

Ceiling on Desires

"Who is the poorest man?

He who has much desires is the poorest man in the world.

Who is the richest man?

He who has much satisfaction is the richest man in the world". -Baba

What is the meaning of "Ceiling on Desires" ? Man is deluded by his unlimited desires. He is living in a dream world. He is forgetting the Supreme Consciousness (Paratattwa). That is why it is important to keep our desires under control, to place a ceiling on them. We are spending too much MONEY.

Instead of inordinately spending for our own pleasure, we should be spending for the relief of the poor and needy. This is the real meaning of Ceiling on Desires. Do not make the mistake of thinking that giving money is all that is needed, however. Do not give to others while allowing your own desires to continue to multiply. Curtail your desires, as materialistic desires lead to a restless and disastrous life. Desires are a prison. Man can be freed only by limiting his wants. You should have desire only for life's bare necessities.



How can you reduce the desires ?

Put a ceiling on desires.

**1 - First rule is:
don't waste money,
the misuse of money is evil.**

**2 - Second rule is:
don't waste time,
time is God,
time wasted is life wasted.**

**3 - Third rule is:
don't waste food.**

**4 - Fourth rule is:
don't waste energy.**

Sathya Sai Baba



FOOD IS GOD -DO NOT WASTE FOOD.

Firstly, consider the food we consume. Eat only what you need to eat. Do not be greedy. Do not take more than you can eat and waste the rest, because wasting food is a great sin. The surplus food can feed another stomach. Do not waste food, because food is God, life is God, and man is born from food. Food is the main source of man's life, body, mind and character. The gross part of the food, which is the major portion of the food consumed by the body, is thrown out as waste matter. A minute amount of the food, which is the subtle part, is assimilated by the body and flows as blood. And a minuscule amount, which is the subtlest part of the food, makes up the mind. Therefore, the mind is the reflection of the food consumed. The reason for the present bestly and demonic tendencies in our minds is the food we consume.

A large part of the WATER we drink is expelled as urine. A minute part of the water consumed becomes the life force (prana). Therefore, the nature of the food and water that we take in decides our character. Only by controlling the quality of our food and water can we attain Divinity. This is why food is said to be God. Hence, to waste food is to waste God. Do not waste food. Eat only what you need, and be sure that what you eat is Sathwic. Give any surplus food to those in need.

Secondly, consider the ways in which money is spent. Indians consider money or wealth as the Goddess Lakshmi. Do not misuse money. By doing so you will only become a slave to bad qualities, bad ideas, and bad habits. Use your money wisely for good deeds. Do not waste money, as misuse of money is evil. It will lead you along the wrong path.

TIME WASTED IS LIFE WASTED

Thirdly, examine the usage of time. The most important, the most needed factor, is time. One should not waste time. Time should be spent in a useful manner. Time should be sanctified because everything in this creation is dependent on time. Even our scriptures say that God is referred to as Time and Beyond Time. The main reason for man's birth and death is time. Time is the main factor in our growth. Time wasted is life wasted. Therefore, time is an essential part of our life. Do not degrade time by spending it participating in unnecessary conversations, or by getting involved in other's personal matters. The truth behind the saying "Don't waste time" is that no time should be wasted in evil thoughts and acts. Instead, make use of time in an efficient way.

DO NO EVIL - DO WHAT IS GOOD

Fourthly, conservation of energy is very important. Our physical, mental, and spiritual energies should never be wasted. You might ask me: "How are we wasting our energies?" Seeing bad things, hearing bad things, speaking evil, thinking evil thoughts, and doing evil deeds all waste your energy. Conserve your energy in all these five areas, and make your life more meaningful.

See no evil - see what is good.
Hear no evil - hear what is good.
Speak no evil - speak what is good.
Think no evil - think what is good.
Do no evil - do what is good.
This is the way to God.

STORY OF A GREEDY KING as narrated by Swami

Baba narrated this story. It seems there was a king who was very greedy and wanted more and more in life. He wanted to be the richest man and he wanted to be the topmost man in this world. So he received a mantra from his guru and then prayed fervently. He observed seriously and scrupulously all the disciplines expected during penance.

God was so happy with this man, because prayer is man's strength and God's weakness. Prayer is our strength because we can achieve anything. Prayer is God's weakness because He has to sanction whatever you pray for and be prepared to face the consequences.

So God appeared in front of that man and said, "Oh, King! What is that you want?"

The king said, "God, I don't have a long list to ask for. I don't have many, many things. No. I have only one desire."

"What is that?" asked God.

"Whatever I touch, let it be transformed into gold. That is all. I don't have many desires. Whatever I touch, let it be transformed into gold."

After all gold is nothing to God. So He said "OK granted"

This king was very happy. He went on touching a table, a chair, a dining table, chest of drawers, anything at all. All objects were instantaneously transformed into gold. This fellow was very happy and he wanted to show all the gold around, the mansions and the objects of gold to be seen to his son. He called his son, "Son, see that building?"

The son was jumping with joy! Gold, after all! So the king was extremely happy because he could make his son very happy. So he hugged his son. The son was transformed into gold! So he wept and wept.

Then he went on moving, touching everything he possibly could. Soon it was time for him to have some water, because he was feeling very thirsty. So he ordered, "Who is there? Bring a glass of water. Don't you hear me?" "Yes, my lord."

They brought him a glass of water. As he touched it, it transformed into gold, including the water. So he could not drink water. Then he felt very miserable.

After he wanted to have some food, as he was very hungry. So he went to the dining table. Everything was served. All the delicious items he saw increased his hunger moment by moment. When he was about to eat, as he touched the plate, it turned into gold, including the rice, *sambar*, and *rasam* -- all those delicious items which were there. So, he could not eat, he could not drink, and he could not hug his son.

Then he went to the queen saying, "Look here! This gold belongs to me, and this gold belongs to you. The royal couple will enjoy all of this gold, which is not available anywhere." His wife was so happy. So she shook hands with the king. Both of them turned into gold!

Therefore my friends, this is the story narrated by Bhagavan telling us of the need to not be greedy. If you are more and more greedy, what happens? You lose what you already have. You lose the existing happiness; you lose the existing balanced state of mind and the ideal of peace. Therefore this story gives us a lesson that one should not be greedy.

STORY OF A GREEDY WOODCUTTER – CHAIN OF DESIRES

Then there is a fourth story narrated by Bhagavan. There lived a woodcutter in a jungle. He was carrying on his life with the small pittance he got out of it. It was a small amount. This fellow was feeling so badly. 'How long should I live life like this? How long should I go to the forest every day, cut the wood and put it on sale in the market, earning a very small pittance, a very small amount of money?' This was not sufficient for his needs, and he was feeling badly.

One day he was very tired. In the afternoon, he had his lunch and was resting under a tree. He began to pity himself. 'This is my life -- no house, no furniture, no servants. My life is horrible, a terrible life. Let not my worst of my enemies face this situation,' he was saying to himself.

But that fellow did not know that the tree under which he was resting was the wish-fulfilling tree. *Kalpa vriksha* is the wish-fulfilling tree. So this fellow was feeling so badly under this tree, but he did not know what tree it was.

Then he got up then said, "I am still hungry. Let me have something more to eat." Immediately a plate with all the items and pots and sweets appeared -- some special sweets from the North Indian canteen also! (*Laughter*) So everything was there, and he ate it.

"Ah, good! Why not have some water?" Immediately Sprite, Coca-Cola, Thumbs-Up and all these cool drinks appeared. He did not understand how they were appearing! This fellow didn't question how they materialised. He never bothered to know how all his wishes were being fulfilled. He ate neck deep, and he drank to the brim of the throat.

Then he wanted to rest. "After having this very good food and all these good drinks, should I sleep on the ground? No! Why not have a beautiful bed, with a mattress ten inches thick?"

The wish-fulfilling tree immediately materialised a beautiful bed, decorated with a 'My-Foam' mattress ten inches thick. This fellow lay down. "Aha-ha! Quite nice!"

Then he thought, "If my wife were also here...if she comes to know that I am enjoying all this comfort...a beggar one day earlier and today living in luxury and extravaganza! Any housewife would be very happy!" Immediately his wife appeared there.

Then he started wondering, "What is this? How could she come here from fifteen miles away? Is she my wife? It is not possible. Possibly she is a devil!" he thought. So his wife was transformed to a devil. And that devil ate this fellow up. That devil finished him!

So what happens here, my friends? Once a desire is fulfilled, it does not stop. One desire leads to the next desire. Fulfilment of the first desire does not end there. It takes you to the next, and the next, and on and on until we are finished! This story was also narrated by Bhagavan to illustrate His teachings on ceiling on desires.

62nd SLOKA: THE ROOT CAUSE OF DESIRE

This *slokas* 62 and 63 from *Sankhya Yoga* speak of the nexus in a sort of scientific analysis, in a logical, rational, technical sequence. It is explained in the form of steps, one step after another, so that we come to know the root cause of desire and where it will take us. It is dealt with very well.

Dhyayato vishayan pumsah, Sangaste shuupa jayate.

Two points are mentioned here. What is the first one? *Dhyayato vishayan pumsah* refers to those who think of worldly pleasures, those who think of sensual pleasures, those who think of the ephemeral, transitory, momentary world, and those who think of luxuries. *Dhyayato vishayan*: *Dhyayato* means 'contemplation'; *vishayan* means 'worldly pleasures and physical comforts'. That is one point.

Why does desire arise? Desire arises due to constant contemplation on worldly comforts and desires. The first blunder we commit, the first mistake that lies within us, is contemplation on worldly desires, or constant thought of worldly comforts and conveniences. *Dhyayato vishayan pumsaha*. You go on contemplating and you go on thinking of worldly comforts. That is first step.

The second step is: *Sangaste shuupa jayate*. (The *Gita acharaya* is far greater than a modern computer scientist where he explains point after point.)

The first thing mentioned is constant thinking of the world and its pleasures: *Dhyayathe visayan pumsaha*. As a result of this, what will happen? *Sangaste shuupa jayate*. What does it mean? It means that you develop interest towards it.

A simple example: Let us say that you want to buy one article from the store. You want to buy toothpaste only. By the time you go and find the toothpaste, you also see a cream biscuit packet by its side. *Dhyayate visayan* comes immediately: "Why not that?" You grab the biscuit packet and then you start moving. Further on, you see a cashew nut packet. Much better! You went to the store to purchase toothpaste, but you returned with a bag full of things. Why?

Dhyayathe visayan pumsah, As I go on thinking of worldly things and worldly objects,

Sangaste shuupa jayate. I develop interest towards that.

‘I see, therefore I am interested. I think, hence I am interested.’ That is the reason why every sacred text prescribes some restrictions in the movements, some restrictions in the associations of all spiritual aspirants and seekers. You cannot go on looking at every object, because once you start looking upon something, you develop interest towards it.

ANGER COMES DUE TO LACK OF FULFILMENT

Therefore, *Gita* clearly tells us:

Dhyayathe vishayan : Constant thought, repeated contemplation on worldly objects

Sangaste shuupa jayate. ;will create interest in you.

See how nice it is? If we don't think, there is no desire. Suppose I think of my friend who has a gold pen. He has a gold pen. 'Oh, I see. Why can't I also have one?' Because I thought like this, I start to develop an interest towards it. That is what *Gita acharya* says.

Then there is the third step:

Sangat sanjayathe kamah

Kama krodha bijayathe.

What happens? I think of it. I develop an interest towards it. Now I desire it. I desire it by watching this thing, by watching this watch. What happens next? I develop an interest.

Sangat sanjayathe kamah

Then what happens? Then I will desire to have that. That is what ***Sangat sanjayathe kamah*** is: Desire comes because of the intense interest you developed by watching it, by thinking about it.

Then, the *Bhagavad Gita* says:

Kama krodha bijayathe.

A gold pen is interesting; a watch is interesting. I thought about it and I am now interested in it. I have a desire to have that watch, but there is no money. (*Laughter*) I don't have money. I see that beautiful pedestal fan. I have an interest to acquire it. I desire to have this fan, but there is no money.

So all that you think, all that which you are interested in, all that you desire, cannot end with the fulfilment of that desire. Desire will never come to an end with acquisition.

Now this will take you to anger. 'Why can't I have it? I want this watch! Is life worth living? No!' What a sorrowful state I am in, full of anger.

Kama krodha bijayathe.

Now the desire will take you to anger. Why are you angry? Your desire was not fulfilled. Why is there desire? You were interested in having it. Why were you interested? You had thought about it. Now you are full of anger because all that you wanted could not be acquired.

TOTALLY RUINED BECAUSE OF ANGER

Then the *Bhagavad Gita* tells us the next sloka:

Krodhad bhavati sammohah

Sammohat smriti vibhramah.

The *Gita*, the Teacher of teachers, how wonderfully it explains:

Krodhad bhavati sammohah

Sammohat smriti vibhramah.

Sammohah means you lose your discrimination. You lose your judgment. You lose your decision-making. You lose your sense of judgment. You become non-judgmental. You become non-discriminatory. Then what happens? The intellect is gone and there is no more discrimination. *Avivekaha* means 'non-discrimination' -- non-discriminatory, non-judgmental.

Constant contemplation on worldly objects will make you interested in them. Then you develop a desire for them and, as you cannot acquire all of them, you will become angry. Out of anger, you lose the power of discrimination, and finally become totally ruined. You totally ruin yourself.

Therefore, we start with a desire and end up with total ruin. That is what the *Bhagavad Gita* tells us here. I don't think there can be a higher or better explanation for exercising a ceiling on desires than these two *slokas*.

SAI BABA EXPLAINS -- TOO MANY DESIRES

In the same context, I want to give you just one or two points for your reference. Why do we develop excessive desires? Why do I have too many desires? Bhagavan explains that it is because of basic human weakness. Basic human weaknesses like avarice, lust, greed, and hatred. All these weaknesses are present and latent in man, and prompt too many desires. That is one explanation which Bhagavan gives us.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A NEED AND A DESIRE

Here I want you to make a kind of clear distinction, a clear demarcation and set a borderline between a desire and a need. What is a need? What is a desire? A need is the basic requirement of life. It is the substance for life. I need a glass of water; I don't desire a glass of water. I need a cycle. But I *desire* to possess a car. I need food, but I *desire* to have a five-star Holiday Inn hotel banquet. I need a little humour in life, but I *desire* the casino in Las Vegas, in the United States of America. So, desire is something *beyond* need. Desire is futuristic, while need is the demand of the hour, this moment, for your life.

The second aspect is the improvement in the standard of living. Let us say that I don't have any furniture. I want to have two chairs at least. That is not a desire. Desire is something *beyond* your capacity, *beyond* your ability, something which takes you to frustration, depression and suppression; whereas, to improve your standard of living is within the purview of your stature, your position, your emoluments, your career advancement, your industrious nature, your hard work. So, by doing some more extra work, you will have some more money. Then you can slowly improve your standard of living. This is not a desire.

Because having a ceiling on desires is not fully understood in its depth. People just think that to save some money out of some expenses, and deposit that money in the bank is ceiling on desires. This is what every member in the Sathya Sai Organisation thinks. It is a mechanical and meaningless process if it is not done with awareness. 'What feeling should we have? Why should we be feeling? What do the scriptures say about it? What does Baba want me to know on the matter?' These are the questions I have covered.

Wisdom Tips

“When you see a thing with a view to buy it, ask yourself, ‘Do I need it?’ If the answer is ‘yes,’ ask again, ‘Can I afford it?’ If the answer is ‘yes,’ ask again, ‘Can I live without it?’ If the answer is ‘yes,’ do not buy it.”

Baba



Ceiling On Desires Projects

We have undertaken tasks of varying magnitudes and description. Before we embark on the execution of these programmes we have to ask ourselves three questions. One: for whose sake are we undertaking these programmes? Two: For what purpose? Three: How are we going to execute these programmes? These may be three different questions, but the answer is one. If we examine deeply, the answer to the first question is: "All for our own sake." The answer to the second is: "For our own happiness and joy." The answer to the third question is that "the results of our work will depend on what we do. If we do something good, the result will be good, if we do something bad, the result will be likewise."

In this world it is not possible to make use of anything without transforming it in one way or the other to make it useful. You cannot have rice for eating without converting paddy to rice grains and then cooking it. Similarly, you cannot have cloth without transforming cotton into yarn and then weaving it into cloth. Similarly, a human being needs transformation in respect of three things: The first is bodily transformation; the second pertains to the mind; the third relates to the Aathma. The Aathma (Divine Soul) is changeless. It is only the body and the mind that require transformation. How does transformation take place? For instance, if we ask the question whether silver can become God or stone become God, the answer is 'YES.' We are not aware of our internal impurities

When a sculptor converts a piece of rock into a beautiful idol to be worshipped in a shrine, what was inert and worthless becomes sacred. This is transformation. Similarly, an idol made out of silver becomes an object of worship. In the same manner, everything which is petty and worldly can be transformed in course of time into something sacred and divine. Such a transformation is necessary for man. Take, for instance, the body. It is an entity which houses much that is bad and that is undesirable. Externally we take great care of the body through bathing and cleaning. We are aware of the external impurity and we try to get rid of it. But, are we aware of the internal impurities? How do we purify them? For this internal purification, we have to acquire sacred thoughts and do sacred deeds. We have the concepts of Jeeva (individual being) and Dheva (celestial being). Man is composed of the three Gunas (qualities), Sathwa, Rajas, Thamas (serenity, restless activity, inactivity). As long as you are part of these Gunas, you are Jeeva. Once you transcend these three qualities you become Dheva (God). The three Gunas are like the husk that covers the rice in the paddy. When you remove the husk it becomes the rice-grain. Whatever we do, whatever actions we undertake, if they were to be permeated with thoughts centred on God, they would become sacred. Today in our seva (selfless service) activities, we do not have this lofty sense of dedication. We should get rid of the thought that seva activities are being done for others. You should understand that they are being undertaken for your own sake and for your own betterment.

Four ways we should try to change ourselves

In Vedhaanthic parlance this identification of yourself with others is called Maithri. In seva activities you have to develop Maithri (friendliness). Another attitude you have to develop is Karuna (compassion). The third is

called Mudhitha (contented) and the fourth is called Upeksha (indifferent to results). In all these four ways we should try to change ourselves and others.

What is Maithri? It is commonly equated with friendship. In the worldly sense this friendship is a mutual relationship. True friendship lies in regarding other people's comforts or joys or sorrows as your own. For instance we have an example in Raamaayana in the relationship between Raama and Sugreeva. Their friendship was based on the fact that each could experience the suffering of the other as his own (Samaana avastha). The bond of friendship is drawn when there is a recognition of sharing of experiences common to both.

What is Karuna (compassion)? Seeing a person in distress and expressing verbally sympathy is not compassion. Compassion must express itself in action to relieve the suffering. Nor should you adopt an attitude of aloofness or indifference on the plea that each one is suffering for his own folly. Though suffering may be due to one's mistakes-- mistakes to which everyone is prone---we should seek to remedy such suffering just as we try to get rid of our own suffering. Some people try to show off their sympathy by setting up charitable institutions like hospitals, etc.

True compassion should emanate from the heart. It should not find expression in outward manifestations which only reveal one's vanity. In the Sathya Sai Organisations there is no place for such demonstrations of vanity. Everything that is done to help the poor or the suffering should be based on the feelings coming from the heart and appealing to the hearts of those who are helped. Process of freeing yourself from bondage

Next comes Muditha. This means acquiring peace of mind through cultivating equanimity in the experience of honour and dishonour, praise or calumny, loss or gain, joy or sorrow. These pairs of opposites should be regarded as things which come and go, like passing clouds. Every Sevak(volunteer) should develop such an equanimity of mind.

The fourth requisite is Upeksha. Apeksha (craving for the fruits) binds man. Upeksha (indifferent to results) frees man. Apeksha means involvement with the worldly concerns. Upeksha means getting rid of this involvement. Take the example of a pumpkin. A green pumpkin, when it is placed in water, it sinks. The pumpkin has plenty of water within it and when placed in water it sinks. The same pumpkin, when it is dried and has no water inside it, floats on water. What is there a son? In the first place the pumpkin has friendship for water and it makes water part of its ownself. Similarly, when you are worldly yourself and you move in the world you are bound to it.

When you free yourself from worldly attachments you go towards divinity and you are freed from bondage to the world. It is the process of "freeing yourself" that is called "Upeksha."When you are tied to kaama you cannot get Raama .In the Raamaayana, when Raama decided to go to the forest, Seetha wanted to accompany him and she gave away all her possessions. By giving up attachments to the possessions she could get Raama. But, when in the forest she developed a desire for the golden deer, she was separated from Raama. In the first place when she removed Kaama (the desire for possessions) she became one with Raama. The meaning of this episode is, so long as you are tied to Kaama, you cannot hope to get Raama or God.

This does not mean that you have to renounce the world. Living in this world as you are, you must strike a balance between worldly life and spiritual life. Man's life is like gold in its native state, associated with dirt, which is impure. It is impure in the initial stages. When you begin to purify your thoughts, speech and actions through seeking good contacts and cultivating noble ideas, you will be transforming yourself. This is the process of Upeksha. More than Thapas (penance) Dhyaana (meditation), service to others is the means by which one transforms oneself. In rendering service, you should be moved by genuine concern for those you serve. You should try to ascertain the cause of their suffering and try to remove it. Only then can you do seva (selfless-service) properly. Momentary sympathy or charity or competing with others in exhibiting one's generosity is not true seva. In rendering service if you try to do something which is beyond your capacity it is a sign of your ego. If you give less than what you can, then you are a thief (denying to others what is due to them). You must be discriminating in your service. You must regard service as a saadhana (spiritual effort). Do not do seva to please

others You should believe that service is a path to God realisation. These activities are to be undertaken not for the sake of Sathya Sai or even for the sake of society. They are purely and essentially for your own sake. It is to transform your own lives that you undertake seva. Through the medium of seva you can reap the fruits of japa and dhyana. By making your fellow-beings happy you are making God Himself happy.

The seva that you do, should not be done out of a sense of compulsion or to please others. It should be wholehearted and spontaneous. In organising seva activities do not attempt to compare one State with another. Because some States have taken up some work in some villages, you should not feel that you should do the same thing. Do whatever you feel is your duty and what is necessary for the areas in which you are working. Do it with all your heart without comparing yourself with others.

There is the programme connected with Ceiling on Desires. You must realise that this programme has not been launched to raise funds. The object of the programme is to prevent waste of money, time, food or other resources and to use all these for the welfare of the people.

The money that is saved need not be kept for the Sathya Sai Organisations. It may be used in the best way you choose for the benefit of others. Do not waste time. Time wasted is life wasted. Time is God. Sanctify all the time at your disposal by undertaking seva activities in a pure and unselfish spirit.

Aims of the "Ceiling on Desires" programme

Today we waste time on unnecessary and unwanted things, in indulging in unnecessary talk and doing meaningless actions. In all these actions we are sacrificing the body to time. Instead we should try to make time our servant. It means spending our time in good thoughts and good deeds. Every second of your daily existence you must ask these questions "How am I utilizing time? Is it for a good or bad purpose?"

Likewise, with regard to food you must ask: "Am I just eating what I need or more? Am I wasting food?" So also with regard to money: "Am I using this money for my own selfish needs or for boosting my name and fame, or to satisfy my ego and vanity?" Once you start seeking answers to these questions, there is no greater saadhana.

These are the aims of the "Ceiling on Desires" programme. It was never the purpose of this programme to collect money for the Sathya Sai Organisations. The object was to encourage you to share your money with others, to give you an opportunity to utilise your surplus resources for some good and noble purpose which will sanctify your life.

Three types of strength are given to a person: physical strength, mental strength and the power of money. It has been said that all these should be offered as yajna (sacrifice). This sacrifice is not offered to God. God, who has given you the body and the mind, does not need them for himself.

God is also the source of all wealth. What does He want with your wealth? Use it for sacred purposes. The seva programme is intended only to provide you with opportunities to make your lives sacred and worthwhile. It is to develop the spirit of sacrifice.

Understand the basic purpose of all service activities Was it beyond the power of Raama to discover Seetha in Lanka Himself? What need was there for Him to send Hanumaan? Raama wanted Hanumaan to go on the search, so that He could show to the world the devotion and steadfastness and faith of Hanumaan. It is a case of Grace on the part of Raama. In the same manner, if Sai so much as wants to do so many things Himself, He could do anything. This endeavour is not for the sake of Sai. It is done through these Seva Organisations so that members of the organisation get the chance to do service and redeem themselves. Try to understand the basic truth that these avenues of service have been provided so that you will get good name for yourselves and not for the sake of Sai.

If people have any wrong notions about the service programme, endeavour to remove their doubts and explain the real purposes. For instance, some people say for the sake of the 60th Birthday Celebrations they have embarked on this project of "Ceiling on Desires." This is a wrong notion. Tell these people it is not so. Sathya Sai does not need anything and He does not ask anything from you. Our idea is that we should undertake some development programme, so that the villages can get benefited. The idea is to save money that is now being wasted in one way or the other, so that it may be made available for doing something good. Above all, the basic purpose of all service activities is to effect a transformation from the state of man to the state of Divinity. Fill your hearts with that which is godly. Then there will be meaning to your volunteer service.

CEILING ON DESIRES: 'ONE-IN-THREE' CHALLENGE

"Nature is the purest handiwork of God. If you are able to love Nature, and feel in tune with it, you are that much closer to God. It is very easy to know God through Nature, for in Nature there is goodness, simplicity, purity and selflessness." (Sathya Sai Baba)

"The five elements – ether, air, fire, water and earth are the vesture of God, as well as of man. Use them moderately and with wisdom, with fear and humility." (Sathya Sai Baba)

The Ceiling on Desires: 'One in Three' Challenge offers each individual an opportunity to help **care for the environment** on which we all depend, by reducing the impact of our individual and collective footprints on Mother Earth while also serving those in need. This is an opportunity for individuals to truly live His Message.

- The Ceiling on Desires: 'One in Three' Challenge offers each individual the opportunity to think about the **difference between our 'needs' and our 'wants'**
- Every time we are about to purchase, or use, goods or services in relation to our daily requirements, we are asked to stop and take a minute or two to reflect on whether the purchase or use of those goods or services will meet a 'need' we have, or whether, in fact, we are fulfilling a 'want'.
- We are also invited to think about how we are using the earth's resources to sustain and maintain our lifestyles.
- We are invited to choose, on at least one in three occasions, NOT to purchase or use the goods or services, and, by so doing, effectively allow the 'saving' or conserving of those resources so they can be available to meet real 'needs' somewhere else in the local or wider community.

The Sai Youth in South Africa, Australia & PNG and in the U.K. have demonstrated the benefits and effectiveness of this practice by saving money in the thousands which has then been used to provide for the needs of poor villagers in India and other parts of the world.

We can be very creative in finding ways to reduce our desires. For example:

Groceries/food items: We can take a few minutes before taking the shopping basket to the check-out counter to check whether we really do need each and every item (it may be we actually don't need the extra tin of tomatoes, packet of chips, etc.) Before we reach for the second, or third' helping of food or coffee, or juice, etc., we might consider whether we are really still hungry/thirsty or whether we really do need that item of food/drink to sustain us.

Clothing: While shopping we can reflect about whether we really need a particular item of clothing, such as the T-Shirt, dress, extra pair of shoes, etc. We can ask ourselves if that purchase is, in fact, meeting a 'want', or if in fact we're becoming caught up in advertising, marketing or effective sales pitches and so have, momentarily, lost our conscious awareness of what is happening?

Fuel: Before we jump into the car, we can stop and consider whether it might be a more efficient use of the car and fuel to wait until we have more than one job to do, or whether we might be able to share the trip with someone else, to save two (or even multiple) separate car trips, and hence save the Earth's resources. We can also consider whether it might be preferable to walk, ride a bicycle or take public transport!

Possessions: We might take some time to look around our homes and cupboards and sheds/garages, etc., to consider whether we really do still need everything we have. If not, we can choose to let go and enable someone else to have the use of that item. By so doing, we lighten the loads we have to carry or are responsible for! We also may enable someone else's needs to be met.

Water: Before having our shower/bath, we might take a few minutes to consider how we might conserve the cool water which runs out of the tap before the hot water. For example, we might catch the cool water in a bucket and pour it onto thirsty plants, or into a bird bath, or fish pond, etc. We can also consider means for redirecting the grey water onto the plants in the garden.

Energy: We might take a couple of minutes to:

- check whether we have turned off the electrical items at the power plug when we have finished using them,
- check whether we really do need the hotplate at the highest temperature when preparing food
- or whether we need to fill the kettle to the maximum for one or a few cups of coffee.

We might also consider whether we really do need to heat or cool the rooms in the house which are not in use, or to use more than one computer or television in the same house at the same time, etc. It may be possible to conduct a 'Green Audit' of our homes and workplaces in order to work out how to reduce energy consumption (ask you regional green officer if you need help with how to do this).

Time: By considering how we are using our time, we may find ways to reduce time waste. For example, through planning for an activity and with good organisation, we can avoid wasting time. By taking a look at our patterns or habits of behaviour, we might realize that we often waste time. The Four "R's" - Refuse, Reduce, Re-Use, and Recycle

We can implement actions which will have the lowest 'footprint' on the Earth by 'Refusing' to purchase goods and 'Refusing' to use services, when we don't need them. When we refuse, the energy intensity footprint is zero...and we are adding LOVE! Through all these practices, we are placing a 'Ceiling on Desires', and we are following our spiritual practices. "It is here that our insistence on a desireless life, in which human wants are reduced to the minimum needs, comes to the rescue as the only possible way of restoring the social and economic balance. Curb your desires, reduce your wants, live in spiritual austerity, and the available material will be sufficient for all humanity. More than that, the tensions of a competitive ...socio economic system will be dissolved and peace of mind will be restored." (Sathya Sai Baba)

"Time is God and so time should not be wasted... One should divide time into four parts to make the best use of it: six hours for sleep; six hours for daily routine and body care-take; six hours for office work; and the remaining six hours for service to the general public...If you are wasting time, you are wasting Divinity. Whatever you do, offer it to God."

- *Man Management by Sathya Sai Baba, Pgs 36-37*

Why is it important to place a Ceiling on Desires of Time?

To begin with, Swami encourages us to ask ourselves 3 questions before we embark on the Ceiling On Desires program:

- **FOR WHAT SAKE ARE WE UNDERTAKING THIS PROGRAMME ?**
- **FOR WHAT PURPOSE ?**

- **HOW ARE WE GOING TO EXECUTE THIS PROGRAMME ?**

“We are not given an unlimited amount of time based on our life span. We should respect Time by living each moment fully by thinking of God and dedicating our time to useful and positive thoughts and actions that benefit us as well as others (versus dwelling in past/future).“

“Managing time effectively at work/ family/Sai activity to be most efficient, and offering a better product to God at the end of that period of time.”

“Using each moment to develop good habits, learn from our challenges faced, and realize we (and others) are more than these limited bodies, and that we are God.”

In summary, why should one practice ceiling on desires to understand the value of Time? We practice time management for **our own personal self-satisfaction and joy, and this practice will manifest in good results for ourselves as well serving the God in others.** When we manage our time wisely, we feel happier, more fulfilled, and we invite the best opportunities for growth, service, and enjoyment.

Practicing time management helps us stay focused on the goal of why we are here in the world: to achieve self-realization and enjoy the beauty and mysteries of the world and beyond.

GOODWILL FUND : Each individual is invited to record the estimated value of the ‘savings’ made through choosing not to purchase goods or use services (including, if we wish, the estimated savings of ‘footprint intensity’) in a Spiritual Diary. This may then become a Study Circle exercise, or just for personal interest or ‘fun’. In addition, individuals are invited to register the Rand value of the foregone purchase(s), or estimated value of services not used, in the Goodwill Fund at the Sathya Sai Baba Centre of their choice, as equivalent ‘Goodwill points’. (For example, the Rand equivalent value recorded as ‘Goodwill Points’ calculated on basis of Rand1:1 Goodwill point).

The points can be registered under an individual’s name (or initials), or under a code known only to the individual. The decision to forgo a ‘want’ is simply a personal decision, that individual’s personal spiritual practice, and a commitment between them and their Lord. After an agreed to period of time (e.g. 3, 6 or 12 months), Centre members have the opportunity to determine how to use the ‘Goodwill Points’ which have accumulated in each Centre’s Goodwill Fund for a particular service project. Centre members are invited to be creative with how they wish to use the accumulated ‘Goodwill’.

Centre members will be invited to translate the points they have personally accumulated into an offer of time, skills or resources, and the like. This can be determined by each individual according to his/her capacity to contribute to the Service activity decided upon. Centres can also choose to combine their respective Goodwill Funds for a joint Service activity. “Trees bear fruits, rivers carry water, cows yield milk, not for their own sake, but for the sake of others. Equally the body is given to man for helping others.” (Sathya Sai Baba) It is possible that the effectiveness of this Ceiling on Desires: ‘One in Three Challenge’ may be such that others in the Sai Organisation worldwide, and perhaps members of the wider community, may be inspired to do the same in the future. “I know you have the enthusiasm to carry My message among the people of this country and other countries. Let me remind you that the best and the only successful way in which you can do it is to transfer the message into your own lives. Your thoughts, words and deeds must be saturated with the message. Then, they will spread effortlessly and efficiently, and the face of the world will be transformed.” (Sathya Sai Baba) “A wave of service, if it sweeps over the land, catching everyone in its enthusiasm, will be able to wipe off mounds of hatred, malice and greed that infests the world.” (Sathya Sai Baba)

“Life is a Challenge, Meet it!”

Life is a Game, Play it!”

Life is Love, Live it!”

The topic is very relevant to the current global context.

Sai Baba's message:

In various parts of the world Nature is causing various disasters.

What is the reason? The spiritual lapses of man account for these calamities. Disturbances in the heart are reflected in earthquakes. –*Baba*

There is a growing concern about the impact of human habitation on the planet. We are facing number of Global Environmental Challenges to protect the world. Changes are accelerating. It is a fast pace world. Where are we going? What is the direction? Are we accelerating into a new world? Global market fuels excessive consumption backed by advances in communication technology and this is at the cost of sustainability. An urgent question that faces us is what are we doing for sustainable living? How are we applying Sathya Sai Baba's teachings towards meeting this challenge?

Many species are vanishing, unable to survive in the deteriorating conditions. There are catastrophic climate changes, rising temperature, rising water levels, natural disasters, floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, rapid depletion of non-renewable natural resources. The list is endless and it goes on. Pollution and global warming are pushing the world's oceans to the brink of a mass extinction of marine life unseen for millions of years.

So what is sustainable living?

Sustainable living is a lifestyle that attempts to reduce an individual's or society's use of the Earth's natural resources .Sustainable living is defined as living that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The Sustainable living will be described as derived from of the philosophy of Sathya Sai teachings on Ceiling on Desires applied to

1. Energy - Avoid Excessive Talk / Talking ill of others / gossip / Speak softly & lovingly / Thoughts are the spark of energy – so watch your thoughts all the time.
2. Food – Control consumption of air, water, food, Rate of death cause by eating excessive food in western countries exceeds the rate of people who die of starvation in the third world countries. We must eat to live NOT live to eat.
3. Time – Avoid excessive use of Face book / mobile phones / internet / e-games etc
4. Money – Use money wisely and help the poor & needy.
5. Knowledge – Balance of secular and spiritual education. Use practical knowledge for the good of the society.

So the practical step towards applying ceiling on desires is to balance our NEEDS and WANTS. We always ask ourselves whether we need to buy or want to buy a particular thing.

It all depends on our lifestyle. We must decide whether we will choose the light of creative altruism or the darkness of selfishness as the way of lifestyle The practice and philosophy of ecological living advocated by Sai Baba utilizes altruism, an exclusive human capacity that acknowledges the oneness principle underlying of all creation. We see all human, animals, plants, lakes, mountains, and glaciers are inseparable parts. The oneness principle shuns violence and violation of natural resources and focuses on helping sentient beings and NOT violating natural resources. This is the definitive pathway to realising spiritual oneness. The principle of oneness is enhanced through selfless action.

Most people do not have time for spiritual practices because of lack of faith and time-poverty. We are trapped by commitments to work, electronic entertainment and personal commitments. The time has come when we need to become aware of global issues. Let us live harmoniously than ever with the oneness principle of Swamy's

teachings. The fundamental challenge is how do we put Sathya Sai Education into our everyday life and what are our experiences with it.

“Why do untoward things happen? Only to promote what is good. They have a cleansing effect. Rise and fall are natural events. When any such thing takes place in relation to the Divine, it must be regarded as the prelude to something elevating and sublime” -In the vast cosmos, man is like a speck. Essentially there is no conflict between Man and Creation. Just as a child is entitled to enjoy the milk from his mother and the bee is entitled to enjoy honey from flowers, there can be no objection to Man enjoying the resources of Nature. But as a result of uncontrollable desires and reckless exploitation of Natural Resources, Nature is exhibiting frightening disorders. Natural calamities like earth quakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts and floods. Mankind today appears like a foolish man who is wielding an axe at the branch of the tree on which he is sitting. - Baba

SUMMARY

The Planet Earth is the one and ONLY one place in the whole Universe where humans can live. It is our utmost duty to understand this miracle of creation and protect it. Ceiling on Desires & Altruism enhance the oneness principle. Oneness is a living dynamic force and it is kind of energy. It is not a mystical idea, philosophy or religion. It is part of life. How do we live in a sustainable manner with our inner environment which we relate to Oneness age. How do we live in a sustainable manner with our outer environment which is we relate to Golden age. Both Oneness Age and the Golden Age are complementing to each other. We create a space during our thought process for peace. In that space we experience who we really are. Connect ourselves with the nature and surrender. We want to absorb the Mother Nature's energy. We will find absolute peace in that space. The moment the Senses © Institute of Sathya Sai Education Australia Page 3 contact with the Sense Objects and the primary resources of the world, the multiple of thoughts arise from our head. Use Sai + Lens = Silence & 3Hv principles to create the space between two thoughts. Thoughts are powerful. When we expose a piece of paper to the sunlight, nothing happens. But if a lens comes in between, the concentrated beam of light burns the paper. Remember SILENCE is SAI LENS. The SAI LENS (MAGNIFYING GLASS) concentrates our thoughts and burns the excessive desires off. (Refer to the appended poster or slide)

The dawn of a new civilisation is called the age of oneness. We have a new destiny to create. In the advent of the Golden Age we would see a world whether there will be no national boundaries. All mankind will become ONE family. People will NOT suffer from sense of

WANT. It is NOT capitalism or socialism, communism or radical humanism that will win the day for us. In this new destiny we will see cooperation and not competition. Each one of us has a role in creating a destiny for a man. We are the architects for our own destiny. As a consequence of this inner state of man the changes will occur in the external world which would bring the Golden Age. Pledge attune with global oneness on our living planet earth.

HAPPINESS = NUMBER OF DESIRES FULFILLED / NUMBER OF DESIRES ENTERTAINED

So we have a unique and a valuable part to play in this life time in the Sai Mission.

Are we ready?

The Control Of The Senses And A Disciplined Way Of Life Are The Signs Of A Cultured Man – Baba

The future spiritual prosperity depends on the application of depth of Swamy's teachings on Ceiling on Desires. The topic can be expanded through the following aspects:

- 1. Silence sitting, meditation & prayers**
- 2. Application of 3HV (Head, Heart & Hand)**
- 3. 5 D's (Discipline, Devotion, Discrimination, Duty, Determination)**
- 4. 5 Human Values (Right Conduct, Love, Truth, Peace, Non Violence)**
- 5. 5 W.A.T.C.H (Watch our Words / Action / Thoughts / Character / Heart)**
- 6. 5 Primary Resources (Time, Knowledge, Energy, Money, Food)**
- 7. 5 Elements (Space, Air, Fire, Water, Earth)**
- 8. 5 Senses**
- 9. Unity, Purity & Divinity**

Self- exercise

What are the various ways in which we waste ? What can you do to practice CEILING ON DESIRES in each of the components identified by Swami ? Briefly state what impact it would have on your spiritual growth if you put them into practice?