



PROTECT THE PLANET

Study Circle



SPIRITUAL ENERGY: THE SOUL

This guide has been designed to help Centres/Groups of the Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) facilitate a study circle on the topic of Spiritual Energy in relation to the human body. It has been developed as part of a series of study circle guides that looks into: physical, mental and spiritual energy – along with their impact on the environment. This is Part 3 of the Module 3 study guide series, with an estimated duration of one hour.

In the interest of time, facilitator may share all the quotes in this guide to participants as pre-read material and/or may opt to conduct more than one sessions, if required.

Part 3 will cover:

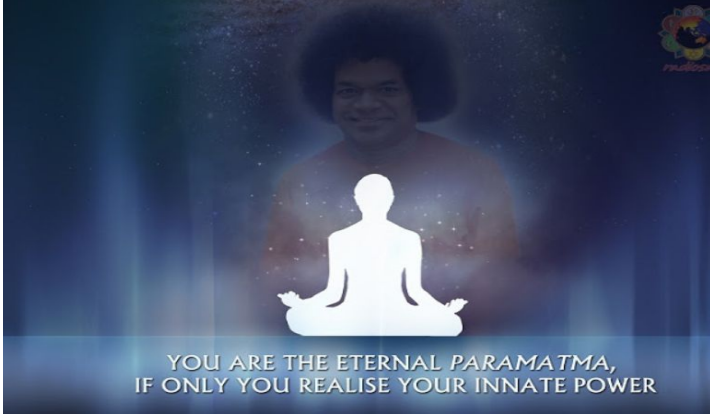
- What is spiritual energy,
- Knowing that God is the source of spiritual energy and tuning into the divine energy source within,
- Being aware of how this same divine energy pervades Nature,
- Realising that our internal state is responsible for creating the world around us,
- Understanding how to balance our internal energy (viz. physical, mental and spiritual) to maintain balance in Nature, and
- Knowing how to channel our internal energy to bring about positive change in the world around us.

PART 3

OPENING AND INTRODUCTION			
ACTIVITY	NOTE TO FACILITATOR	RESOURCES	ESTIMATED DURATION
3 OMs or silent sitting followed by an opening prayer	Whether <i>Omkar</i> or a minute of silent sitting is used depends on the audience this study circle is being delivered to. Either way, the objective of this activity is to help settle the group and establish group dynamics. This objective is the same if a prayer or short reading is used as an alternative.		1 minute
Introduce today's topic	<p>This study circle is part of the Serve the Planet (STP) initiative of the SSIO and is based on the theme 'Protect the Planet' with a focus on 'Energy.'</p> <p>The purpose of this study circle is to better understand the importance of our spiritual energy and how to connect to the spiritual source within, develop unity between the body, mind and spirit, maintain balance of internal energy to achieve balance in Nature and grow in spiritual energy to further our spiritual development.</p> <p>It is important to remain respectful and open at all times. Keep in mind that the Study Circle is about sharing and exploring the topic and inspiring each other rather than 'finding the right answers.'</p>		1 minute

TODAY'S DELIVERY

ACTIVITY	NOTE TO FACILITATOR	RESOURCES	ESTIMATED DURATION
<p>Question 1: <i>What is spiritual energy?</i></p>	<p>Pose this first question, using information below to support your discussions.</p> <p>Before we can define spiritual energy, let us take a look at the definition of spirit or soul, the very source from which this energy emanates.</p> <p>Spirit (or soul) is defined as ‘the non-physical or immaterial part of a person, which is the seat of emotions and character; the soul. It is the non-physical part of a person regarded as their true self and as capable of surviving physical death or separation, therefore immortal.’^{1,2}</p> <p>Sathya Sai Baba describes the soul thus:</p> <p>“The body is made up of five elements and is bound to perish sooner or later; but the Indweller has neither birth nor death. The Indweller has no attachment whatsoever and is the eternal witness. Truly speaking, the Indweller who is in the form of the <i>atma</i> (soul) is verily God Himself.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 37.1: January 1, 2004)</p> <p>So, in essence then, spiritual energy is:</p> <p>The universal life force known as Prana or ‘chi’ that permeates the soul. It is essentially the energy from the divine that pervades reality on all levels, including in inanimate objects.³</p> <p>Sathya Sai Baba describes spiritual energy thus:</p> <p>“Cosmic energy works in every person in the form of divine knowledge. Matter in all forms is only energy. Without atoms, you cannot have any matter, and in the atom, energy has the form of electron, proton, neutron, etc. Energy springs from the structure of the atomic constituents. For example, if you take water from the ocean in a vessel, it assumes its shape, and when breezes blow there are ripples on it, which manifests energy proportionate to the quantity of water in the vessel. But when the whirlwind rages over the ocean, the big waves can sink ships and pulverize cliffs. Scientists work only on the external source of energy, they do not investigate the internal sources. You go millions of miles into space, but you do not go half-an-inch within, where lies your strength, the <i>Atma Shakti</i> (force or power of the Universal Soul).” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 14.54: September 21, 1980)</p> <p>Video 1 can be played for a better understanding of spiritual energy. It is suggested to send the video link to participants in advance, so that they can watch it and</p>	<p>Video 1:</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIEhlw_d5N8 (5:17 mins)</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>

	<p>understand its contents before the study circle convenes.</p> <p>From the quotes and the video, we come to the awareness that the source of our internal spiritual energy is very much within us, divine and a part of God.</p>  <p>(Source: https://sathyasaiwithstudents.blogspot.com/2015/07/the-path-of-material-prosperity-vs-path_15.html#.W3qIT-gzZPa)</p>	<p>(*Note if no video facilities are available on-site, participants can be sent video links beforehand to watch at home prior to the study circle taking place)</p>	
<p>Discussion on: <i>Being aware of the spiritual source (divinity) within each of us</i></p>	<p>Initiate a discussion on how we can be more aware of the spiritual source within us and considering which of the following practices help us to heighten that awareness. (You can also discuss any techniques not mentioned in the list below.)</p> <p><u>The role of a healthy body and mind</u></p> <p>It is important to recognise the role of a healthy body and mind in our spiritual endeavour. Parts 1 and 2 of this series of Study Circle Guides have delved into the body and mind in-depth, so we will only revisit it briefly in this study circle, in terms of what Sathya Sai Baba has to say:</p> <p>“Every effort should be made to keep the human body healthy. Health is wealth. Wealth cannot be enjoyed by a person with poor health. Health is more important because it gives physical and mental strength to a person.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 27.3: January 21, 1994)</p> <p>“Mind is a conglomeration of thoughts of various kinds. Sometimes when the thoughts become exciting, it gets upset and throws itself into grief. But in truth, it is just a bundle of thoughts. Just as many threads spun together make up the cloth, so also many thoughts make the mind. No thoughts, no mind either. A pure mind is one with good thoughts or God-thoughts. We have to eschew all bad ideas and bad thoughts and harbour only good thoughts. You should exercise your intelligence and discrimination on which thoughts are good and which are bad.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 15.8: 1981, Divine Discourse, Dharmakshethra)</p>		<p>15 minutes</p>

Prayer

“When a man falls into a well, of what use is it if he controls his voice and his emotions and whispers quietly, ‘I have fallen into this well, I have fallen into this well. I am in great danger. Please save me?’ No one will be able to hear or save him. He must shout full-throated, with all the anguish he is experiencing and with the extreme desire to be saved, ‘I HAVE FALLEN INTO THE WELL! SAVE ME! SAVE ME SOME ONE!’ Then can he hope to get succour? Similarly, when you are caught in the coils of this world, when you have fallen into this deep well of worldly misery, shout with all your might, with all your heart, that you may be saved by God. There is no use muttering faintly and half-heartedly, ‘Save me, save me; I am floundering in this *samsaar* (worldly life).’ When the prayer comes shrieking through the heart, help is assured.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 13.24: Nov 14, 1976)

Meditation

Sathya Sai Baba has shared with us three types of meditation practices, which are:

1. Jyothi light meditation

Access the guided Jyothi light meditation here – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xi6XawC2SUg> (10 mins 23 secs)

2. Soham meditation

Hear Sathya Sai Baba speak about and conduct a guided Soham meditation here – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOGzVBXNybA> (0–7.22 mins)

3. Name and form meditation

Refer to **Appendix A** to see Sathya Sai Baba’s advice on practising Soham meditation

Appendix A

Devotional Singing and Chanting God’s Name

“*Samkeerthan* is the process of singing that originates in the heart, not from the lips or tongue. It is the expression of the joyous thrill that wells up from the heart when the Glory of God is remembered. It is the spontaneous manifestation of inner ecstasy. No attention is paid to the blame or praise that others may give. It does not seek the admiration or the appreciation of the listeners. It is sung for one’s own joy, one’s own satisfaction, one’s own delight.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 13.24: November 14, 1976)

“The *Atma* (Divine), which is inherent in man, can be seen only when the ash of ego, anger, desire, and body attachment is blown away by chanting the name of the Lord.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 31.44: November 24, 1998)

Love and Service

“For the human being love and service are like two wings, with the help of which, one should strive to realise the spirit.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 28.34: November 21, 1995)

“When the mind turns away from the senses to the *buddhi* (intellect) for enlightenment, *ānanda* (bliss) starts to flow and the glory of *Atma* is revealed. *Buddhi* promotes the search inward. While the sense organs—the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the tensile skin—all open out towards external objects, true *sādhanā* (spiritual discipline) consists in turning the vision inwards, in fact, to swim against the on-rushing current. It is seldom realised how near is the goal of Self-realisation when once the sense organs are turned inwards. Students should realise the importance of service to realise the Divine. It makes one’s life significant and purposeful.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 16.18: July 24, 1983)

Yoga and Breathing Exercises (*Pranayama*)

“In *Patanjali* Yoga it is said that we should exercise control over the senses and also achieve unity of the senses. Unity...unity...unity... That is why it is said – the proper study of mankind is man. What is this mankind? It is the harmony of three – heart, word and action. Therefore, out of this unity we will develop purity; through purity we will step into Divinity. The moment we step into Divinity, the enmity will be set away. Therefore, the *Patanjali* Yoga sutra confers the Divinity. So, to the extent possible, the young students – boys and girls, in times of anger or difficulties, they should be able to tolerate and forbear, face it boldly and earn the patience to move forward. In the beginning stage, you may find it a bit difficult. As you practice, gradually it becomes a habit. – Sathya Sai Baba (Summer Showers 1993.12: May 30, 1993)⁴

“Yoga is not merely a physical exercise. *Pranayama* and *Pratyahara* have to go along with it. *Pranayama* is the process of inhaling and exhaling air. There are three steps, namely: *Purakam*, *Rechakam* and *Kumbhakam*. *Purakam* is inhalation, *Rechakam* is exhalation and *Kumbhakam* is the retention of the inhaled breath. How should this be performed? One should not attempt to do *Pranayama* reading from books, without the guidance of a guru. It is very dangerous. We can keep a timer and note the time we take to inhale. You can do it for a duration that is comfortable to you, there is no strict rule that inhalation should take a certain duration. But the breath has to be retained for the same duration you took to inhale. And the same time taken for retention should be taken for exhalation. These three processes should take equal intervals of time. Watch... (Swami demonstrates)! You should not gasp or become

breathless, it should be natural. This has to be practiced, and with time you have to take breath through one nostril alone and exhale through the other. It is referred to as *Ida, Pingala* and *Sushumna*. The air taken in goes through the nerves *Ida and Pingala*, and in between is retained in the *Sushumna*. When there is any mistake in this process, the lungs get damaged. Not only this, even the brain gets affected to an extent.” – Sathya Sai Baba (Summer Showers, 1993.12: May 30, 1993)⁴

Practicing the Five Human Values in Thought, Word and Deed

“The five values of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Nonviolence are related to different inner instruments of the body. The value of Truth is expressed through speech or words. The value of righteousness is expressed through the body. This is related to the physical sheath. Peace can be experienced only in the mental plane. For *Sathya, Dharma* and *Shanti* one has to purify the instruments of speech, body and mind. Love comes out of the mental and bliss sheath. Non-violence comes from bliss sheath. Love (*prema*) flows as an undercurrent in all the inner instruments and purifies them. So, all the five values are having relationship with the five sheaths (*kosas*).

- *Shanti* comes from *Manomaya Kosa*
- *Sathya* comes from *Vijnanamaya Kosa*
- *Dharma* comes from *Annamaya Kosa*
- *Prema* comes from *Praanamaya* and *Manomaya Kosa*
- *Ahimsa* comes from *Anandamaya Kosa*

In these five sheaths are encased three types of bodies (*sarira*): physical (*sthoola*), subtle (*sookshma*) and causal (*kaarana*). *Annamaya Kosa* represents physical body. It is like the tyre of a lorry. If you increase intake of food, it grows and the weight of the body increases. Divinity is there in all the sheaths of the body. It is Constant Integrated Awareness in different forms in speech, action and feelings.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 26.13: April 12, 1993)

The Importance of Good Company

“Man, by Nature is pure and sacred. But he acquires evil qualities by associating himself with bad company. It is said ‘Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are.’ Tell me the type of people you associate with, I can tell you the type of person you are. It is therefore necessary that you associate yourself with good people in all your activities. It is the company that makes you good or bad. Therefore, keep away from bad company. Join the company of those who have a pure heart and sacred feelings.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 39.10: May 21, 2006)

<p>Question 2: How do we recognise the divinity (or pervasiveness of divine energy) in Nature?</p>	<p>Allow the participants to take 2–3 minutes to reflect on their current views and relationship with Nature, after providing the prompts below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we see the divinity that is inherent in Nature? • How do we relate to and connect with Nature? • Do we feel compelled to serve Nature in the same way as we want to serve God? <p>Encourage sharing of views before proceeding to use the information below to guide your discussions on the inherent divinity in Nature and the interconnectedness of Man, God and Nature.</p> <p><u>Introduction:</u> Though we see Nature as being outside of us, Nature is very much a part of us and intricately weaved into the fabric of our lives - not only in all that it gives us, but also because it is pervaded by the same divine spiritual energy that exists within man.</p> <p>Knowing the divinity present in Nature</p> <p>“The universe is full of energy or power. The Divine power is all pervasive. Just as sugar is present in sweets, the divine is present in everything. That is why God is called the <i>rasa</i> (sweet essence) of everything in the universe.” – Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 28.15: May 30, 1995)</p> <p>Being aware of the interconnectedness amongst man, Nature and God</p> <p>Just as hands, eyes, nose and mouth are the limbs of the body; likewise, all human beings are the limbs of society. Society is the limb of Nature and Nature is the limb of God. Seeing this vast Nature, one should not think that it is different from God. One should understand the fundamental truth that Divinity pervades the entire creation. – Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 33.19: November 20, 2000)</p> <p>“Everyone should realise the integral relationship between Nature, Man and God. They are inextricably interrelated. Take a simple example. Here is a tumbler. It contains water. It is on the table. The tumbler has been placed for the sake of the water. If one does not need water, there will be no need for the tumbler. If there is no table, the tumbler cannot be placed on it. You may ask the questions: Is the table important, or the tumbler, or the water in it? Water is important. The water needs the tumbler as a container. Nature is like the table. The <i>Jeevi</i> (individual) is the tumbler. The Divine exists in the form of <i>Naara</i> (water). There is no use for the tumbler unless there is water.” – Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 16.32: December 31, 1983)</p>		<p>10 minutes</p>
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Deepening our spiritual relationship amongst Man, Nature and God

“There is nothing except God. Nature is His Manifestation. Man must recognise God in all human beings and in all else that exists.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 14.9: August 13, 1978)

When we start connecting to the spiritual energy within, we realise the fact that we are a manifestation of God and that the same divinity that is within us is also present in other creatures in Nature and Nature as a whole. Spiritual energy and oneness of body, mind and spirit highlights the importance of having a healthy relationship with Nature. If our environment is clean, it has a positive impact on all the other layers of our existence. As a result, they come into balance and we experience a greater sense of peace and connection within ourselves and with others around us. In ancient culture, the sages have always honoured Nature, mountains, rivers, trees, the sun, and the moon. It is only when we start moving away from our connection to Nature and ourselves, that we begin polluting and destroying the environment. We need to re-establish our connection to our society, Nature and God and thereby experience supreme spiritual happiness.

Nature has its own ways of balancing. If you observe Nature, you will see that the five elements that form its basis are opposed to each other. Water destroys fire and fire destroys air. Then there are so many species in Nature — the birds, reptiles, mammals — and all these different species are hostile towards each other, yet Nature balances them out. We need to learn from Nature how to balance opposing forces, both within ourselves and in the world around us.

Not only is Nature pervaded by the same divine principle, it has a lot to teach us:

“Nature’s role is to help humanity, the crowning achievement of the evolutionary process, to realise the Divinity immanent in creation. Mountains help humans to build houses by providing stone slabs quarried from them. Trees provide the timber for construction of houses and also firewood for domestic use. Among animate beings, every creature, from an ant to an elephant, is of assistance to humans in one way or another. Cows provide nourishing milk. Bullocks are useful for ploughing the fields and helping to grow food crops. All other creatures like birds, fish, sheep and others are serving humans in different ways. Seen in this light it will be clear that all things in creation are helpful to the human being in leading his or her life. Even the sun and the moon are serving the human.” – Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 21.19: July 12, 1988)

<p>Discussion on:</p> <p><i>Understanding the relationship between internal energy (physical, mental and spiritual) and external energy (Nature)</i></p>	<p>Discuss this with the group, placing an emphasis on why it is important to understand this relationship.</p> <p>We have heard the phrase, ‘As within, so without’ from the Greek Philosopher Socrates. The subtle lesson Socrates hinted at was that you could not deepen your knowledge of the outside world without deepening your self-knowledge.⁵</p> <p>We know that the world outside is simply a reflection of our inner world/state. This is the ‘reflection, reaction, resound’ that Sathya Sai Baba talks about.</p> <p>“Because of man’s misconduct and immoral behaviour, there is pollution everywhere – in air, water, land, and food. All the five elements have been severely contaminated, consequent to man’s unbecoming behaviour. If man behaves properly, is pollution of the elements conceivable? It is all due to the extensive prevalence of immoral feelings and improper behaviour. The sharp decline of virtues like love, compassion, and forbearance is directly responsible for the widespread pollution that one sees today. In fact, one might even say that the five elements are afraid of man! The five elements as God created them are all pure and sacred. There is nothing wrong with them whatsoever. It is man’s misconduct that has caused them all to become polluted. Impurity within gets reflected as pollution without.” – Sathya Sai Baba (Summer Showers 2000.2: May 15, 2000)</p> <p>Hence, our internal energy, including our physical, mental and spiritual energies, is important not only for us but also for the world around us and becomes an agent for change if we can keep it in balance. The best way to do this is to stay connected to the source of that energy through the ways covered in Question 2.</p>		<p>5 minutes</p>
<p>Discussion on:</p> <p><i>Need for transforming spiritual energy into action</i></p>	<p>Once our internal energy is in balance and we are connected to the divine source constantly, our reverence for Mother Nature and appreciation for the things she provides us will grow. This will make us want to protect and help Mother Nature in the same way that our heart and hands stretch out to help another human being in distress. As a result, we will be more mindful of our thoughts and actions and how we can change those to make powerful choices that help us spiritually and at the same time help the planet.</p> <p>Coupled with this is the realisation that the threat to our planet is very much here and now, not in some distant future.</p> <p>Not a day goes by when we do not hear of the huge environmental challenges facing our planet. But these are</p>		<p>5 minutes</p>

	<p>not simply stories we read about in newspapers or watch on television. Behind every environmental crisis or disaster are people who are suffering. Take the water crisis that Cape Town faced earlier this year (2018), or the Indonesian earthquake and tsunami at the end of September 2018. These are in addition to the daily challenges of pollution and rising temperatures our planet has been experiencing. Watch the two videos available at this link to see how climate change affects us and what we can do about it -</p> <p>https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-45775309?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cmj34zmwm1zt/climate-change&link_location=live-reporting-story</p> <p>“Man's misadventures have created several problems for the entire mankind. He has polluted the five elements causing havoc on the earth. There is pollution everywhere in air, water, food and so on. His misdeeds coupled with his evil thoughts and feelings have degraded human life on the earth. If man acts in the righteous way, there will be no pollution at all.” – Sathya Sai Baba (Summer Showers 2000.2: May 15, 2000)</p>		
<p>Question 3: <i>How can we achieve maintaining the balance in Nature?</i></p>	<p>Pose the following question to the group, allowing the participants to take 1-2 minutes to reflect on their current views, followed by providing the prompts below:</p> <p>What holds us back from making the simple changes in our daily living habits that can make a huge difference to the planet we live in?</p> <p>Use the information below to support your discussion:</p> <p>Changing short-term behaviours that benefit the environment into long-term habits can become a powerful way to serve the planet. Here is how:</p> <p><u>Choosing to go the extra mile</u></p> <p>A lot of the choices we make are based on convenience. Not carrying our shopping bags with us, buying that cup of coffee without remembering to take our flask with us, buying that bottle of water when we could just wait 10 minutes to reach home. “If we all worked to put long-term impacts before short-term convenience, we really could make the world a better place.”⁶</p> <p><u>Controlling our desires</u></p> <p>The underlying foundation of this entire ‘Serve the Planet’ initiative is based on ‘Ceiling on Desires’. Man’s unlimited desires have led to the current state of the planet, unless we can cut back on our desires. “In its annual report, Worldwatch Institute says the cult of consumption and greed could wipe out any gains from government action</p>		<p>5-8 minutes</p>

	<p>on climate change or a shift to a clean energy economy.”⁷</p> <p>“Man has to consider himself as a limb of the society and help in the welfare of society, just as the organs of one's body are used for one's well-being. Again, society is a limb of <i>Prakriti</i> (Nature) and <i>Prakriti</i> is a limb of <i>Paramaatma</i> (Supreme Lord). Thus, there is close relationship between man and God. Nature is more progressive than man, and to protect Nature, man has to exploit it within limits. When man tampers with Nature recklessly, it reacts adversely, and trouble arises. In order to protect Nature, man has to practise ceiling on desires. He should not trigger the negative aspect of Nature.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 26.3: January 21, 1993)</p> <p><u>Distinguishing between ‘want’ and ‘need’</u></p> <p>Sathya Sai Baba has on countless occasions said, ‘less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure’. This is only possible if we learn to distinguish between the things that are necessary for our progress (both material and spiritual) and the things that are nice to have but not really required.</p> <p><u>Even one person can make a huge impact</u></p> <p>If we ever doubt the power of one person to make a difference, it is worth reminding ourselves of the great leaders that have made a change simply through the power of their own belief and faith in pursuing the right path. Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Malala Yousafzai all come to mind, among countless others. As Dalai Lama XIV has said: “If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito.”⁸</p>		
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION			
Closing summary of today’s session	<p>In the Module 3 series of Study Circle Guides, we covered:</p> <p>Study Guide 1: Physical energy – where it comes from, the role of food, eating to maximise our energy levels, the impact of sleep/rest, exercise, disease and the environment on our physical energy levels. Practising ‘Ceiling on Desires’ in relation to physical energy and how we can direct this energy towards the service of the planet.</p> <p>Study Guide 2: Mental energy – what generates mental energy, the factors influencing the strength of our mental energy, various means to preserve and cultivate our mental energy, understanding how mental energy travels, and how a healthy mind can be of benefit to the environment.</p> <p>Study Guide 3: Spiritual energy – what is spiritual energy, knowing that God is the source of spiritual energy and</p>		3 minutes

strengthening our connection to Him, being aware of how this same divine energy pervades Nature, realising that our internal state is responsible for creating the world around us, how to balance our internal energy (viz. physical, mental and spiritual) and use it to bring about change in the world around us.

In closing then, we learnt that this human birth is sacred. That it offers us the opportunity to realise the highest spiritual truths. However, for us to individually and collectively make spiritual progress, the human race needs to survive. As man depends on Nature for all its basic needs and in light of the fact there are huge environmental challenges currently facing us, the future survival of the human species is uncertain to say the least.

The good news is that individuals like you and me are blessed with a human body, with its physical and mental faculties and a divine *atma* (soul) at its core. This *atma*, which is the very source of divine energy can be such a powerful agent for change, provided we direct the physical, mental and spiritual energies that are latent within it to serve Nature and the world around us. We pray that our beloved Sathya Sai Baba – our God, Guru and the very source of the energy we have spoken about at length in these study circle guides – blesses us with the ability to keep our bodies healthy, our minds sharp and our spiritual energy always connected to Him so that each of us may now help to serve Mother Nature in the way she most requires it to heal from the destruction that we as a human race have caused her from our excessive greed. Let us pray that by placing a ceiling on our desires, we not only help the planet but continue to scale the spiritual heights that lead to supreme love and peace and ultimately to our supreme self, God.

“All are the children of Mother Earth and should follow the selfless activity of the earth, which rotates on its own axis and goes around the sun at sixty-six-thousand miles per hour. By this constant motion we get day and night and variations in the seasons without which we cannot have food crops, which sustain humankind. As children of the earth, people should learn the lesson of *tyāga* (sacrifice) from Mother Earth. Without sacrifice it is difficult to sustain life itself.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 27.10: April 11, 1994)

“Nature’s role is to help humanity, the crowning achievement of the evolutionary process, to realise the Divinity immanent in creation. Mountains help humans to build houses by providing stone slabs quarried from them. Trees provide the timber for construction of houses and also firewood for domestic use. Among animate beings, every creature, from an ant to an elephant, is of

	<p>assistance to humans in one way or another. Cows provide nourishing milk. Bullocks are useful for ploughing the fields and helping to grow food crops. All other creatures like birds, fish, sheep and others are serving humans in different ways. Seen in this light it will be clear that all things in creation are helpful to the human being in leading his or her life. Even the sun and the moon are serving the human.” – Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 21.19: July 12, 1988)</p>		
<p>Question:</p> <p>Why is the prayer for peace (<i>shanti</i>) repeated thrice (<i>Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti</i>)?</p>	<p>Pose this question to the group. Once participants have shared their thoughts, the facilitator can share the below thoughts.</p> <p>It is chanted as “Om, Shanti, Shanti, Shantihi.” Peace is chanted for: purity of the body, purity of the mind, and purity of the spirit. In other words, peace is prayed for in the physical, mental, and spiritual planes.</p> <p>So, the next time, when you chant <i>Shanti</i> prayer, connect to your body, mind and spirit.</p>		2 minutes
CLOSE	<p>Closing prayer or reading.</p> <p>Prayer for universal peace – <i>Om Shanti, Shanti, Shantihi.</i></p>		1 minute

Note: Ideally there should be two facilitators in groups of ten or more participants. The first facilitator conducts the study circle. The second facilitator observes the group’s dynamics and informs the first facilitator of any lethargy and confusion from participants. The second facilitator also conducts the opening activity (e.g. *Omkar*) shares insights at the end. This helps give variety to the participants, but also allows the first facilitator space to capture important feedback and learning points to share as insights.

Appendix A

Name and Form Meditation

“The place for meditation should be a little elevated — an inch or two — from the ground. Place a mat of *dharbha* grass (a matty, long grass grown in India) on it, spread a deerskin on the mat, and lay a thin white cloth on the skin. Sit on it in the lotus posture (*padmasana*). The right foot must be above the left and the left foot above the right. The fingers of the hand must be in close touch with one another and the hands should be placed in front. The eyes must be either half open or fully closed. Then, by means of mental massage, relax the neck, shoulders, hands, chest, teeth, stomach, fingers, back, thighs, knees, calves, and feet. After this, one has to meditate on one’s own favourite name and form, with Om added. When this is being done, there should be no mental wanderings; one must be stable and quiet. No thought of past events, no trace of anger or hatred, and no memory of sorrow should be allowed to interfere. Even if they intrude, they should not be considered at all; to counteract them, entertain thoughts that will feed one’s enthusiasm for meditation. Of course, this may appear difficult at first. The best time for meditation is the quiet hours before dawn, between 3 and 5 a.m. One can awake, say, at 4 a.m. First of all, sleep has to be subdued. This is very necessary. In order to keep the hours unchanged, one may set the alarm clock for 4 a.m. and rise. Even then, if sleep continues to bother, its effect can be overcome by means of a bath in cold water. Not that it is essential to bathe; it is needed only when sleep gives much trouble. If in this manner the path of meditation (*dhyana*) is rigorously followed, it is possible for one to win the grace of the Lord very quickly.” – Sathya Sai Baba (Dhyana Vahini, Chapter 1: The Power of Meditation)

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