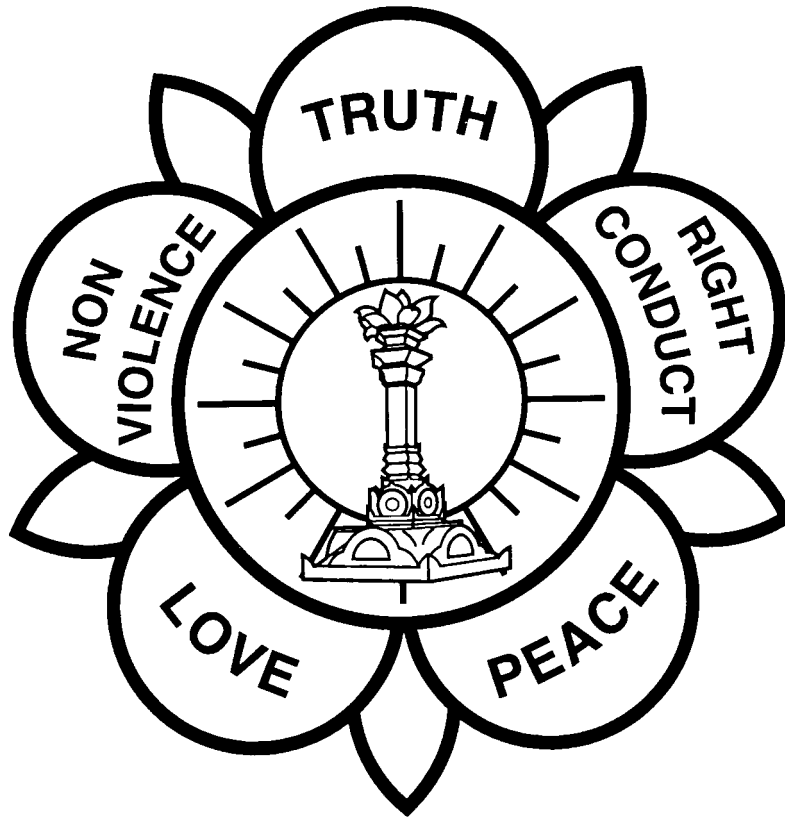


Sathya Sai Baba Centers of Northern California & Nevada
Special Study Circles

Nine Point Code of Conduct



Sai Ram!

Nine point Code of Conduct

Introduction

Bhagavan Baba while placing the Sai movement throughout the world on a firm footing with established Universal Principles, such as those shown below, has also proclaimed as a guiding light for a devotee's spiritual and personal development - The Nine Point Code of Conduct and The Ten-fold Path to Divinity.

Let us first examine the Universal Principles which will give a deeper understanding of the very purpose of the Sai movement and how each and every devotee contributes to the growth and success of the movement.

Universal Principles

- ☞ Belief in GOD - for there is only ONE GOD for all mankind - though He may be called by many names.
- ☞ Follow sincerely the respective religions we are born into or we have chosen and to live our daily lives in consonance with the teachings of good behavior and morality.
- ☞ To respect all other religions - for no religion advocates the negative and low qualities of man. All urge mankind to follow the ideals of high Human Values.
- ☞ Perform selfless service to the poor, the sick and the needy, without thought of reward or fame.
- ☞ Cultivate in our lives the values of TRUTH, RIGHT CONDUCT, PEACE, LOVE and NON-VIOLENCE and to promote these among all.

With this macro understanding of Sai ideals it is desirable that we explore the inner significance of the Nine Point Code of Conduct, and the manner of its practice. Perhaps, this may create a process of self-purification or internal cleansing for all Sai devotees, benefiting individuals, families and community.

1. Meditate and pray daily

Whatever religion one belongs to, whatever your spiritual heritage, the necessity to still the mind, to control the vagaries of thoughts, to make the “monkey mind” do our bidding and not what it wills, is a basic spiritual practice. Divinity resides and reflects in man - but we are unable to see this reflection of Divinity in the pool of our consciousness because the lake of our mind is subject to incessant storms, its surface ripped apart by wild lashing waves. Only when the waters of the lake are still, can the reflection of the moon be seen on its surface - likewise the reflection of divinity on the calm surface of our consciousness. But if we merely do meditation and still our mind is this enough? The reflection of the moon will not be seen, even in the still water, if the waters of the lake are filled with dirt and pollutants. Thus, two qualities are required to see the reflection of the moon:

- ☞ the surface of the water must be still, and
- ☞ the lake must be free from dirt, debris, froth and pollutants.

Baba has placed meditation as the first code for those who wish to glimpse the Divine within. However, stilling the mind (the waters of the lake) is not enough - a recycling plant

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must be erected beside the lake to clean the water. Much of the other codes of conduct relate to this process of “cleansing the water” - not only for ourselves but for our family members also.

Bhagavan in various discourses has instructed devotees on various techniques of meditation: - on Jyothi, Soham, Breath etc. Devotees wishing to pursue the meditation and its technique should make attempts to listen to tapes/cassettes that are available or read books on it. See *Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume VI, pages 239-240; Volume X, pages 347-350.*

And what of prayer? Pray in whatever way familiar to you ... this will reinforce your meditation. You can chant mantras, sing bhajans, traditional hymns, kirtans, or just speak to God in your own way - whatever makes you feel closer to Him and makes you truly feel that you are communicating with Him.

You can do this silently, or loudly-so that others hearing your prayers may benefit by thinking of God at least momentarily. Also your loud chants/prayers at home will help to create positive and divine vibrations in the environment and be of benefit to those who live in your house.

But most important of all do not take this daily task as a burden, something you carry around your neck like a proverbial albatross.

Prayers, bhajans etc. should be done joyously, giving you a sense of upliftment - lightness. God is “Bliss” - “Joy” - “PEACE” and when you think of Him and sing or speak His name

the same Bliss, Joy and Peace should fill your being ... if this does not happen something is wrong with your attitude or method of prayer ... reflect on this and adjust yourself accordingly.

The hunger for prayer - to communicate with God - should be equal to the hunger that we experience to fill our belly. We eat 3 or 4 times a day for our bodily health, or to satisfy bodily hunger, pray at least twice a day to feed the “soul” or the inner being. There will come a time when every moment, every act, every word, becomes a prayer for you - then you may dispense with the “twice a day” - but until that moment of perfection - keep the fire of prayer burning.

2. Have devotional singing and prayer with family members once a week

There is an age old axiom, - “*the family that prays together stays together*”. Bhagavan is merely trying to remind us of this forgotten truth. In the early days families used to eat together and pray together. Today, the notion of every man for himself seems to have crept into families too.

Some Sai devotees have expressed this problem - “I am the only Baba devotee in my house - the rest refuse to accept Him - how can I keep to this code?” Bhagavan does not say pray to Him! Have your family prayers in the traditional method of worship, be it Hindu, Christian or whatever. You need not even have Baba’s photo there, if this will help achieve the objective of weekly family prayer and family unity. Have HIM in your heart.

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Also, it does not matter if all refuse to join. Start the family prayer with whoever is willing. Keep to a fixed day and time and continue with faith - let Baba do the rest. Many such family prayers that started with one or two now, include the whole family. If need be start alone and leave the “door” open for others to hear your prayer and to join. The important thing to remember is not to be disheartened by the attitudes of others who do not join. Give them time! Not all buds bloom at the same time when the sun shines - but the sun does not give up - it shines daily and silently and over time - all will bloom! However, it is important to show that you have bloomed - through your prayers and other spiritual practices. Your family members should see the visible, positive transformation in you - that your sadhana has made you more loving, more kind, more gentle, and more understanding. This will have a greater effect on nonparticipating family members and make them join you, than your actual “prayer” itself - i.e. make your whole day an extension of your morning and evening prayers. Slowly, they will be drawn to the power that has transformed you and will join you. If on the other hand, you as a wife or husband or son, daughter or father, after starting prayers, after becoming “born again”, become intolerant, demanding, insensitive to the physical or worldly and human needs of others, and take a “holier than thou” attitude, then you will drive your family members away from your prayer - and you yourself will never enjoy the benefit of your sadhana. Moderation and love should be the key guiding factors.

3. Participate in Sathya Sai Education

programs organized by the Center for children of Sai devotees

The reason for this code is obvious when one becomes aware that what is taught to the children in the Sai Spiritual Education classes are:

- ☪ one’s own religion - chanting of prayers, songs, hymns, lives of great saints etc.
- ☪ knowledge and respect for other religions.
- ☪ human values - respect for parents and elders, cleanliness, good conduct, confidence, cooperation, self-help etc.
- ☪ The Life and Message of Bhagavan Baba. All these are taught through sophisticated, dynamic programs where only gurus who have undergone a specific training program will be qualified to teach.

Many Sai devotees, and leaders of Sai Centers around the world are in their positions, devoid of any in-depth knowledge of the great religious, and spiritual traditions of the world. Only their love for Bhagavan, often fostered through his physical presence and love, have put them on their spiritual path. However, the children of today, the leaders of tomorrow, may not be so lucky - they may not have the opportunity of the direct physical proximity of Bhagavan Baba to foster their love, devotion, their thirst for spiritual knowledge and world welfare ... the crowds of devotees would be too great. Their spirituality must thus be fostered from within, and the Sai Spiritual Education program is so designed as to create a new generation of spiritually motivated and dynamic youngsters who will become a credit to themselves, their families, society and nation - and uphold all

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the great human values that can make man great, grand and Godly. No parent should want less for her child and no parent should sacrifice the future destiny of their children by giving more importance to karate lessons, taekwando classes, dancing, swimming, tuition etc. and thus say that they have no time to spare to send their children to classes designed to mold their very destiny as children all can be proud of. It is in this context that this code requires all children of Sai devotees to attend these classes.

4. Participate in community work and other Sai organization programs

This is merely a codification of an injunction that is in every religion of the world - to serve man and thus serve God - "Service to man is service to God".

Bhagavan Baba has prescribed that the qualification of membership of a Sai organization is not just to attend bhajans and to love Baba, but to accept the 9 codes as part of our life and to perform 4 hours of Service every week to the poor, the sick and the needy. Perhaps, among all of Baba's injunctions, this one separates those "devotees" who wish to hop along on one leg, i.e., making bhajans (bhakti) their primary sadhana and those who are "members" - the "thirsty" seekers, striding forward in their spiritual journey on the two legs of bhakti (devotional love) and karma (selfless service) towards the inevitable prize of Jnana (divine knowledge); while practicing dhyana (meditation - refer code 1) and finally attaining liberation - moksha.

Bhagavan has declared "Hands that help are holier than lips that pray".

Very often devotees sit back and wait for the Sai Center leaders to organize service activities, and even when these are organized many find a hundred excuses not to do, instead of finding the one reason to do! Devotees should realize that this service aspect makes up part of the divine formula for salvation and God's Grace and they should in fact be urging, and forcing "inertia bound Center leaders" to organize meaningful service activities to fulfill their spiritual yearnings.

As for leaders of Sai Centers who have taken up the divine task of leading a Sai center - they should be fully cognizant of their divine responsibility. Members depend upon them to show the way and set the example and direction. If by inertia or by neglect, Center leaders do not fulfill their responsibility of organizing meaningful service activities to allow devotees to channel their spiritual yearning, then such Center leaders not only face the karmic consequence of their own inaction - their own lack of sadhana, but face the possible risk of absorbing all the karmic consequences of members of their Centers, for stunting the spiritual development of those who look up to them for guidance. It is thus wise for those who hold positions in Sai Centers and do not fulfill the task they have assumed for themselves (or even elected), to step down and allow those with the time, the energy and initiative to take over the running of the Center in line with Sai ideals.

5. Attend at least once a month

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group devotional singing organized by the Center

This perhaps, is the only code that virtually every devotee fulfills in good measure and then some! But what is significant is that through this code, the entire concept of Bhajan singing, the foundation of the Sai movement, has been brought into its true perspective... i.e. that it is only the foundation. By placing the requirement on "at least once a month", Bhagavan has given the directions for the future, i.e., that devotees should not remain at the Bhajan level - the foundation. The foundation is only valid if a superstructure is built on the basis of the foundation ... and all the other codes are the brick and mortar for the spiritual superstructure for all our lives. Without the superstructure, the foundation itself becomes desolate ground, overgrown with weeds and other undergrowth harboring snakes and insects, benefiting neither the devotees nor those they come in contact with. In fact the pursuance of Bhajans alone as a principal sadhana, ignoring the total "integral yoga" that Bhagavan has called for, to still the agitation's of the mind to uproot the weeds and to flush out the insects of excessive desire or lust, anger, attachment, greed, jealousy, envy, backbiting, trying to destroy the good work being done by others etc., can lead to many devotees slipping backwards in spirituality, rather than moving forward, towards greater internal peace, expanding love and unity of vision.

One has only to witness some "senior" devotee in most religious and spiritual organizations (including Sai Centers) who, after many years of "actively languishing" at only the Bhajan or superficial prayer level -

continue to display no characteristics indicating their pursuance of a divine path. Rather, people who were for example good friends or even relations, before joining a Sai Center, now have become enemies. What a sad testimony of people being devoted to the "Guru form" rather than the message of the Guru. Thus, it is vital that devotees understand the significance of this "Bhajan" code, place it in the perspective of their total spiritual practice and carry on moving forward. Also the "once a month Bhajan" should not end there - once a month or once a week, the sincere aspirant must constantly be "tuned in" to the Devotional songs, their lips or their minds constantly "singing" of Divinity, analyzing the meaning of the songs and their messages, and using it as a guide, as a beacon of love in their daily lives. Only if Bhajans are used as such will they bring about the necessary results, the softening of the heart, the gentleness of speech, the kindness of thoughts, the yearning to serve. If the name and message of God is constantly in the mind, the cleansing effect will most certainly take effect, and devotees will see their lives their character and behavior transformed; without this transformation, the devotional songs have little or no spiritual significance.

6. Study Sai literature regularly

This should not be interpreted in a narrow or chauvinistic way that only books about Sai must be studied. Needless to say all Sai devotees are expected to study the life, messages and teachings of Swami. However, the literature of all the great religions and saints should also be part of our reading material.

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In short “Sai literature” should be interpreted as literature that helps provide Spirituality, Awakening, and Inspiration:- any literature that falls under this category should qualify as Sai literature.

The “regular study” - refers, not merely to individual study, but also participation in “Study Circles” organized by the Center. Some devotees, feeling that what takes place in a study circle is too basic or too simple for them, keep away. Well, if one thinks they know more than others, all the more the reason to participate fully, and help others to rise to your level of understanding ... do not be selfish.

Some find the study circle too advanced - here again - absorb what you can, up to your ability. If you grasp only one paragraph of what is spoken or read, reflect on it and put it into practice, you benefit more than the person who only listens and perhaps, understands all the words but does not reflect on the meaning or put any of it into practice.

Sravana (listening or absorbing), Manana (reflecting, digesting), Nidhiyadasana (putting into practice or acting on the message) are the three stages in spirituality: the person who remains in the first stage, remains stunted. It is thus not the quantity of knowledge you absorb, but the quality and the degree you reflect and integrate the message into your life, that is critical.

7. Speak softly and lovingly to everyone

This is an interesting code that underwent a slight metamorphosis during Bhagavan’s 60th Birthday. In the original code the words were “to speak softly with everyone”. It appears that many mistook this to mean the “loudness of the voice” and neglected the aspect of the “harshness of the words”.

A dog barks loudly on seeing its master - but all that loudness is an expression of love. A snake hisses very softly but its soft sound is a forerunner of venom ... full of poisonous implications.

The code has now been placed in its proper perspective not condemning those with natural loud, projecting voices, and exalting those who, even in anger and hate, do not have the capacity of “voice projection”. Today the code is very clear - speak with love, lower your volume if you can - but love is the essence. Harsh words screech even if spoken softly. All devotees of God must realize that they cannot stand in front of their altar and say however softly, “I love you God; I hate the other fellow but I love you”. Such a love will not fructify.

8. Do not talk ill of others especially in their absence

Backbiting, character assassination, falsehood about another, trying to belittle or bring down the esteem of one in the eyes of the other - this is the deadly cancer that has destroyed many groups, even great movements, and most

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certainly must be considered an anathema to any spiritual body.

Here the talking ill or finding faults, should not be mistaken as being blind to the genuine faults or mistakes of others. It means simply that we must be totally conscious of our motive when we talk about the faults of others. To say that it is a sin to talk about others in their absence would be to make every living person a sinner. We always talk of others - this is inevitable. What then is this injunction? It simply means that if you do talk about the faults of one to another, then it should only be because you genuinely want to help, to improve and elevate; not to degrade and condemn.

But then of course the easy thing would be to go and tell the person (softly and lovingly), about the fault and help him or her improve! For many this is difficult! "What if that person gets angry with me? What if that person asks me to mind my own business?"

This then becomes the supreme test of our spirituality! Have we "conducted" ourselves to that person in such a manner that he is convinced that our criticisms are out of love and not of any other negative motive? If you are one who indulges in cliques and ignore others, then of course, even your best, sincere, genuine advice will not be accepted by the person outside your clique, for no one knows your heart... they only hear your words. But if you have made your heart known ... if you have practiced a policy of giving love equally to all within the group, then when you do pass a critical remark it will be accepted as genuine advice ... and no hard feelings.

If all devotees along the path of spirituality can expand the circle of their "contacts of love" where they can offer criticism and this is accepted with love, this then is most certainly progress; the cup of love in your heart must slowly expand ... make it into an ocean of love and you have achieved the ultimate.

9. Practice Ceiling on Desires and use the savings for service

This code is one of those that witnessed change during Swami's 60th Birthday. The original code read as follows: "Narayana Seva - some cereals to be kept separate every day to feed the needy and to form a habit not to waste food".

The change took place for two reasons:

- ☞ due to the fact that many felt it difficult to implement this in their particular cultural, or lifestyle environments and
- ☞ it was the first stage of a bigger program for devotees.

Whereas the original code by implication, suggested a ceiling on food items, to be set aside to serve the poor, the new code urges all aspirants along the spiritual path to put a rein on growing desires, within an increasingly materialistic, uncaring, waste and obsolescence oriented society.

There is multi-billion dollar industry that is designed merely to create artificial wants. The advertising world persuades us to consume what we often do not need, or is detrimental to our health ... "The Hidden Persuaders", "Planned Obsolescence" have been for

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decades the buzz words of this growing industry.

Bhagavan, unearthing once again the message of all great religions has called upon all people who want to have a measure of peace and contentment in their lives to place a “Ceiling on Desires” ... a ceiling on Food, Energy, Time, Money and Knowledge.

In summary the Divine call is:

ॐ Do not waste food. Do not overindulge in food.

ॐ Do not waste energy ... electricity, water, your own energy. (Too much talking, anger, jealousy and other negative expressions are equally a waste of Divine energy.)

ॐ Do not waste Time.

ॐ Do not waste Money.

ॐ Do not absorb “garbage” as knowledge into your mind; and whatever genuine knowledge you have, use it well.

Rules & Regulations

“Do not fret against Rules and Regulations which the Organization imposes on you.

They are laid for your own good. Regulation is the very essence of creation, as:

- The oceans observe their limits;
- Wind and fire respect limits and bounds;
- The human body has to maintain warmth upto 98.4 degrees in order to be free from fever;
- The heart has to beat a definite number of times a minute and breathing has to be done 21600 times a day;
How then can the Organization escape the prescription of certain Rules and Regulations.”

--Sathya Sai Baba

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Self Assessment

On a scale of 0 to 10, as defined below, score yourself in putting into practice each of the Codes. Resolve to move forward, tracking your progress over time.

Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High
0	2	5	8	10

Code of Conduct ...	Score on Date _____	Score on Date _____	Score on Date _____
1. Meditate and pray daily			
2. Have devotional singing and prayer with family members once a week			
3. Participate in Sathya Sai Education programs organized by the Center for children of Sai devotees			
4. Participate in community work and other Sai organization programs			
5. Attend at least once a month group devotional singing organized by the Center			
6. Study Sai literature regularly			
7. Speak softly and lovingly to everyone			
8. Do not talk ill of others especially in their absence			
9. Practice Ceiling on Desires and use the savings for service			
Total			