the students and instill in them a love for God and the desire to manifest their innate divinity through the practice of Sathya Sai Baba's teachings.

The following components are frequently used in the SSE classes:

1. Recitation of Om, Prayer, Repeating the Name

*I suggest that you have prayer as an important item in the timetable of the classes; through prayer, you can draw down unto yourselves the Grace of God.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 12 May 1970

2. Silent Sitting/Meditation

*Two roads lead to fulfillment: prayer and meditation. Prayer makes you a supplicant at the feet of God; meditation induces God to come down to you and inspires you to raise yourselves*

*to Him. It tends to make you come together, not place one on a lower level and the other on a higher.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 22 January 1967

### 3. Devotional Group Singing

*Let melody and harmony surge up from your hearts, and let all take delight in the love that you express through that song.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 14 November 1976

### 4. Lesson/Story – Spiritual Principle

*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, and more God-oriented life? That is the question you should ask yourself.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 3 January 1974

### 5. Group Activities – Life Application Activity

After telling the story and discussing how the story illustrates the value being considered, introduce a group activity to reinforce the value and integrate it into the student's experience. Activities that follow stories are of two types: the first is a Group Activity in which the entire class participates; and the second is a Life Application Activity to be practiced during the upcoming week(s).

*Bal Vikas (SSE) is the primary basis for the great movement to restore righteousness (dharma) in the world... The ideal is to raise a generation of boys and girls who have a clean and clear conscience. The actual syllabus is not so important as the creation of an atmosphere wherein noble habits and ideals can grow and fructify.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 6 June 1978

## Spiritual Objectives by Age Group

In a very true sense all these spiritual objectives carry through from level to level and cannot be called separate. Each spiritual objective may be considered a building block for a lifelong practice of spiritual principles. At the younger ages, the ideas are presented in a simpler form in ways appropriate to the age group. As a child matures, the concepts are applied and practiced in increasing depth.

*The enumeration of human values as five — truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence — is not correct. They are all facets of the foundational humanness. They grow together, are interdependent, and are not separable.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 31 December 1984

### Group I (Ages 6, 7, 8)

- Develop faith in and relationship with God.
- Encourage respect for parents, teachers, elders and the environment.
- Foster self-esteem and self-discipline.
- Nurture truthfulness.
- Promote the practice of placing a ceiling on desires.
- Cultivate a spirit of loving service to self, family, school and others.

## Group II (Ages 9, 10, 11)

- Demonstrate increasing integration of objectives from Group I.
- Foster the understanding of Divinity in all.
- Develop the faculty of discrimination.
- Promote the practice of placing a ceiling on desires.
- Impart noble ideals.
- Foster understanding of the unity of faiths.
- Encourage the practice of selfless service.

## Group III (Ages 12, 13, 14)

- Demonstrate increasing integration of objectives from Group II.
- Develop awareness for the *Atmic* reality.
- Strengthen moral living.
- Emphasise selfless service.
- Promote the practice of having a ceiling on desires.
- Foster a sense of one's role in society.
- Facilitate learning to control negative emotions.
- Provide practice in applying spiritual principles to concerns and challenges faced in the wider community.
- Develop communication skills, in oral and written form, that reflect spiritual principles.
- Develop a spirit of mutual trust and love, especially with parents and peers.

## Group IV (Ages 15, 16, 17)

- Demonstrate increasing integration of objectives from Group III.
- Encourage self-motivation and regular routines in spiritual practice.
- Establish a sense of the interdependence of self and society; deepen the understanding of one's role in and responsibility to society.
- Increase ability to make *dharmic* choices when facing moral dilemmas.
- Demonstrate human values by meeting life challenges with love, confidence, and understanding of others.
- Establish habits to avoid waste of resources and continue all disciplines of the "Ceiling on Desires" programme, including:
  - Developing keen awareness of the effects of media, companions, and activities on one's choices.
  - Deepening the practice of controlling negative emotions.
- Foster excellence in all endeavours without straying into egoistic competition.
- Apply all aspects of the curriculum and develop awareness of self as an exemplar, through leadership roles. For example, assisting/mentoring roles with younger children.
- Provide increasing emphasis on selfless, loving service through:

- Participating in local and regional service projects and activities.
- Initiating service project with age-group peers.

### **The Sai Spiritual Education Teacher**

*When you teach the children, you must remember that you are engaged in a noble task for the sake of the children entrusted to your care. You must feel you are educating yourselves when you are educating the children. When you impart knowledge to the children, your own understanding of the subject improves. When you study information for teaching, you derive joy from that study. Always have the feeling that whatever you do for others is in reality a service done to the Divine that resides in everyone. When teachers do their duty in this spirit, they will imbue the children with the spirit of universal love.*

[Teachers' Training Camp, Prasanthi Nilayam, August 1983]

### **Teacher Beliefs and Actions**

*Teachers, be aware that the world is watching you with sharp eyes—your conduct, your practice, your words, and your deeds. Unless your conduct is exemplary, our whole Bal Vikas (SSE) programme will be undermined. How can such a teacher expect other parents to feel enthused about sending their children to class?*

[Spiritual Sadhana, 1978]

Who are the SSE teachers? Sai Spiritual Education teachers are members of the Sathya Sai Centres who are well-versed in Sathya Sai teachings. They are senior students on the path to Self-realisation. Teaching Sai Spiritual Education is part of their personal spiritual practices for purification and enlightenment.

The teacher serves as a vital role model and exemplar in the life of a child. Therefore, in the context of the SSE programme, the teacher should believe in the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba and live the spiritual principles He expounds.

### **Teacher Guidelines**

- Pray for guidance.
- Make a commitment to the ideals of Sathya Sai Baba.
- Be properly trained as an SSE teacher.
- Treat the children as your own.
- Observe the child's individual needs.
- Practice tolerance of the child's level of progress.
- Build self-confidence in the children.
- Use a positive approach in teaching.
- Make sure each child understands the lesson.
- Enforce discipline.
- Communicate with parents.
- Prepare materials ahead of time.
- Be punctual.
- Foster a positive class environment, conducive to the teachings of spiritual truths.
- Demonstrate equal-mindedness and broad acceptance.

## Involving Parents

*To instill in the minds of the young the value of prayer, humility, and loving service to others, the homes have to be the first schools. The parents have to be imbued with faith in the basic universal truth of all religions.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 3 April 1967

The lasting effect of the SSE programme upon the child depends upon parental involvement. What is taught in the SSE classroom is effective only if the parents support the teacher and the SSE activities and are willing to reinforce the teachings at home.

## Mutual Commitment and Responsibilities of Teachers and Parents

*Students are like the stones out of which the sculptor chisels the figures he wants. The sculptor produces a thing of beauty out of a piece of rough rock. Parents and teachers are the sculptors, who have to mould the shape and figure of the students for whom they are responsible.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 20 January 1986

1. The teacher shall provide a spiritual and experiential educational programme in cooperation with the Sathya Sai Centre by which the children will develop their divine nature following the guidelines of the SSE programme.
2. The parent agrees to reinforce the goals and objectives of the SSE programme in the home to see that the student attends SSE classes regularly and participates in regularly scheduled activities.
3. Teachers arrange occasional meetings with parents to discuss their child's progress, as well as to invite them on special occasions to sit in the class.
4. Teachers regularly inform parents about the goals and objectives of the class through lesson plans, written communications, or any other means that is mutually acceptable to teacher and parent.

*Teachers, if a child misses class, call the home and find out why the child was not in class.*

[Teachers' Training Camp, Prasanthi Nilayam, August 1983]

## Sai's Words to Teachers

### Q: What is the goal for the teacher?

*A: Students are very tender and pure-hearted; give them that which is sacred and pure ... Fill your hearts with love and you will be fit to teach. Even if you are forced to do discipline, do it through love. Let love be your guiding star.*  
[Spiritual Sadhana, 1978]

### Q: How can we have a positive approach to discipline?

*A: When ridiculing, reprimanding, or disciplining a pupil, teachers must try to picture themselves in the child's position and decide how they would have reacted to the same situation when they were students. This kind of self-inquiry is very useful.*  
– Sathya Sai Baba, 23 March 1984

### Q: What is the responsibility of a Sai Spiritual Education Teacher?

*A: Teachers must endeavor to help each pupil unfold their native talents and innate skills and recognise their latent potential. When you plant a sapling, you provide water and manure; you*

*ensure that the plant receives sunlight and air. With all this help, it is a wonder the plant does not turn into air, soil, manure or water. Instead, it becomes the same plant, true to its seed. As teachers, recollect your struggle to preserve and promote your individuality when you were a child. Keeping that in mind, deal accordingly with your students, who have the same problems and the same purpose.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 23 March 1984

**Q: What is the essence of the SSE teachers' message to the children?**

*A: Be convinced that there is a God, guiding and guarding us. Remember Him with gratitude. Pray to Him to render you pure. Love all, serve all. Keep good company. Visit places of worship and saintly people.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 1 January 1967

**Q: What qualities should teachers cultivate in themselves?**

*A: Above all, the teacher must be equipped with tolerance and a calm and quiet temper. Be prepared to face the buffeting of the environment without becoming ruffled ... When you must speak harshly to a child or parent because all other means of bringing home a point have failed, let your heart be soft, let it not be hardened by prejudice or hatred.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 6 June 1978

**Q: What are the qualities to cultivate in the children?**

*A: Children must have fear, humility, and faith. Fear of what? Fear of doing wrong, of falling into falsehood. Humility before whom? Before elders, teachers, parents. Faith in what? Faith in God, in your own strength, in your own victory.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 1 May 1969

**Q: Sometimes teachers find fault with other teachers. How should this be handled?**

*A: Teachers should not indulge in jealousy or fault-finding. They can undertake the task of teaching only after they have rid themselves of such traits. If teachers speak ill of other teachers and promote misunderstanding and factionalism, the children can never improve. Resolve now to adhere to the right path.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 21 November 1979

*Teachers should take care that the weeds of hatred, envy, and similar vices do not take root in their own heart. These weeds are rampant in the political field, and they creep into other fields too. Teachers should not form rival groups — some proud of their achievements, some envious of the praise others earn — that engage in recriminations. See others as your own brothers and sisters, for all are One when viewed as divine.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 20 November 1979







SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION