

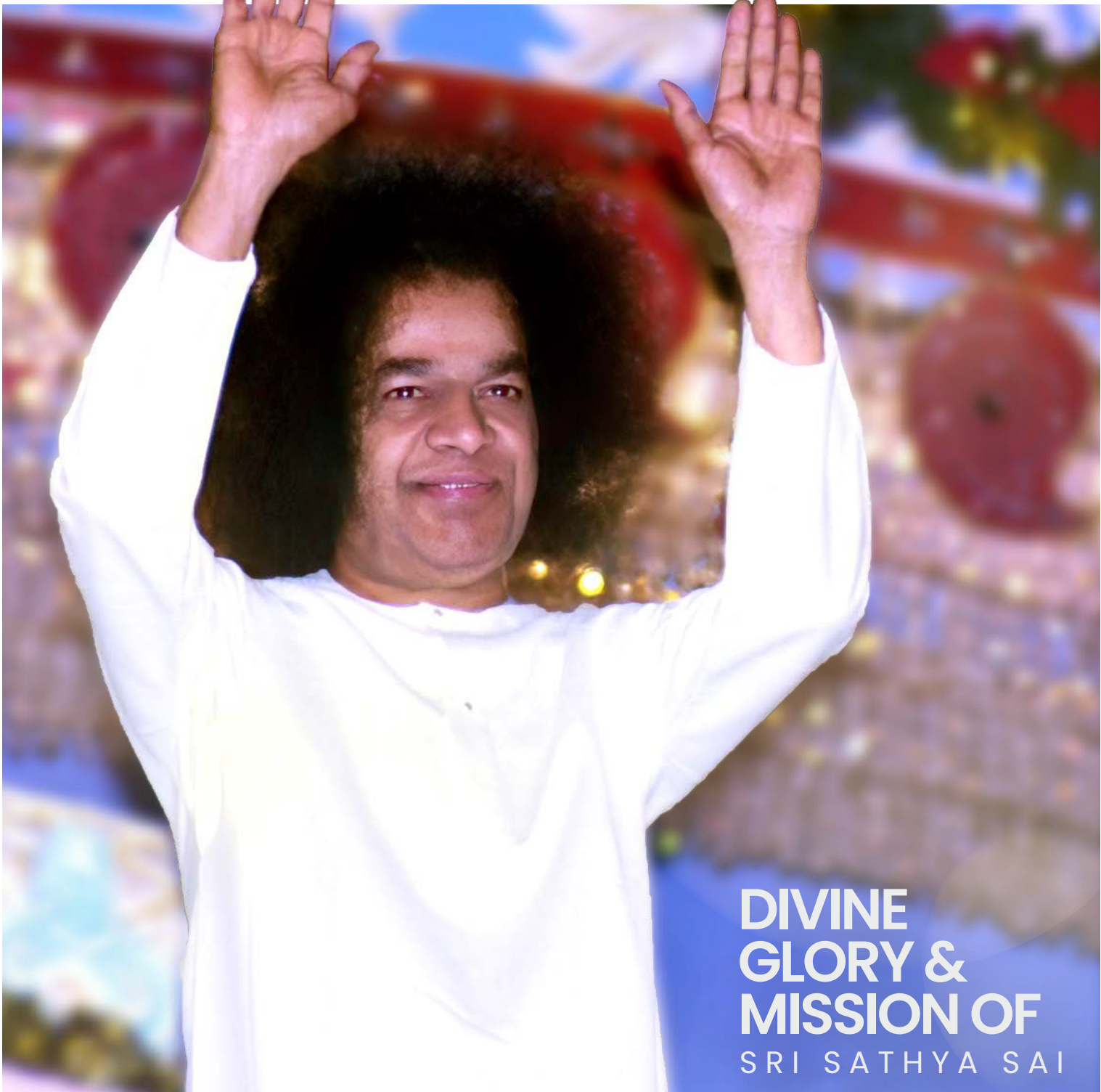


SATHYA SAI

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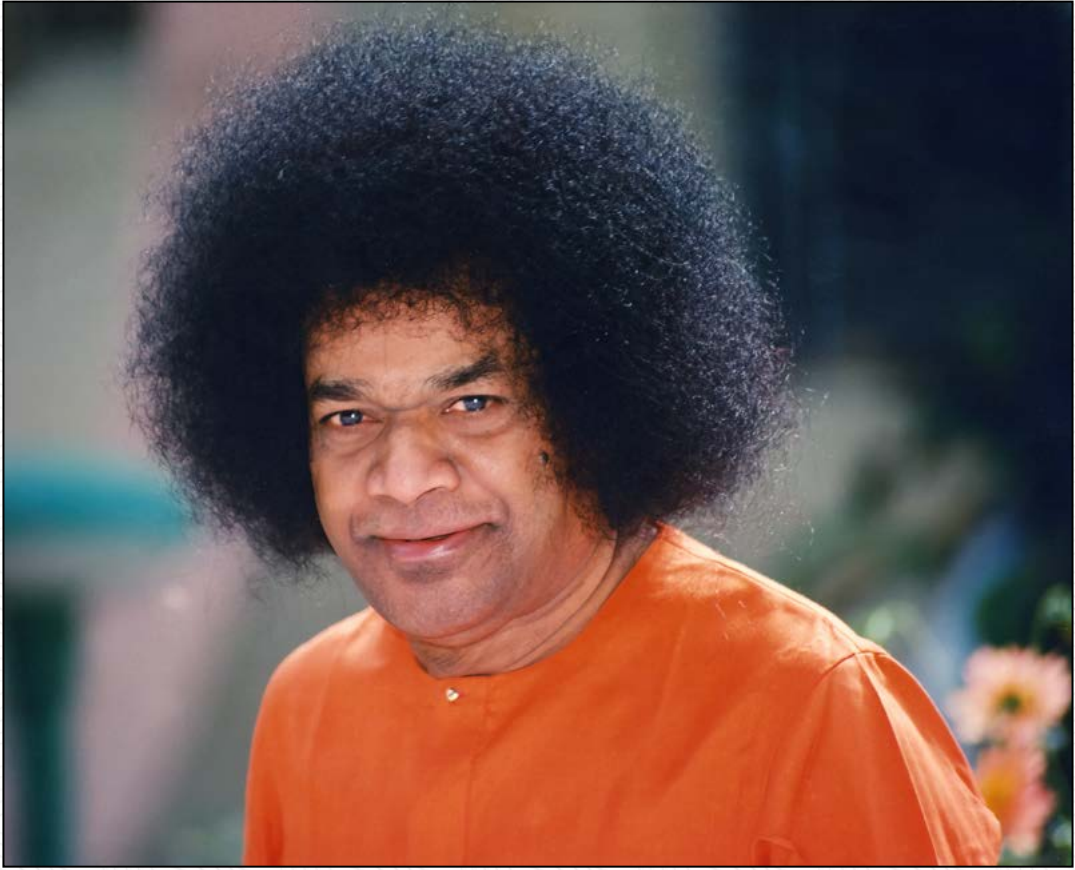


**DIVINE
GLORY &
MISSION OF**
SRI SATHYA SAI



Love! Love! Become what you truly are – the embodiments of love. No matter how others treat you or what they think of you, do not worry. Follow Jesus Christ. Love for your own evolution and not for what others say. Do not imitate others. Cultivate your own life. You have your own heart, your own opinion, your ideas, your own will. Why then imitate? Imitation is human, they say; but creation is Divine.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
December 25, 1979



DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO
BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA





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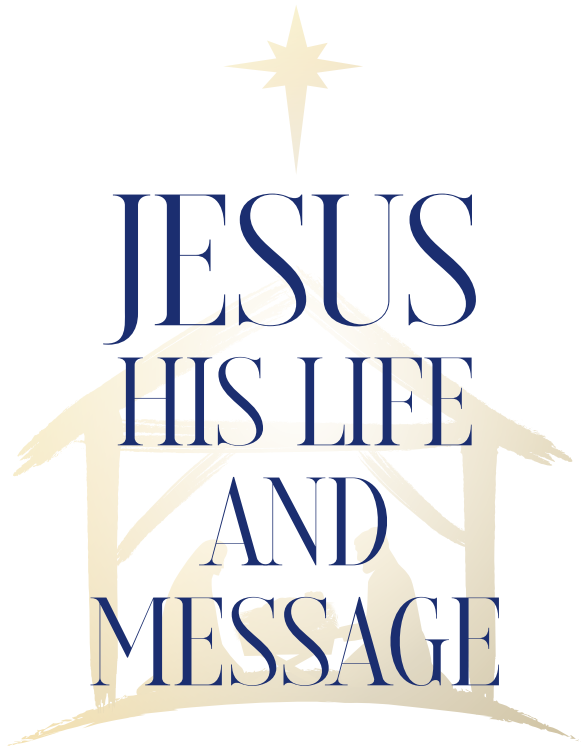
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JESUS HIS LIFE AND MESSAGE

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba said that religious holidays like Christmas will become holy in the true spirit when we celebrate them understanding the inner spiritual significance of these festivals. Christmas is about celebrating the life and glory of the Lord Jesus, studying His teachings, and practicing them in daily life. **Jesus Christ came to teach man the high ideals of love and sacrifice** when the temples of worship had become places of business and when the high priests and scholars followed the letter of the scriptures, forgetting the spirit. Lord Jesus was born in the little town of Bethlehem, in a small manger, to the chosen mother, Mary. Blessed were the few who could recognize His divinity only by His grace – the three wise men from the East and an old Jewish spiritual seeker named Simeon, who took the baby Jesus up in his arms, blessed God, and said: “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen the Savior sent from You.”¹ Later in His life, when He was ready to be baptized, John the Baptist said that he could not baptize Him; instead, Jesus should baptize him. Thus, he recognized the greatness of the Lord Jesus. Through the ages, there are a few chosen ones who,

by God’s grace, recognized the divinity of *Avatars* even when they were *incognito*, looking like mere mortals. This happened with Rama, Krishna, and even Sathya Sai Baba; very few people recognized Swami’s divinity in the early years. Even at this time, out of billions of people, **only those blessed with His grace can have a glimpse of His divinity and experience His love.**

Lessons Taught by Jesus

As a young boy, Jesus explained the inner meaning of the scriptures, which the elders did not appreciate. When the priests said that it was not allowed to do anything on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, which was a holy day for the Jews, He declared that no days were forbidden for good acts with firm faith and clear authority. His love was universal. He forgave the sin of Mary Magdalene and accepted her worship because she had intense devotion. Jesus appreciated her pure love. Mary Magdalene washed Jesus’s feet with tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed them with perfume. God looks at the heart of the people, not their outward appearance. Jesus taught us not to judge others so we may not be judged. When people were ready to stone a fallen

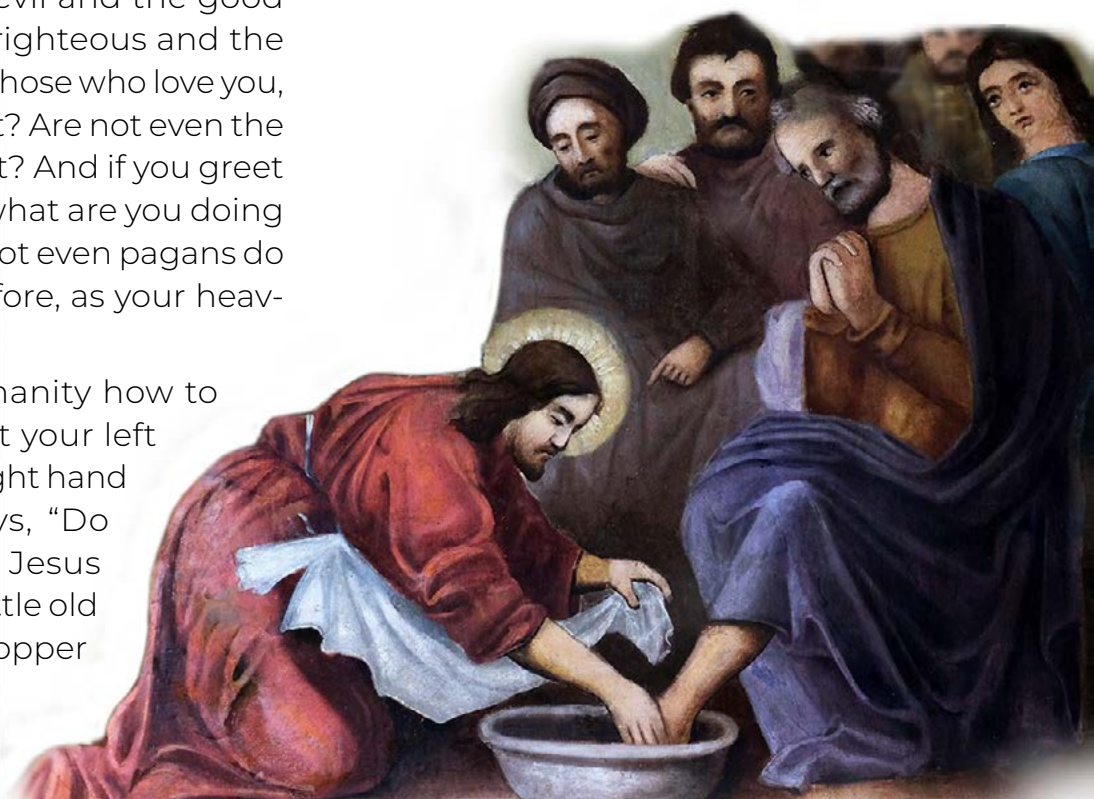
woman to death, He came in the way, saying, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."² Everybody backed off, and she was saved, and then He told her, "Go and sin no more."³ His message was, **"Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but fail to notice the beam of wood in your own eye?"**⁴ Swami said, *"When we want to develop divine love, it is very important to practice not to find faults in others but find our own faults."* The noble quality Lord Jesus demonstrated in His life was forgiveness. When Peter, His disciple, asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven,"⁵ which means we should forgive the wrongdoer many more times. His life was His message. Even when He was being crucified and in intense pain, Christ prayed to the Lord, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."⁶

He advised people to forgive their enemies. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' **But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.** He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁷

Jesus also taught humanity how to give, saying, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand does."⁸ He further says, "Do it with utter humility." Jesus gave the example of a little old woman who put two copper

coins in the coffer, "I tell you the truth," He said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth, but she out of her poverty, put in all she had to live on."⁹ God looks at the heart of the giver, not the gift. Similarly, when the super specialty hospital was being built in Puttaparthi, Swami recognized the contribution of a young boy who gave 100 rupees (equivalent to only two to three dollars) out of the donations of millions of dollars received from other donors toward the hospital construction. **God looks at the purity of heart and the love and simplicity of the giver.**

The greatest commandment of Jesus Christ is, **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and, Love your neighbor as yourself."**¹⁰ This command means we should love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. We should share the joy and suffering of others as our very own. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, *"He is the greatest yogi who identifies himself with the joys and sufferings of others."* But Christ went even further at the last supper when He washed His disciples' feet and shared the bread as



His body and wine as His blood. He said, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."¹¹ Thus the Lord Jesus showed us how we should love each other and everyone the way He loved us unconditionally.

Lessons from His Disciples

Peter was one of the 12 disciples of Jesus. His name derives from the word 'petra,' which means rock in Greek. Peter's faith was solid like a rock, and he recognized Jesus as Christ. Jesus said to Peter: "You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church."¹² But even Peter denied Christ three times, and his faith wavered when he encountered worldly challenges and opponents. St. Thomas too, doubted Him and wanted proof that He was indeed resurrected. But later, it was St. Thomas who spread the message and love of Jesus worldwide, including India.

Judas, one of the twelve disciples, betrayed Jesus just for a few coins. Jesus foresaw this before it happened. In the 2001 Christmas discourse, Swami said there would be many betrayers like Judas during the time of this *Avatar*. The lesson is – Let us always be careful, let us not be subject to doubt like Thomas or wavering in faith like Peter or be tempted like Judas, but **let us have absolute, unwavering, steady faith in God, our Lord Sai, in all situations.** There is a beautiful example in the Bible of a Centurion (leader of soldiers) from the Roman army. When his servant, whom he loved as his son, became ill and was about to die, he called out to Jesus for help. When Jesus was ready to come to his house and heal the servant, the Centurion said, "Lord, there is no need to come. Just say one word, and he will be healed." Lo and behold! by the time he turned around to return to his house, the servant was completely healed. Then Jesus told the people around him,

"Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."¹³ That is the kind of faith that is needed. We should pray to the Lord for His blessing to have such absolute faith in all situations.

His Miracles

Miracles of Jesus Christ are expressions of His compassion and unconditional love.

They are like visiting cards to be connected with Him. He made the lame walk, the blind see, the mute speak, and He healed the lepers. He raised the dead like Lazarus and performed miracles galore. He showed how He could control nature, as witnessed by His calming the storm in the Sea of Galilee. He exorcised evil spirits and ghosts from people, which also reminds us of how Swami performed similar miracles in the early years of His Avatarhood.

In Cana, Jesus changed water into wine at a bridegroom party that had run out of wine. This wine tasted ambrosial due to His divine touch. Likewise, we heard that Swami turned water into petrol when the car He was being driven ran out of fuel. On one occasion, Jesus also multiplied food to feed the multitudes. He used five loaves of bread to serve thousands of people gathered, and even after serving all, seven basketfuls of food were left behind.

His Message

Lord Jesus Christ gave His message in simple parables, like our Lord Sai, who shared them in the form of small stories called *Chinna Kathas*. Some of these parables touch our hearts, especially the parables of 'The Good Samaritan' and 'The Prodigal Son.' All these stories teach us how to lead a spiritual life. Jesus taught us how to get rid of the obstacles in our spiritual path, mainly attachment. That is why, when a devotee said he would join Lord Jesus after burying his dead father, He replied, "Follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead."¹⁴ **When we follow**

the Lord, our highest priority is serving Him and His mission.

Similarly, when a wealthy man wanted to follow Christ, He said, "Sell what all you have and follow me," which the man was not ready to do. Jesus said, "Choose between God and mammon. You cannot serve two masters." He also said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."¹⁵ In a similar vein, Bhagawan Baba has said, "*Mine is a single-seat sofa,*" "*You cannot serve two masters,*" and "*You need to give the highest priority to God.*"

The Beatitudes

Jesus Christ gave an inspiring sermon from the top of a mountain called the 'Sermon on the Mount,' which includes the 'Beatitudes.' These are fundamental spiritual teachings, and I want to touch on a selected few.

One of His notable sayings is, "**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**"¹⁶ Our limitation is that we do not see God because of our impurities, which is why Swami said, "*Don't seek God but see God.*" Since everything is God, we should see God in every atom, cell, and moment. To do this, first, we need to get rid of our impurities. The impurities are the six inner enemies: desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride, and jealousy. Once we are pure, we can clearly see and experience God. That is why, Swami said, "*Purity is enlightenment.*"

Another important teaching of Christ is, "**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.**"¹⁷ Everyone needs peace in this world where there is so much hatred, unrest, conflict, and confrontation. Swami beautifully revealed the solution, "*When there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in character. When there is beauty in character, there is harmony at home. When there is harmony at home, there is order in the nation. When there is order in the nation,*

there is peace in the world." To establish peace, one should follow the path of righteousness. That is why Lord Jesus and Lord Sai both promoted peace through love and righteousness. It is the peacemakers who are the true children of God.

In another Beatitude, Jesus said: "**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**"¹⁸ He urges us to be like a child; not childish, but childlike, which means that when we have no ego and we are innocent and pure like a child, we can enter the kingdom of God.

"**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted,**"¹⁹ Jesus proclaimed. Everyone, whether a saint or a sinner, rich or poor, king or pauper, goes through pain, challenges, and difficulties. When we go through these adversities, our character improves. If we have the right attitude and consider everything as the will of the Lord, God will comfort us, and although we may still encounter pain, we will not suffer.

Jesus extolled right conduct, saying, "**Blessed are those who hunger after righteousness, for they shall be fulfilled.**"²⁰ Swami says, "*Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah*" (*Dharma protects those who follow the path of Dharma*). For spiritual seekers, it is essential to walk on the path of *Dharma* or righteousness. Swami also says, "*Righteousness is love in action.*"

The next Beatitude of Jesus is, "**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.**"²¹ Jesus was always full of compassion, and our Swami also said, "*The heart with compassion is the temple of God.*" Compassion toward all people is a noble virtue. When we are compassionate, God also showers His grace and compassion on us.

Another notable Beatitude of Jesus is, "**Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**"²² When we walk along the righteous path and do good, there may

still be obstacles, and people may criticize and persecute us. But when we exercise forbearance and accept it as His will, the kingdom of heaven is ours, and the Lord will be pleased and shower His grace and blessings on us.

The next Beatitude gives us practical guidance on the spiritual path, **“Blessed are those who are slandered for the sake of God, for great is their reward in heaven.”**²³ In life, we will likely face criticism, and even the *Avatars*, Lord Krishna, Shirdi Sai, and Sathya Sai, were criticized during their lifetime. These *Avatars* embodied love, but people still reviled them and found fault with them. The lesson is for us to take criticism with equanimity and faith, believing that our reward will be higher in heaven, as taught by Lord Jesus. Swami has said, *“If you criticize or abuse anyone, all that will come back to you. The world is nothing but reaction, reflection, and resound. Whatever you do will come back to you and nothing else. This is the divine law.”* Hence, let us welcome criticism and not be affected by it; let us face it all with a smile and be relaxed and calm. Smiling is the best answer to negativity and criticism.

Practice Divine Love

The practice of divine love is the underlying principle of all the commandments and teachings of Jesus, including the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. Jesus showed by example the three stages of

spiritual progress. In the first stage, He said, **“I am the messenger of God.”** In the early stages of spiritual practice, when we have body consciousness, we think we are the servants of God. We perform service and feel “we are the messengers of God.”

Then as we progress, we get purified more and more and sincerely practice His teachings. In this second stage, Jesus said, **“I am the Son of God.”** We arrive at a stage where we experience being part of God, where He is our father, and we have compassion and love just like the father, Lord Jesus, or Lord Sai.

In the final stage, Christ declared, **“I and my Father are one.”** We realize we are one with God and assert our Godhead because we know we are the embodiment of divine love, and we see no difference between God and ourselves. These are the various stages in spiritual life. In *Sanathana Dharma*, the first stage is called *Dvaita* (dualism), where we are separate from the Lord. Then as we evolve, the next stage is *Viśishtādvaita* (qualified dualism), where we think we are part of God. The final stage is *Advaita* (non-dualism), where we experience everything as divine. Swami said, *“The best way to celebrate Christmas is by sincerely following the teachings of Jesus and making our life His message.”*

Jai Sai Ram.

References

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Luke 2:29-30 | 6 Luke 23:34 | 12 Matthew 16:18 | 18 Matthew 5:3 |
| 2 John 8:7 | 7 Matthew 5:43-48 | 13 Matthew 8:10 | 19 Matthew 5:4 |
| 3 John 8:11 | 8 Matthew 6:3 | 14 Matthew 8:22 | 20 Matthew 5:6 |
| 4 Matthew 7:3 | 9 Luke 20:45-21:4, ^{NIV} | 15 Matthew 19:24 | 21 Matthew 5:7 |
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| | 11 John 13:14-5 | 17 Matthew 5:9 | 23 Matthew 5:11 |



All are Children of God



*Mohammedans call him Allah
Christians call him Jesus (Yehova)
Vaishnavites address him as Phullaabjyaksha,
the Lotus-eyed One (Lord Vishnu)
Shaivites hail him as Shambo (Lord Siva)
Various people worship GOD.
The Same GOD will bless everyone with Health,
wealth, and prosperity
Believe this truth that GOD is ONE.*

(Telugu poem)

Embodiments of Love! Just as the phenomenon of nature includes heat and cold, there exists joy and grief. In one instance, heat confers comfort to human beings. In another instance, cold confers comfort. Hence both heat and cold have to be welcomed. Both contribute to comfort and contentment. Time, space, and circumstances decide their use and their value. This attitude of accepting the inescapable fact is what is proclaimed and praised as serenity, equanimity, or *samathwam* in the Bhagavad Gita. The Gita says, ***Samathwam Yoga Uchyathe (Equanimity, equal-mindedness, and steadiness, are known as yoga).***

The Gita also declares, *Yogah Karmasu Kousalam*, “Yoga is the quality of excellence that has to characterize every action.” Happiness and misery, success and failure, and praise and criticism are intertwined; they can never be experienced singly. One is elated by gain and depressed by loss. When praised, one is elated; when blamed, one feels down.

Discrimination Is the Distinct Feature of the Human Being

Consider the reality of things – the mountains we see are made of rocks; the Earth on which we live is made of soil; the trees that provide comforting shade are made of wood, living beings are made of flesh. All these are the aberrations of the five elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth). New forms and names are assigned to distinct patterns of the same forces and

things that demonstrate distinct characteristics. Since ancient times, India (Bharat) has been proclaiming and propagating this holistic spiritual truth with the outlook of renunciation and serenity. India has been conferring eternal and permanent peace and comfort and has been a spiritual lighthouse. Then and now, proclaiming the spiritual message of “May all the worlds be happy (*Samastha Lokah Sukhino Bhavanthu*)” is the culture of India. **One has to inevitably take up the path of sacrifice (renunciation). This is the ultimate truth.** If one doesn’t consciously take up the path of sacrifice, the world will forcibly teach the path of sacrifice. **Vedas teach that “Through renunciation alone, can you attain immortality.”** The discriminating faculty glorifies human life. Without the discriminating faculty, one’s life would deteriorate. With the increase in spiritual wisdom (*jnana*), human life would prosper. The one with good discriminating faculty is a true human being.

The *Upanishads* have declared that the human being is one who is resplendent with good human qualities with discriminating faculty. Human beings seek comfort and bliss (*Ananda Pipasi*). There is a scientific basis for this. It is in the nature of fire to burn and reduce things to ashes. Coolness is the nature of ice. Sweetness is the nature of sugar. Likewise, **Bliss is the nature of man.** Therefore, people seek bliss and do not prefer sorrow. In our daily lives, we experience this always. When we



see someone who is sad, we ask them why they are sad. What is the reason for this? The reason is that to be sad and to cry is not in one's nature. If someone is calm and blissful, no one asks why you are not sad. The reason is that sorrow is not the nature of a human being. **Why are then human beings not able to experience this natural state of bliss?** As a result of one's association with the surroundings and company, one's senses are filled with attachment (*raga*) and hatred (*dwesha*). As a result, one is not able to experience the state of bliss.

Human beings seek transient and fleeting comforts and pleasures in the world around them. This aspect of desiring comforts and pleasures is attachment (*raga*). If one doesn't attain these comforts and pleasures, it turns into hatred (*dwesha*). Attachment and hatred arise from desires. Therefore, in one's thoughts, one should limit the desires so that the impurities in the senses can be cleansed. Unfortunately, human beings are forgetting the bliss that is in themselves and are seeking happiness in the external world. People spend time during the day at the office. After returning from the office, they go to entertainment clubs to find happiness. They feel that they can secure bliss in the clubs and through playing cards. Some go to cinemas (movies) in search of bliss. They feel that the bliss they are seeking can be found in the cinemas. There are others who indulge in alcohol in the hope of experiencing bliss. These are all one's delusions, and the bliss is not in these external objects. **One is forgetting the Bliss within oneself and making various efforts to find bliss in the external world.** They may get material happiness, which is temporary, but one should realize

“*There is such a close relationship between Bliss and the Divine. This is why man hungers for Bliss. In seeking Bliss, one is really seeking union with God.*”

the truth that permanent bliss is within oneself. Thus, **when one understands that the originating source of bliss is the Atma, one can experience true and permanent bliss.** One should contemplate and enquire, ‘where have I come from?’

In the Bhagavatam, it is stated that true bliss can be obtained when one reaches where one has come from – the source of one’s origin. A person travels to a place to fulfill some tasks. This is a temporary stay. In that place, in spite of favorable weather, comforts, and conveniences one experiences, true peace and rest can be experienced only when one returns to his native place. Likewise, the human being has come as a pilgrim to this world, a field of action (*karma kshetra*). In this transitory resting place or caravanserai (*sathram*), no matter how many worldly comforts, luxuries, fortunes, and conveniences are there, it is just a temporary resting place but not one’s destination. **The Jeeva (individual soul) is a traveler to Mokshapuri (the place of liberation). In this travel, the body is like a temporary inn. The mind is like the watchman.**

What is the relationship between these three – the individual soul, body, and mind? There is no relationship between the watchman and the traveler. There is no relationship between the inn and the traveler. The traveler stays there temporarily for rest and moves on with one’s travel leaving behind the inn and the watchman. Human beings are not recognizing this truth. They are considering the inn (body) as their own home and the watchman (mind) as their servant and try to end travel at the inn, considering that as the

permanent home. They are forgetting the purpose of the pilgrimage. Without being able to complete their pilgrimage, they are not able to reach their original abode and go through many difficulties in between.

A vessel that is made from the soil will one day end up becoming part of the soil. Water that is evaporated from the sea will become clouds and through rain will become part of the streams and rivers and will one day become one with the sea. **A human being has forgotten his real home (Atma) and has been caught in the middle of relationships and attachments and is getting imprisoned.** Thus, one is subjected to many types of delusions, not being able to recognize the Truth and becoming distant from the path of Truth.

Be Ever Watchful of the Mind’s Machinations

People are subjected to attachment and hatred. What is the reason? People are always thinking of an object or a person. The person who is being thought of will become an object of interest. As this interest in the object gets strengthened, it will become a desire. Some of the desires may find fulfillment, and some may not be fulfilled. When the desires are not fulfilled, anger arises. This anger will increase the state of fury and make one forget their humanness. This will result in forgetting one’s true nature, and one will not be able to discriminate between right and wrong and will act in their own way. This will lead to sinful actions. **What is the reason for these sinful actions? The reason is desires and desires only.** So, in the first instance, one should try to control the mind through multiple means. How can we control this

“*Jesus alone is not a Son of God. You are all Sons of God. It is not that only Jesus and God became one, you all can become one with God.*”

mind? Many people, without recognizing the ways to control the mind, give more freedom to the mind in various modes. Without controlling the senses, it is a big mistake to try to control the mind. The mind comes under the influence of the senses. **Therefore, without controlling the senses, controlling the mind will not be possible.**

For the spiritual path, there are three important principles:

1. Speech not tainted by untruth
2. Actions not tinged with violence
3. Mind not affected by attachment and hatred

These three are important spiritual treasures. Cultivate a style of speech free from falsehood, actions unpolluted by violence, and a mental attitude unsullied by attachment or hatred. Also, direct the senses along the path toward God. Be ever watchful of its machinations.

In the Bible, it is said that devotees are in search of God. We have to enquire here whether the devotees are in search of God or God is in search of a devotee. God is everywhere (omnipresent). We don't have to search for God. God, who is omnipresent, is in search of a true devotee. What kind of a devotee is God looking for? **God is looking for a truthful, genuine, and selfless devotee.** Besides, He seeks an ideal son who can be held before mankind as an example and an inspiration. God is searching for such devotees. Such devotees have become extremely rare to find nowadays. In these times, devotees weep and wail when they ought to be really exulting; they

exult when they have every reason to weep and wail! Wherever you see, one comes across such deceitful devotees. So, the Lord says,

I am searching, I am searching, still searching,

I searched in the past, I search, and search now,

For the man knowing and observing his true Dharma.

Therefore, God is in real need of devotees who completely offer their love, actions, and all their sacred feelings to God. Devotees who see the oneness of all beings and those who express sorrow at the suffering of others are the true devotees. Jesus was such a Being with a sacred Heart. In the beginning, Jesus announced Himself as the Messenger of God. This means Jesus identified His body as having been offered to God to alleviate human misery. **He considered His body as an instrument to serve those that are in grief and considered Himself as a messenger to serve those in need.** With the body, through His actions and service, Jesus was offering to people the message of the Lord. Step by step, from the body level, Jesus entered the realm of the mind. Through the realm of the mind, Jesus felt, **'I am the Son of God.'** With the mind, Jesus discriminated between the eternal and the fleeting. Jesus contemplated on what is Truth and what is Untruth. This world is filled with imagery. All the actions are reflections of the feelings within the mind. Jesus continued to recognize such Truths. He continued to enquire about the nature of the mind and reached the realm of the intellect (*buddhi*). When

Jesus reached the realm of the intellect, **He declared, 'I and My Father are One.'** What this means is that Father and Son have a close relationship. Every spiritual aspirant should recognize here that **all are children of God**. The qualities of the Father will come to the Son. Just like a tiger is born from the womb of a tiger, from the Father who is Divine, the Son will be born with Divine qualities.

Lessons that Jesus Taught and Symbolized

The birthday of every great person is celebrated by those who adore and follow him. This day being the birthday of Jesus, is celebrated as a festival. It should not be considered a mere holiday. People from various religions have been observing the festivals from an outward view. People merely go to the Church on 24th December, perform some prayers but return home to revel, drink, and dance. This is not the inner significance of the occasion of Christmas. This is not the inner meaning of the birthday celebrations of noble persons. Festival day doesn't merely mean that we are satisfied with the consumption of tasty delicacies. **The importance of festivity is the method of churning one's heart, cleansing the dirt formed in the heart and purifying it, and keeping in view the ideals given by noblemen as a goal.** Of many ideals that were given, making an effort to live up to at least one of the ideals is the true essence of a celebration.

Today, man is living to fulfill his desires and not for the sake of living a life of ideals. He is aspiring for a long life (*Deergha Jeevithamu*), but not for a divine life (*Divya Jeevithamu*). He is not making an effort to follow in the footsteps of noble souls. As spiritual aspirants (*sadhakas*), this is an important activity to undertake. Every spiritual aspirant (*sadhaka*) should become the master of the house and not the servant. What is the difference between

the master and the servant? The servant has the idea of the items which are visible externally. But the master has an idea of all the precious items which are kept in the house and in which locations in the house. Since we are behaving as servants, we are always on the lookout in the world for names and forms. But once we become masters, we will recognize where the treasures and priceless possessions are. **Jewels of good values, good behavior, and good thoughts are hidden in us. We should try to identify them within us.**

We need to put into practice all the noble qualities attributed to the *Atma*. So, man needs to put into practice the noble qualities and noble ideals latent in him. Such precious qualities, if we hide them inside and do not share them, it's of no use.

You all know very well that where there is good, there is bound to be bad. Even in such moments, we should never take a step back or become a weakling. **Once you are convinced that the work you are doing is truthful and pure, then with faith, you need to face all the obstacles and try to achieve the goal.**

Do not think that today being the birthday of Jesus, doing *bhajans*, singing songs, and enacting dramas would bring sanctification to the forefront. Among the various teachings of His, we should practice at least a few of them. **All of you should remember this as the true significance and essence of Christmas.**

*Where there is Faith, there is Love,
Where there is Love, there is Peace,
Where there is Peace, there is Truth,
Where there is Truth, there is Bliss,
Where there is Bliss, there is God.*

There is such a close relationship between Bliss and the Divine. This is why man hungers for Bliss. **In seeking Bliss, one is really seeking union with God.** Therefore, always contemplate on God, who is Bliss.



Happiness is union with God. It is only through God that we can secure Bliss.

Material objects do not confer Bliss. Even if they confer Bliss, it will be fleeting. These are all scenes in a dream. One may experience bliss in a dream, when one wakes up in the morning, bliss is no longer there. Therefore, human beings and spiritual aspirants of these times should consider joy and grief, sin and merit, and bliss and sorrow with an even keel filled with Divinity. There is only one way for this. This is called liberation. This is also called immortality. Whether it is called liberation or immortality, what is the path to this? What is the way to immortality? **Removal of immorality is the only way to immortality.** The day when we remove bad traits, bad practices, and bad feelings in us, that day, we achieve immortality. Therefore, Jesus made His Heart pure, steady, and selfless by removing impurities. This is what is called Sacred Heart. We should develop such a Sacred Heart. We have the heart. What is the use? **We should make our hearts like that of Jesus' heart.** So, how should we pray?

*I am in the Light; I am in the Light,
The Light is in Me; The Light is in Me,
I am the Light; I am the Light.*

When we come to this stage, we have established a link between that Heart and

this heart, and our heart becomes sacred. **So, it is not enough if we say, Swami, Swami, Swami. Swami should become our Being. Or we should become part of Swami.** Whether we mix sugar in water or water in sugar, it is the same. So, in the first instance, you try to become part of God. Or you try to make God become part of you. Since time immemorial, there have been two paths. When one becomes part of God, it is called *Bhakti* (Devotion). Making God part of us is called *Jnana* (Wisdom). We should try to achieve one of these paths. To bring the unity of these paths and to make Divinity grow in people, Jesus came as a messenger. **Not just Jesus alone is a messenger, all of you are messengers of God. Jesus alone is not a Son of God. You are all Sons of God. It is not that only Jesus and God became one, you all can become one with God. Jesus came as a representative of God and taught these sacred teachings.** So, we should develop such sacred feelings and noble ideals on the festival days, not as a mere celebration in outwardly form. Today, people have come from various countries to Prasanthi Nilayam. Having come this far, undergoing many difficulties and discomforts, you should try to imbibe at least one valuable, divine, and sacred quality in your Heart. Having come to India, do not make



it a mere tourism trip to see new places and some worldly attractions. You should imbibe sacred feelings and noble ideals and make your life sacred. Likewise, there are thousands that call out, Swami! Swami! Swami! in the Ashram. Having been in close proximity to Swami for a long time, they tend to forget the value of Swami's nature, glory, and majesty.

A small illustration. There is a hotel and next to it is a pharmacy store. The person who is serving in the hotel gets tired after serving for a long time and gets a headache. This person working in the restaurant goes to the pharmacy store for a pill to get relief from the headache. The person who is working in the pharmacy store gets tired after working for a long time. This person would go to the hotel and asks for a hot coffee to cure his headache. The person working in the hotel, as well as the person working in the pharmacy, both have a headache. Headache is common for both. The headache of the person working in the restaurant is cured by getting the pill from the pharmacy. The headache of the person from the pharmacy is cured by the hot coffee from the hotel. The pill in the pharmacy couldn't be used as a cure for the person working in the pharmacy. Likewise,

the hot coffee from the hotel couldn't be a cure for the person working in the hotel. What is the reason for this? Each one of them has spent all their time in the same environment, and they are not able to realize the value of the remedy they have in their own environment.

Likewise, all are in God all the time. People are experiencing Divinity. They are not able to realize the value. In meditation or in some other setting, if someone gets a glimpse of Divinity, we are struck with great wonder. Another example to illustrate this. Swami has been sitting here for two hours. When people go back to their homes and get a glimpse of Swami, even for a fraction of a moment in their meditation, they are filled with bliss. When something happens that is not natural, it leads to wonderment. This wonderment is not permanent. **One should experience the bliss that is natural.**

Embodiments of Love! **Whatever activity you may be engaged in, whatever you see, wherever you may be, and whatever you discuss, feel that everything is filled with the Divine, performing everything as an offering to the Divine, and thereby sanctify your lives.**

December 25, 1982

Journey to Self-Realization

Part 2

In this second of three articles, a devotee describes his journey to Sri Sathya Sai Baba and, ultimately, Self-realization. The first part appears in the previous issue (Volume 1, Issue 9) of Sathya Sai - The Eternal Companion.

A New World

IN THE FALL OF 1978, MY SPIRITUAL IMPASSE CAME TO AN END. Although I did not recognize it immediately, my life was about to be transformed again. My mother, who had been living in Ojai, California, for about three years, came to Arizona to visit her friends, Bob and Barbara Bozzani. Their home was about a two-hour drive from our home in Tucson, so Rose and I drove up to see them on a Saturday. After a pleasant visit, as we prepared to leave, my mother handed us two books – ‘The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist’ by Samuel Sandweiss and ‘Sai Baba Avatar’ by Howard Murphet. Accepting the gifts, we returned to our home in Tucson.

After a couple of weeks, I decided to look at these books. I was amazed at the story told in the two books. In all my reading of metaphysical and religious texts, both popular and academic, I had never seen anything so remarkable and heart-warming.

I felt compelled to follow up and explore the life and teachings of this seemingly divine master, Sathya Sai Baba. What was particularly unusual was that these books touched my heart profoundly. My heart had become dry and lifeless. My spiritual path had always been primarily an intellectual pursuit. **But the truth in these books intuitively held me spellbound. The experience of finding a genuine spiritual authority was new and remarkable.**

This experience reminded me of God's immanence within all of us and, therefore, of our essential unity.

A few weeks after receiving the books, Rose and I went on a drive to the Gila wilderness of New Mexico and the White Mountains of Arizona. We spent one night in a small motel in the town of Alpine at an elevation of about 10,000 feet. I had been thinking all day about the stories of this amazing holy man, Sai Baba, and was captivated by the charming way He related to His devotees. Miraculous signs and unusual displays of grace highlighted the stories that extolled His love and sweetness. The stories were unlike anything I had read or heard before. Throughout that night, I was unable to sleep. **The mantra "Om Sai Baba" kept on repeating in my mind for the entire night.** No other thought or word broke the spell, and yet, in the morning, I was fully refreshed.

When I got up from bed in the morning, I looked around the small motel room. The curtains, carpet, and bedspread were all orange, the color of Sai Baba's robe! Opening the entry door, I was startled by the beauty of the scene outside. I saw fresh snowfall covering the tall pines of the rural alpine setting, the roads, and the parking lot. Everything was quiet, still, and serene, wrapped in a pristine white blanket of snow. And to me, the world appeared anew. I knew with great certainty that the truth and love that I had newly experienced would transform my life. **Again, my life had been changed, this time by the love and grace of Sathya Sai Baba, on the morning of November 23, 1978.** It was Sai Baba's Birthday! Baba says that the real birthday is

the day God is born in our heart. So, I count that day as my birthday too!

Proof Positive

Returning to Tucson from the White Mountains, I gained a new outlook. The faith and devotion that overwhelmed my consciousness showed me a new dimension to spiritual life. I had always believed that the essential questions in my life would succumb to the rule of reason. The new dimension that now surged from my heart opened the door to show me the closeness of God within. And so, the power of the heart started to transform my consciousness. **I had not previously felt a close relationship with God in any form, but now having tasted that sweetness, longed for more.**

Sai Baba must have looked within my nature and decided that I would need something tangible to hold on to. My nature was pragmatic and analytical. My mind demanded some proof before it would surrender its dominion. Not more than a week or two later, that proof appeared! I had cut a black and white picture of Swami out of the book, 'Sai Baba Avatar' by Howard Murphet, and placed it in a small plastic frame on my desk. It was a picture I would later learn was taken on the sacred night of Maha Shivaratri, the annual sacred night of worshipping Shiva. I was drawn to the picture because it reminded me of the images of the Himalayan Masters that my mother had on her altar when I was a child.

I viewed the experience as a token of the omnipresence and grace of God, who is with us every moment.

Within about a week of framing the picture, it seemed to have a small smattering of fine grey ash outside the glass frame. This holy ash, called *vibhuti* by Sai Baba devotees, is a symbol of Sai Baba's presence and grace. It symbolizes the end of all matter – that which cannot be reduced to any further state. It also represents the end of desire and the futility of worldly materialism. **I was amazed to see the ash on the front of the picture.** Rose too, saw the ash and, unbeknownst to me then, even tasted it to be sure it was not dust or incense ash. It was fragrant and clearly not the result of any other cause. It could only be a sign of Sai Baba's presence and grace.

Soon after, I decided I wanted a 'smiling' picture of Sai Baba in that frame. I changed the picture but saved the original. However, after about ten days, I gave away my new 'smiling' Sai Baba picture to a friend with whom I discussed my experience. So, I put the original photo back on my desk in a nicer frame. After reflecting on the experience with the *vibhuti*, it seemed only respectful to keep the picture in a beautiful frame. I purchased a new golden-colored wooden frame with non-glare glass. I acquired some dark green matte boards for

the border to secure the photo and create a nicer presentation. I carefully brushed off the image several times. I also meticulously cleaned the frame and the glass to be sure they were spotless. If holy ash appeared again on this picture, I wanted to be sure there was no question of mistaking the sign.

I placed the picture beside me on my left side as I sat on the floor. I turned to my right to cut a small piece of mat board with a box cutter. I then removed the center portion of the mat board, where the picture would be secured. Looking immediately back at the picture, I observed a small mound of loose gray ash lying on top of the photo to my left!

How could such an event take place in the seconds that I had looked away? **I was, of course, wonderstruck by this spontaneous display that I could only attribute to divine grace.** I picked up the picture and bent it slightly while tilting it to allow the ash to slide down the center of the picture into my hand. Clearly, the ash could not have been on the picture as I carried it around the house. Nor had it been there when I had set the picture down seconds before. I placed the ash in my mouth and ate it, as is customary when Sai Baba offers it to a devotee in the audience before Him in India.

Why would He show such **compassion** to a person like me? Certainly, I held no claim to saintliness or even of unusual goodness.

This experience was undeniable proof that my rational mind could not ignore or refute. It happened before my very eyes. There had been no one else present to observe or interfere. I viewed the experience as a token of the omnipresence and grace of God, who is with us every moment. It demonstrated that He constantly sees our thoughts and actions and can immediately respond when the time is right. And indeed, if He was in me, then He was also inside everybody else.

This was a momentous revelation to me. This experience reminded me of God's immanence within all of us and, therefore, of our essential unity. For the same God resides as the witness and motivator within each of us. This experience also proved to me the amazing grace and compassion of a loving Lord. Why would He show such compassion to a person like me? Certainly, I held no claim to saintliness or even of unusual goodness. But more was to come...

Mr. Jonathan Roof
USA

(I will narrate more of my experiences in the concluding article)



Mr. Jonathan Roof is currently retired and living in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. Jonathan first visited Sathya Sai Baba in India in 1979. As a result of his interactions with Sai Baba, he wrote the three volumes of Pathways to God. The first volume came out in 1991 and the third volume in 2004. Jonathan served as an SSSIO officer in many capacities for 33 years. In 2011 he led the USA pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam. Mr. Roof was President of the Sathya Sai Baba Central Council USA from 2001 until 2011. He has spoken extensively at Sai conferences throughout the USA and Canada.



SEE EVERYONE AS DIVINE : Practice Die-Mind

As the musical offering by Northern European devotees ended, a visibly delighted Bhagawan motioned for the *Arati* song to be sung. I was thrilled at the opportunity to wave the flame, lit with camphor, to the Lord, and I trembled with joy. Even as I offered *Arati* to Swami, **I prayed that my life should be like that of the camphor – pure, white, fragrant, and burning out to glorify God.** He seemed to acknowledge my prayers with a smile and raised His hands in blessing. What a perfect end to a perfect evening! The 7th of August 2010, the day when Sri Sathya Sai Baba blessed the devotees from Northern Europe with the opportunity to sing 15 songs in His presence, was also my last *darshan* of Him physically. But **I know that Swami has always been with me, eternally** – even before I knew Him during His earthly sojourn and after His '*Mahasamadhi*'!

Human Values in Business

Today, I see Swami's hand in my life, even in my motivations, from an early age. When I was a child, I realized that the world was in a bad state, and all I wanted to do was to make it better. I decided to prepare well for life and studied at an American business school.

My first job was with a supermarket chain store in the Netherlands. At that time, I noticed how old and used glass was disposed of in landfills, and it piqued my conscience to imagine the harm we were doing to the planet. **God (today, I know it is Swami) inspired me with an idea to solve this issue** while it also helped to boost profits for the company. Back then, recycling glass was not in vogue, and

I began to pursue a second *sadhana* seriously: to find good in people when I meet them



I found that melting existing glass required much less energy than producing virgin glass in a furnace from sand and soda. It was a win-win solution: we segregated the glass and made money by selling it to glass companies; the companies also saved a lot of money in raw material costs. Thus, the Netherlands became the first European country to set up glass recycling containers to collect waste glass. The initiative was a huge success and spread across Europe like wildfire. I worked in this company for two years until it was acquired by a big firm. I never patented this idea, and I am grateful to Swami for inspiring me to do it as a selfless service. I found a new marketing job with the country's biggest provider of school supplies. However, I learned that this company was deceiving customers with sub-standard quality products. I protested, but no one supported me, and my words fell on deaf ears. I left that company and started a foundation with a health food store and a vegetarian restaurant. We also organized classes on healthy lifestyles and vegetarian food for thousands. It was a resounding success. Simultaneously I managed a publishing firm, producing stationery from recycled paper. This initiative, too, turned out to be a great success. In the meantime, despite its large size, the dishonest school supplies

company went bankrupt. This reminds us of Swami's message that commerce without morality is not only useless but positively dangerous.

Lasting Happiness Comes Only From Swami

I was about thirty years old when, one day, I found myself on my knees praying, "Oh Lord, thank you for your great creation and for all the opportunities you have given me! But there is one thing missing in your creation—lasting happiness. So, please take back this creation and give me one with lasting happiness."

Though God had always been a part of my life, I decided to start looking for God. I started reading about great spiritual masters like Paramahansa Yogananda, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sri Aurobindo, and Lord Buddha and took some classes. The teacher mentioned the name 'Sai Baba' in my Buddhism class. I asked, "Who is Sai Baba?" The teacher answered, "**He is God on Earth.**" If that was the case, I wondered what are we all doing here and that we should all visit Him.

It was 1979, and I immediately joined the local Sai Baba Center. Within a few months, I was invited to join a group visiting Swami. I told them, "Well, I just got married. I don't

have the money to travel, and I don't know how to explain my plans to travel to India to my wife! But if Swami can resolve these challenges, I will be glad to go with you."

Swami indeed arranged for both! My accountant had erroneously filed my tax returns, showing that I owed taxes; in reality, a tax refund was due to me. After two weeks, a large sum of money was credited to my bank account, which was more than enough to pay for the trip to India. My wife also had a vision not to object to my plans. Hence, she agreed with my plans to travel to India!

So it happened that a group of nine couples, a man, and a woman, finally arrived in Whitefield, Bangalore, from the Netherlands to see Swami.

Two Interviews

During *darshan* that year, Swami came near me and asked, "How many?"

"20, Swami."

"Which country?"

"Netherlands, Swami."

Swami just walked on. But the moment He reached the door of His residence, He stopped, turned around, and came straight to me.

"Go!" He said. That was the first interview with Him. In that first interview, I saw Him materialize rings and chains for many.

The thought that came to my mind was, "Do I also want a ring?"

Spontaneously, the answer came from within, "No!"

"What do I ask for then?"

"I will ask to touch His feet."

That was my first *Padanamaskar*.



Let me fast-forward to 2003. I was again in the interview room. I didn't know then that it would be my last interview with Swami. My wife was also with me. Upon entering the interview room, Swami took my hand in His and held it like that throughout the interview. I melted and could not think anymore. During the interview session, Swami asked me thrice,

"Do you want a ring?"

I did not answer because I wanted only what Swami had come to give: Self Realization. But when He asked me for the third time, I replied,

"If you want to give me that too, I am happy to receive it."

Swami waved His palm and made a ring with a green stone. He put it on my finger but looked at it with disappointment.

"Wrong color," He said and asked me to take it off and hand it back to Him. Then He blew on it and changed it into a shiny, transparent stone. He asked everybody, "What stone is this?"

"Diamond, Swami!" everyone answered.

"No," He said, "**This is Die-Mind.**"

As He put that ring on my finger, I felt delighted that He gave me what I really wanted.

After the interview, Swami asked the photographer to take a picture of Him with my wife and me. Swami asked me for our address so he could send the picture. But I was then on the proverbial "cloud nine" and could not recollect my address. It was only on a later trip that one of the devotees from that interview gave me the photograph.

Significance of the Diamond Ring

Back in the Netherlands, I constantly prayed to Swami to help me become a good person. That was when I got a vision of a Divine Hand pointing at someone, with three fingers pointing at me. When Swami gifts you an experience, He alone can grant you the ability to understand it. I understood that whenever I looked at other people, I had to find three good traits in them.

So, I did this exercise intensely. Nothing seemed to happen for one full year; then, it was sheer magic for two weeks! **For two**

weeks, I could not find a single mistake anywhere or in anyone – all was perfect and divine! I woke up in a land that I never saw before. However, I did not arrive there by my effort alone. I took one step, and Swami took one hundred steps toward me to make this possible. After two weeks, this experience stopped as suddenly as it began. I knew I had to continue my exercises.

I began to pursue a second *sadhana* seriously: to find good in people when I meet them. But when I am alone, it is the *Die-Mind sadhana* where I just watch my thoughts. **I become a witness to my thoughts, and it is amazing to see how the thoughts drop off the moment you begin to witness them.** I only want to entertain good thoughts.

I cannot tell you how happy I am to know Swami. Swami says, "You are already saved!" That is how I always feel now.

Mr. Jan Floris
The Netherlands



Mr. Jan Floris is an innovator, marketer, and entrepreneur from the Netherlands who has always practiced human values in his professional life. He joined the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization in 1989 after meeting Sri Sathya Sai Baba and served in various capacities, including as the National Council President of the Netherlands. He is presently a Central Coordinator for SSSIO, Zone 7 (North Europe). He is also the Chair of the SSSIO Christmas Program Committee.



Christmas

With Sai

I was barely 15 years old in 1979 when I first traveled to India with my parents to see Sai Baba. The notion of a Guru or ‘God in human form’ was alien to me as all my early life was spent in a conservative Catholic school. **My parents explained that Sathya Sai Baba was an Avatar, the Divine descended in human form, like Christ, walking on earth again.** They also told me that this isn’t surprising because God incarnates from age to age when goodness declines in the world. Therefore, accepting Swami came easily and spontaneously to me.

True Spirit of Christmas in Sai’s Presence

From 1980 onwards, many of my Christmases were celebrated in the divine presence of Swami at Prasanthi Nilayam. That was when I learned how Christmas should be celebrated away from the commercial buzz, feasts, and parties that are the standard in America. Instead, in Prasanthi Nilayam, especially in those early years, Christmas was a simple celebration that was deeply spiritual with the least pomp and show.

All the foreigners would get together for *satsang* and practice singing carols which would be sung in Swami’s presence on the 24th of December, Christmas Eve. On Christmas Day, we would have the morning *Nagar Sankirtan*, marching around the Mandir singing Christmas Carols with lighted candles, ending in front

The experiences during Christmas are gifts from Sai with the sole objective of our spiritual transformation and growth.



of Swami's residence. He would come to the balcony in His white robe with a bright glow all around Him. Tears of devotion and gratitude would well up in our eyes as our hearts and tongues sang "Silent Night," "O Come All Ye Faithful," "O Holy Night," and other popular and immortal carols. **It felt like spending Christmas in the presence of the Heavenly Father!**

Reviewing His discourses during that time, the insights Swami gave on Jesus Christ's life, proving His Omnipresence, always amazed me. After listening to His discourse, we would enjoy a drama related to the life of Christ presented by His students. Then, late in the evening, Swami Himself would give each of the 1,500 or more devotees a plate of food, bringing to life the lines from the Lord's prayer – 'Give us this day our daily bread!'

Christmas Celebrations: Behind the Scenes

From 2005 onwards, Swami blessed my father, Mr. John Behner, with the honor of being the Chairman of the Christmas Committee to coordinate the Christmas celebrations by the overseas devotees, which had become a 3-4 day event. My father shared many stories about these events, which are recounted below. Based on his experience in running a large food company, my father organized teams of devotees to take charge of different aspects of the Christmas celebrations - decorations, adults' choir, children's choir, *sevada*

(volunteers), Christmas feast, transportation, rentals, audio-visual systems, photography, video coverage, reporting, and the *prasadam* to be distributed to the devotees. Everyone put in their best efforts, but **it was, and always is, Swami who silently orchestrates everything, like puzzle pieces coming together.**

Here are some incidents that illustrate His Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence!

What does Swami See in Our Offerings?

Volunteers with artistic talents would lovingly make many greeting cards and offer them to Swami during Christmas. One year, one of the cards shaped like a Christmas tree looked quite ordinary, and my father felt it should be put aside and not offered. But at the last minute, he discovered that there was no card for the children's drama group to present their program to Swami. Thus, the 'rejected' card was finally selected! When Swami received the card together with the drama outline, He held it in His hand for the whole length of the drama! **It became clear to us that Swami was seeing the devotion and dedication of the artist and not her artistic abilities.** After the evening's program, the lady who made the card was waiting outside the men's exit, and she asked my father if Swami had seen her card. He replied, "Seen it! He held it in His hand during the entire program, which rarely happens."



Lord Sai Blesses the Children

Though my father was the primary coordinator, he delighted in engaging with the kids, telling them a story every day about Swami's childhood along with tips on how to behave during *darshan*. He told them, "If you ever see Swami point His finger in your direction, He is calling you, not someone else. You should get up immediately and go to Him." During one Christmas, the children were all seated in Sai Kulwant Hall, waiting to present their drama. Unexpectedly, due to a medical emergency of a devotee, Swami had to leave for the hospital. When the car came for Him to get in, Swami motioned to one of the children. The next instant, His car was surrounded by all the children. With great delight, Swami blessed each of the children with a packet of *vibhuti* from His divine hand. When He returned from the hospital, the children happily presented their drama.

Devotion Also Needs Discipline

Another Christmas, all of us were in for a real surprise. As the children waited expectantly to present the drama, Swami sat on the stage reading letters. Suddenly, He got up and left the hall in His car. He did not return, leaving us all wondering what went wrong.

When my father returned to his room, my mother told him that Swami had been signaling by rotating his fingers when He passed her in *darshan*. My mother surmised that it meant disharmony or some dispute was going on in the group. When my father investigated, he found out that the mothers of the children were all too eager to see their children perform. So they broke in through the entrance ignoring all instructions given by the volunteers about their assigned seating. My father called these mothers and asked them if they wanted to see their children perform. Of course, their answer was a resounding 'yes.' He explained to them how important discipline was to



Swami and that they would have to follow protocol and directions from the volunteers. In the morning *darshan* the next day, he asked Swami if the children could perform that afternoon. Swami readily agreed, and the mothers behaved like angels that afternoon!

The Constant Evolution

The experiences during Christmas are gifts from Sai with the sole objective of our spiritual transformation and growth. He has also beautifully explained this process of evolution from the life of Jesus himself. During the discourse delivered on December 25, 1982, Swami explained the journey Jesus undertook into Oneness with the Divine Essence or Christhood.

First, Jesus announced Himself as being a 'Messenger of God', where He identified the body as being given to him as an instrument for serving humanity, or as Swami mentioned, "*He denied the demand of the flesh and devoted His skills and strength to relieve agony and pain.*" Then Jesus' consciousness rose to

the level of the mind when he declared, 'I am the Son of God.'"

Swami continues explaining that on the last part of Jesus' journey, "*He strove hard to discover the distinction between Appearance and Reality, between Truth and Mental Image, and He became aware of the higher level of consciousness which transcends the vagaries of the mind. From that peak of intelligence, He became aware that 'I and My Father are one!'*"

In this same discourse, Swami said: "**Jesus was a messenger of God; but note this also, all of you are messengers of God. Jesus was not the only Son of God; you are all His children. Jesus and His Father are one. You and God are also one, and you should be aware of it.**"

This is a powerful message that Swami gives. That is the evolutionary path that we need to follow. Today, walking that path for me is Christmas with Sai in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Mr. Eric Behner
El Salvador



Mr. Eric Behner hails from a family of staunch devotees of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He was involved in the formation of the Sathya Sai Center of El Salvador. He is the President of the Central Committee of the SSSIO of El Salvador and a member of the Sri Sathya Sai Foundation of El Salvador. Eric holds an MBA with more than 20 years of experience in Telecommunication. He is the Director for Business Solutions of Telefonica Movistar, El Salvador.

To Holop with Balemya

My Dear! you will find it deep within yourself. Think it many times. Ponder it, it tells you about your true nature, it gives you hope, it gives you new life, it points the way, it proves to you that GOD is within you and you are not man, man is GOD, it shows you that it is possible for you to realize GOD (Swamiji) but you and you alone must ponder this work deeply, you will find that you will begin to know what is meant by the statement: "The Self" cannot be explained, the mind knows of its existence, "The Self-GOD" is within man, you are that Self, all else is illusion of the mind's creation, the mind that creates, preserves, and destroys.

My Love! The great joy, the subtlety of the bliss, that you will feel as you come closer and closer to your Real Self; if you strive to find your self by using your mind, you will strive and strive in vain. Because the mind, cannot give you the truth; a lie cannot give you the truth; a lie can only entangle you in a web of deceit, but if you sensitize your self, awaken your true, fine, beautiful qualities

above you - nothing below you - nothing, to the right of you - or to the left of you - nothing; and dissolve your self into that nothingness, that would be the best way you could explain the realization of the Self. and yet that nothingness would not be the absence of something like the nothingness that nothingness is the fullness of everything, the power of the existence of that appears to be everything. - Baba -

Man is God

To Hislop With Blessings

My Dear! You will find it deep within yourself. Think it many times, ponder it. It tells you about your true nature, it gives you hope, it gives you new life, it points the way, it proves to you that God is within you and you are not man, man is GOD. It shows you that it is possible for you to realize God (Swamiji) but you and you alone must ponder this work deeply. You will find that you will begin to know what is meant by the statement: “the Self” cannot be explained, the mind knows of its existence, “the Self-God” is within man, you are that Self, all else is illusion of the mind’s creation, the mind that creates, preserves, and destroys.

My Love! The great joy, the subtlety of the bliss, that you will feel, as you come closer and closer to your Real Self; if you strive to find your self by using your mind, you will strive and strive in vain. Because the mind, cannot give you the truth; a lie cannot give you the truth; a lie can only entangle you in a web of deceit, but if you sensitize yourself, awaken your true, fine, beautiful qualities.

Above you – nothing. Below you – nothing, to the right of you or to the left of you – nothing; and dissolve yourself into that nothingness, that would be the best way you could explain the realization of the Self and yet that nothingness would not be the absence of something like the nothingness. That nothingness is the fullness of everything, the power of the existence of that appears to be everything.

Baba

LOVE IN ACTION



BELARUS

Purity Day – Cleanliness is Next to Godliness

As part of the 'Active Summer 2022' program and Zonal Day of Purity, SSSIO volunteers and children from four cities in Belarus participated in a clean-up project. In Baranovichi, the volunteers enthusiastically removed garbage in the forest near a village. Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Center of Vitebsk diligently cleared the banks of the Vitba river, a city park, and areas around an apartment building. Similarly, Sai volunteers from the city of Lida beautified the landscape of a housing complex, cleared a playground, helped to clean an apartment, and planted some bushes. Finally, in Minsk, Sai volunteers cleaned up a forest park and collected garbage along the streets. Sai was there all along, and He showered His blessings in the form of a sudden downpour during which the volunteers chanted the sacred Gayatri Mantra, concluding the service.



*S*ervice must be the outer expression of inner goodness. And, as one undertakes selfless service more and more, one's consciousness expands and deepens and one's Atmic reality is more clearly known.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Vidya Vahini, Chapter 8 (Loving Service)

See more stories of loving service by volunteers from around the world at the Sri Sathya Sai Universe website: <https://saiuniverse.sathyasai.org>



CAMBODIA

Service to the Needy

On April 24, 2022, in grateful memory of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, nine SSSIO members distributed rice, noodles, soy sauce, salt, sugar, and beverages to 30 impoverished children at the Cambodia Students and Children Fund Organization (CSCFO). This organization, run by local Cambodians, provides cultural and art lessons and financial resources to needy children to help them with their schooling. Sai volunteers also distributed books, stationery items, and toiletries to 20 students who attended weekly English classes regularly. The students were grateful for the gifts of love, which also brought joy to the volunteers.



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Connecting with Mother Nature

On July 17, 2022, the Ladies Wing of the SSSIO Trinidad and Tobago held a team-building activity to develop a deeper appreciation and respect for Mother Nature. The day started with 20 devotees at the Point-a-Pierre National Wildfowl Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, a wetland rainforest and fresh-water sanctuary for endangered wetland birds. The participants learned interesting facts about the sanctuary, which is home to over 70 unique species of trees and 109 species of birds. There is also a breeding colony of the Scarlet Ibis, one of the national birds of Trinidad and Tobago. The sanctuary was the perfect place for the team-building activity as its Motto is 'To Know is to Love, to Love is to Preserve.'





USA Making People with Disabilities Feel Special

"I have lived in California all my life, but because I was in a wheelchair, I have never been able to go out to the beach. This is the first time I have been able to taste the salty waters of the sea and ride the waves. The experience has been beautiful."

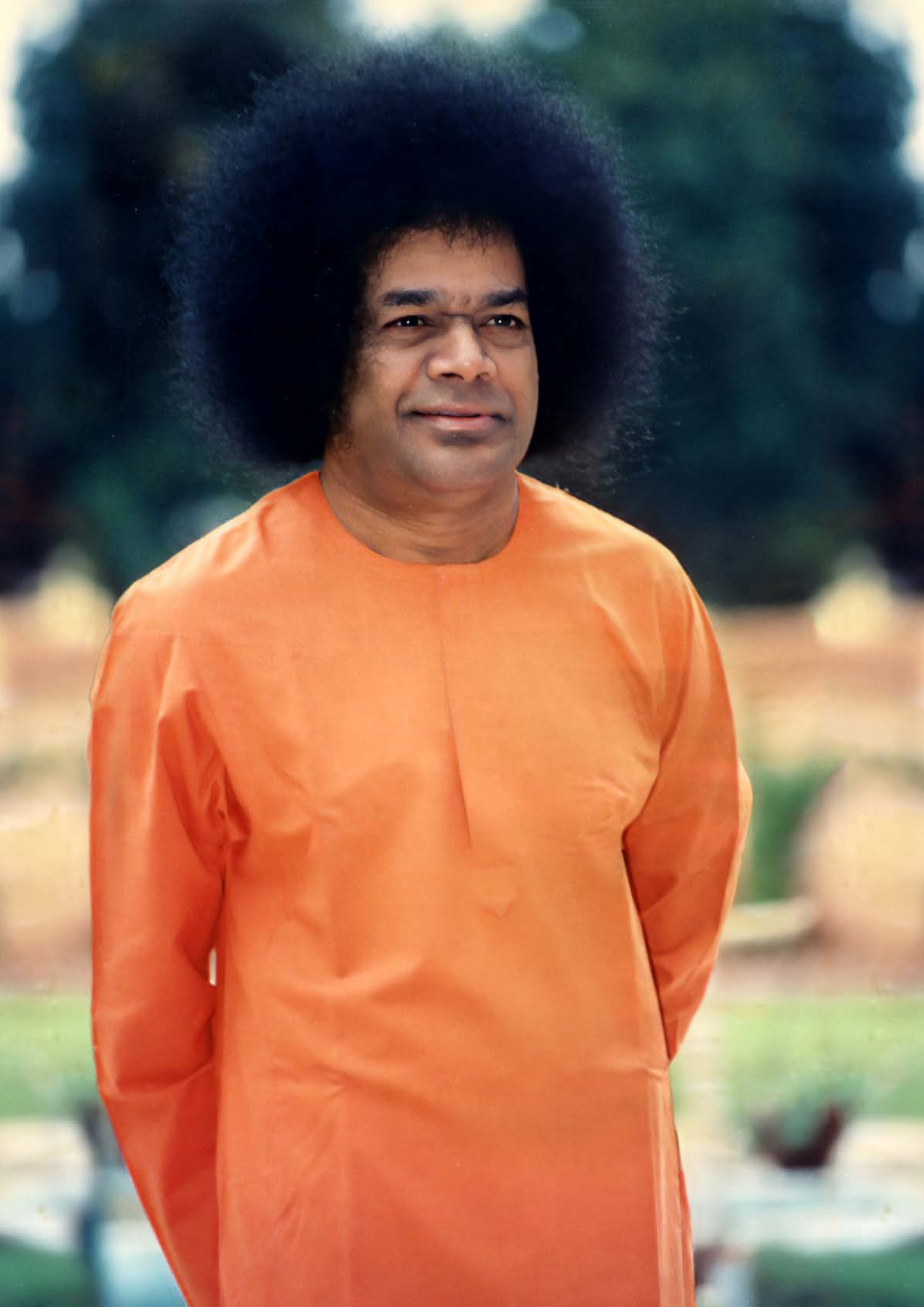
'The Day on the Beach' is an annual event sponsored by Shared Adventures. The heartwarming event provides individuals with disabilities an occasion to enjoy a fun-filled, exhilarating day at the beach. They participated in water sports – surfboarding, kayaking, canoeing, or scuba diving that they had never dreamt of.

SSSIO members of Northern California have been volunteering at the event since 1992. This year, after a two-year hiatus due to COVID, there was excitement in the air as 100 volunteers, and more than 500 participants with disabilities made their way to Cowell's Beach on July 9, 2022. They were greeted with live music by a talented local band. The guests, thrilled with anticipation, could hardly wait to get into the water for kayaking. Seeing how modern technology could help people with disabilities navigate the sandy beach and operate the kayaks to their great enjoyment was genuinely encouraging.

After the guests returned from the ocean, they were treated to a wide array of food prepared by volunteers. Afterward, they participated in many fun activities, such as rock painting, face painting, ball sorting, and memory games. Everyone also enjoyed more music and entertainment.

The joy radiating on all the faces truly proved Swami's maxim that the joy of selfless service is not limited to the recipients alone.





SAI 100

OFFERING FOR 100TH BIRTHDAY



As an offering of love and gratitude to Lord Sai for His 100th Birthday, the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization is commencing the [SAI 100 Program](#), which implements 12 initiatives to serve humanity, intensify our spiritual journey, and serve everyone and Nature – the vesture of God.

Serving the Community & Environment

Expansion of Community Adoption or Support Programs

In conjunction with Swami's 95th Birthday, 157 communities were adopted by the SSSIIO by 2020. Now, we will intensify our efforts to adopt more communities with additional service programs for SAI 100.



Mental Well-Being Workshops

The World Health Organization and medical experts around the world recognize that mental health issues are escalating every year, affecting nearly a billion people. We will intensify our efforts to improve the mental well-being of all by organizing engaging and interactive workshops, meditation, counseling sessions, and health education.

Medical Camps

More than 1,000 medical camps will be held to bring essential and much-needed medical services. These camps will provide preventive healthcare, health education, and comprehensive healthcare, including screening, diagnosis, and treatment of disease.



Massive Tree Planting Worldwide

The increasing threat of climate change and pollution has created multiple challenges for humanity, for which the mass planting of trees provides many benefits. The SSSIIO has already planted over 250,000 trees worldwide, including an unprecedented number in Africa and many other countries. We will continue to make further progress under the SAI 100 initiative.



SSSIO Organizational Improvements

Organizational Excellence

The focus is on streamlining SSSIO Organizational processes and systems, establishing best practices to better serve communities and themselves, ultimately accruing the benefits of individual transformation.



Communication Excellence: Internal & External

A seamless communication system will be established to ensure that messages sent by the SSSIO are received by everyone for more effective communication.

Active Roles & Participation of Young Adults in Sai Centers

Young Adults (YAs) are our future leaders, and it is vital to increase the engagement between adults and YAs in Sai Centers. We will empower the 30-40-year-old devotees who have graduated from the SSSILP (Sri Sathya Sai International Leadership Program) to step up and mentor the younger ones.

Expansion of the SSE Program

The children of SSE are the next generation of leadership and members of the Sai community. More and more children will be engaged in SSE by Sai Centers and Groups worldwide to solidify children's spiritual foundation to help them blossom into youth and adulthood.

Spreading His Message

International Media Academy & Digital Media Associates

This program will generate innovative and inspiring media content to disseminate the message, works, and love of Lord Sai worldwide.

Public Meetings

At least 100 public meetings will be organized across the world to bring greater awareness of Swami's teachings and their application to daily living. These meetings can be in the format of a public seminar on general topics such as stress management, healthy living, secrets of a happy life, etc. The meetings will be open to all members of the community.



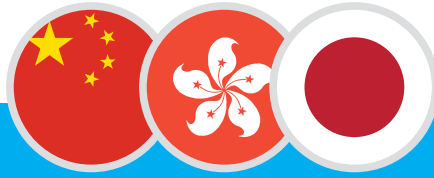
Tuition Program for Students

Tuition can greatly alter the destinies of students who need help. Our goal is to adopt at least 100 schools worldwide to improve the academic performance and character development of students through human values.

Expansion of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) Programs in the Community

Swami has emphasized the practice of human values by individuals, communities, and nations for the peace and happiness of all. The long-standing SSEHV program will intensify its approach to reach more professionals, societies, and communities across the world with the help of the 27 Institutes of Sathya Sai Education.

SSSIO ZONE 5



CHINA • HONG KONG • JAPAN

JAPAN

1975

Sathya Sai Bhajans held publicly for the first time in the city of Kobe, which translates to “door.” Kobe was the door of entry of Sathya Sai into Japan.

1979

Sathya Sai Center established at Kobe.

1980

Sathya Sai Center of Tokyo established

1981

Establishment of Sri Sathya Sai International Organization, Japan

1990

Bhagawan grants interview to Japanese group

1991

First All Japan Sathya Sai National Convention in Kobe

2018

Ten Sai Centers and fifteen Sai bhajan groups are active in Japan



Sri Sathya Sai
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION
HISTORY



Sai

Our Indweller, Guide and Protector



“WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?” Swami asked my husband innocently in His sweet and loving voice. “Denmark, Swami” was his answer, just as he always responded to questions from Swami on innumerable occasions, ever since our first visit to Puttaparthi in 1981. We always wondered what Swami’s intentions were in asking that question because He always addressed us as ‘Denmark’ whenever He called us for an interview.

Then, one day, Swami asked a five or six years old young schoolboy sitting next to my husband on the *mandir* veranda, “Where do you come from?”

His big brown eyes beamed with joy as he looked up at Swami and answered confidently, “From you, Swami.”

“Good boy!”, Swami remarked.

“Aha!” My husband thought, “this is the right answer to that question. Now, Swami, I am ready for you!” Almost the very next moment, Swami came up to him, as if He heard his thoughts, and asked, “And where do you come from?”

“From you, Swami!” was my husband’s proud response. With a gentle smile, Swami corrected him, saying, “No, no! From Denmark!” Of course, everybody had a good laugh.

The way Swami teaches us is profound. He makes us wonder, reflect, and even laugh whenever He interacts with us. He enlightens us in the interview room or in the *Darshan* lines so that the lessons get ingrained in us and stay with us forever.

As we reflect on these innocent and somewhat casual remarks of Swami, we develop new understanding, and sometimes we also realize that He answers profound spiritual questions that were important and intricate, through them. Baba’s simple and innocent questions, in fact, make us go within and intuitively find the answer there.

At the same time, during or after answering important spiritual questions, He would suddenly change the atmosphere and connect with us in a familiar and intimate way, sometimes as a dear family member! He would reveal to us that He had been present at our family events, and like a grandfather, He would share what

had happened. With His unique humor, He would imitate the expressions and words exactly as we used them in our family setting. Thus, **He would convey that He knew everything and that He was always with us, watching over us.**

The Lord who takes Care of Everything, Big and Small

During our first visit in 1981, Swami gave my husband His robe along with His guidance to start the Sathya Sai International Organization of Denmark upon our return. Later, in 1987, He urged us to form the first Institute of Sathya Sai Education outside India. He continuously guided and advised us, making necessary changes to our plans. To understand His directions, we had to stay alert and engaged, letting go of all expectations. Then He took care of every small detail in His own divine, enigmatic way.

For instance, in 1982, we came to visit Him with our 7-year-old son, who refused to eat the spicy food in the South Indian canteen. He would protest saying, “I do not like this!” Since there was no Western canteen at that time, in frustration, we said, “But what do you want to eat?” Prompt came his answer, “French fries,” not realizing that my question was a rhetorical one. However, Swami seemed to have taken note and answered my son’s innocent demand! The following day, we were amazed to see that they served French fries in the South Indian canteen! Not only that, but they continued to do so for the rest of our stay! We had never seen this happen in the South Indian canteen before, or at any time since then. Such is Swami’s grace and compassion!

On another occasion, we had multiple leaks in the bathroom of our flat in Prasanthi Nilayam. I just called out, “Oh, Swami! We need a plumber!” It was a spontaneous

The heart is
where we
can find Him
when we need
His presence,
His guidance,
and His
reassurance.

cry for help. Before my husband could call for a plumber, within minutes, there was a knock on the door. It was a plumber! With a smile, he asked, "You called?" **This shows He hears all our prayers.**

Swami – Physician Par Excellence

Once, I had a dream where I was calling out to Swami, and He was warning me about an impending illness. I woke up with an upset stomach, with the symptoms of dysentery. At *darshan*, Swami walked past me without even looking at me. Then, suddenly, He turned around and gave me a direct, penetrating look. At the very moment when He looked into my eyes, the illness suddenly disappeared!

In 1983, just before our departure from the Ashram, our son developed a very high fever. My husband decided to take him to the hospital while I finished packing. Suddenly a volunteer (*Seva Dal*) came to our door with the message that Swami wanted to see us! We had hardly arrived at Swami's door when He came out and said, "*Denmark, come.*"

Inside, Swami's first remarks were, "*Why are you going to the hospital when I am here?*" My husband started explaining, but Swami just smiled and held our son's hand, saying, "*He is fine, nothing is the matter with him. No fever. Feel it for yourself.*"

Later our son told us that the moment Swami held his hand, he got well and felt cool and happy!

In another instance, due to a work-related injury, I developed a joint disease in my spine. I was confined to bed for long periods and suffered intense pain. Though it was very difficult to travel to India, I somehow managed to visit Swami many times. During one of our visits, Swami came to me quietly during *darshan* and *bhajans*, stood right before me, and looked intensely into my eyes. He stood still for quite some time, and after a while, I miraculously felt a warmth surging up my spine. When He turned around and walked away, my intense pain had completely disappeared! After returning home, X-rays showed that the cartilage between the joints had healed and improved!

On one occasion, Swami was distributing sweets to the ladies, and everybody around me stretched out their hands to receive one from His Divine hands. When He came to me, He did not give me a sweet. Instead, He looked at me sweetly and said, "*Always smile.*" The disappointment of not getting a sweet from Him instantly became a valuable lesson because His

smile and the energy He transmitted to me touched my heart and lifted me up. I understood that He had something more precious to give me. I found these priceless moments of interaction immensely valuable and transformative.

He is The Indweller and Guide

Many a time, He asked us, “*What do you want?*”

It was a simple question to make us think and reflect on our desires and expectations in life so that, eventually we would realize the goal of our lives. He redirected our focus from an outer vision to an inner vision. But irrespective of our answer to His question, He blessed us to fulfill our needs at that moment.

I never thought that the time would come when He would no longer move among us.

He had asked me in the later years, “*What do you want?*” I replied, “Your love, Swami.” ***“My love? Why do you want my love? I am in your heart!”***

His reply reminded me that it was foolish to seek Him outside. He clearly confirmed that I would be able to find Him in my heart!

The heart is where we can find Him when we need His presence, His guidance, and His reassurance. Thus, He prepared me for the time when He would no longer be physically present among us.

Coming to Swami was the beginning of the journey that completely changed our lives. From the very first visit, He blessed us with interviews and intimate interactions. Through His loving guidance, He inspired us to walk the spiritual path. Finally, He led us to the point where we understood what He had really come to give us and why He descended on earth! ***He came to share His Selfless Love*** and to inspire us to open our hearts and embrace the world through the higher principle of Universal Love.

Mrs. Marianne Meyer
Denmark



Mrs. Marianne Meyer graduated from Copenhagen Business College and later continued her university studies in philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy. She and her husband, the late Thorbjorn Meyer, established the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization in Denmark and the ESSE Institute. Mrs. Meyer has served in many capacities in the SSSIO. She is a Member of the Prasanthi Council and a Director of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation.

from the
International Sai Young Adults

In this Christmas issue, we are pleased to share updates on the inspiring work of Sai Young Adults from Mauritius, the SSSILP 2022 Graduation Ceremony, and a Serve the Planet initiative on Avatar Declaration Day with the theme “Love the Planet to Serve the Planet.” We are also pleased to share with you a very special Christmas reflection and a fun crossword puzzle to solve. But first, read the clues, please!

SSSIO International Young Adults Committee

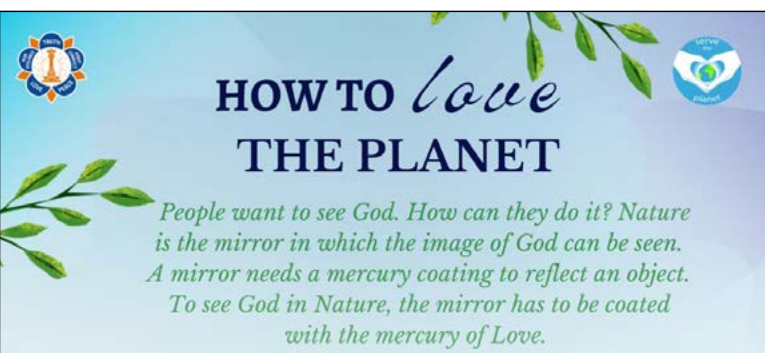


LOVE THE PLANET TO SERVE THE PLANET

On the auspicious occasion of Avatar Declaration Day and Serve the Planet (STP) anniversary, the STP Subcommittee launched a 6-week challenge on the theme of “Love the Planet to Serve

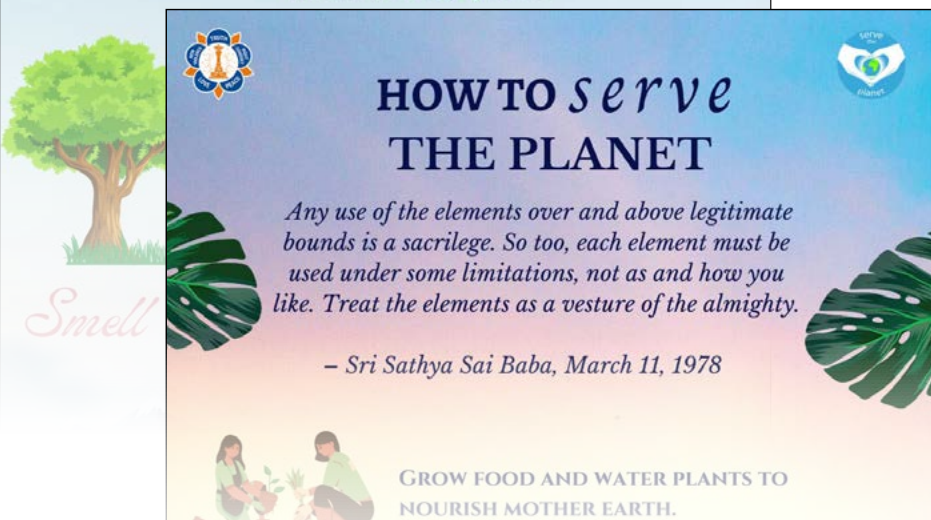
the Planet.” The aim is to develop a beautiful relationship with our Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the form of Mother Earth, from whom we learn kindness, tolerance, service, sacrifice, and compassion. Each week, the initiative will highlight and explore a different sense organ through Nature. As we utilize our five senses to love Mother Nature in

different ways, we will automatically start practicing simple ways to show our love and respect for Mother Earth. In the final week, a few simple tips will be shared that one can implement daily to make the world a better place to live for all.



HOW TO *love* THE PLANET

People want to see God. How can they do it? Nature is the mirror in which the image of God can be seen. A mirror needs a mercury coating to reflect an object. To see God in Nature, the mirror has to be coated with the mercury of Love.



HOW TO *serve* THE PLANET

Any use of the elements over and above legitimate bounds is a sacrilege. So too, each element must be used under some limitations, not as and how you like. Treat the elements as a vesture of the almighty.

– Sri Sathya Sai Baba, March 11, 1978

GROW FOOD AND WATER PLANTS TO NOURISH MOTHER EARTH.

GRADUATION CEREMONY



With the Divine grace of our dearest Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, on October 29, 2022, 97 YAs from around the world graduated from the SSSILP 2022, adding to the growing army of 1,800 illustrious Sai leaders representing more than 47 countries.

Enriched with Bhagawan's inspiring teachings on ideal leadership, the participants completed nine online, instructor-led sessions in conjunction with completing the module, pre-reading material as well as post-module activities. These graduates are now equipped with practical tools to become ideal leaders not only within the SSSIO but also in society at large!

This momentous occasion beautifully unraveled through Sai Baba's *Mahavakya* (great saying) on Leadership – '*To Be, To Do, To See and To Tell!*' The program included talks from eminent speakers, inspiring reflections, a melodious musical offering, vibrant *bhajans*, and a Divine Discourse by Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

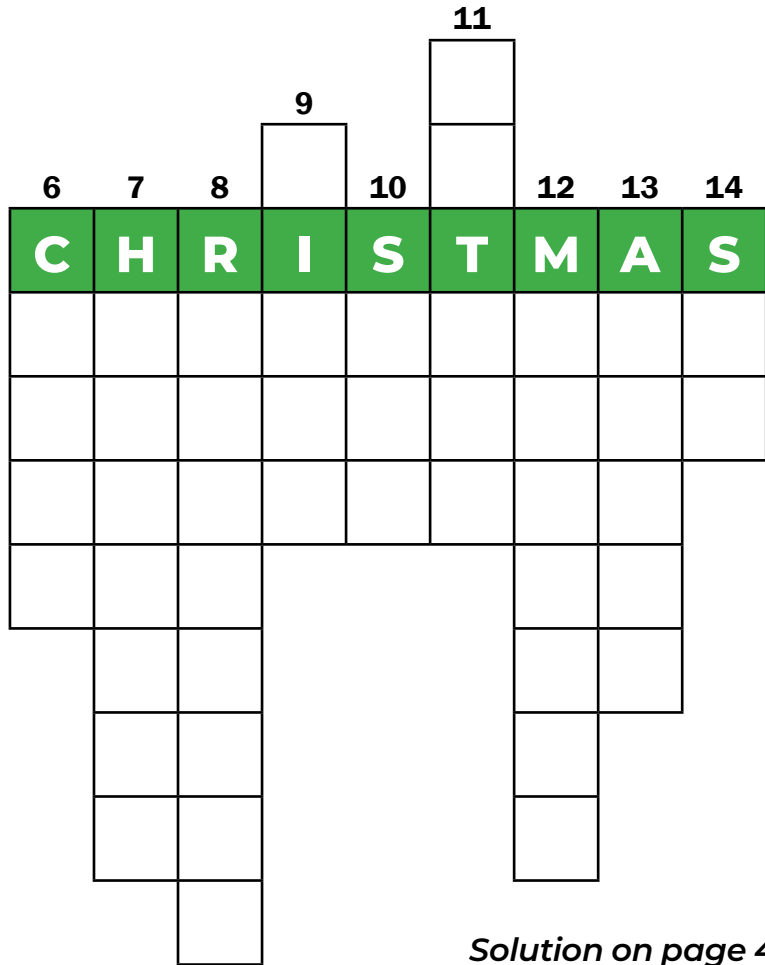
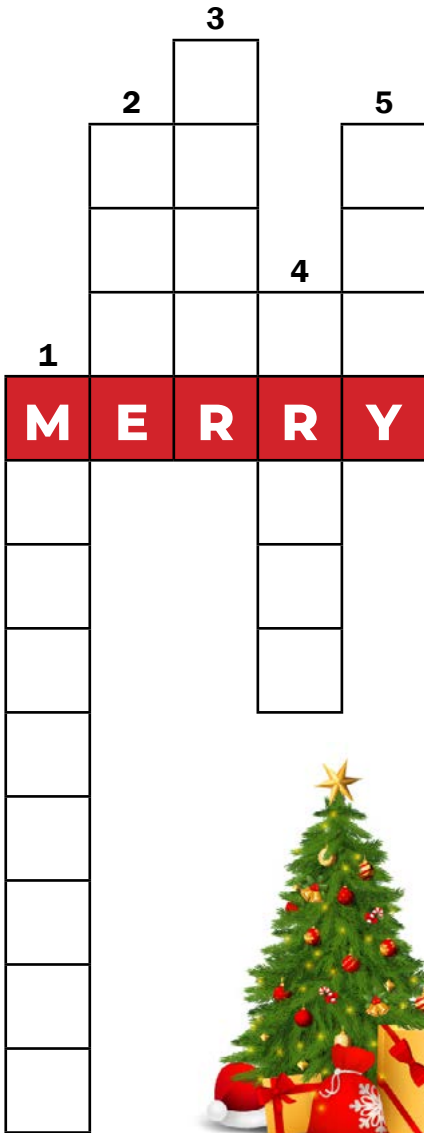
Keynote speaker, Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman, SSSIO, emphasized the qualities of an ideal leader following the example of the perfect leader – our beloved Swami. He elaborated on the traits of gratitude, empathy, attention to detail, practicing before preaching, and above all, the selfless love of a leader.

Guest speaker, Mr. Satyajit Salian, had the good fortune of serving Bhagawan for 13 years, from 1998 to 2011. During this time, he spent many precious moments each day with the Lord and was privileged to receive guidance and training from Swami. He shared his experience and words of wisdom on how to become an ideal leader. Mr. Salian also delved into various leadership frameworks and scenarios, exemplifying how Swami's training and leadership principles prepared one to deal with them effectively.

The SSSIO YA Coordinator, Ms. Vahinie Pillay, the SSSILP co-leads, and deputy leads also spoke about their own experiences, knowledge, skills, and tools that have helped them on their spiritual journey and serve effectively in SSSIO leadership roles. The ceremony concluded with an inspiring song and a glorious *Arati* done simultaneously by all the graduates at their own altars around the world.

The end of SSSILP 2022 marks a glorious beginning for SSSILP 2023, as we have received an overwhelming response for the program next year. We look forward to onboarding the new class in January 2023 and witnessing the great service of the alumni.

C H R I S T M A S
C R O S S W O R D



Solution on page 46

This crossword is based on Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Divine Discourse given on Christmas Day, December 25, 2002. Please read the discourse to find the answers:

<https://saispeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/love-and-morality-need-hour>

1. The one who loves God.
2. *This* alone can protect us, not atom or hydrogen bombs.
3. One of Jesus' very first disciples.
4. Jesus said, "Death is but a ___ of life. Wherefore do you shed tears?"
5. Sacrificing it on the cross earned Jesus a good name.
6. **6, 10, 13** Three of the five aspects that every object in the world has.
7. Castes are many, but *this* is one.
8. Though there are many of these, their goal is one.
9. Holy Book of Christianity.
11. Why search for God when He is already ___?
12. Love and *this* are the need of the hour.
14. The one whom God loves.

TREE PLANTING INITIATIVE

Mauritius, Zone 9

Nature is the demonstrable proof of the existence of God. Nature is not under any obligation to any man, it takes no orders from any man, it operates according to the will of the Divine.

–Sri Sathya Sai Baba
July 12, 1988

The expression of Divine Love must not be confined to human beings but should be extended to all beings - trees, animals, and other species. Inspired by this Divine cue of celebrating their love for nature, the planet, and its resources, the Young Adults, members, and SSE students of the Sri Sathya Sai Centre of Tyack, Mauritius, undertook a noble project of planting medicinal and endemic plants at the Endemic Garden of Morcellement Tyack. In loving observance of Avatar Declaration Day, also known as Serve the Planet Day across the world, plants and saplings of different varieties were planted at this Endemic Garden that adorns the south of the island.

Love for Nature was in action, and everyone enjoyed this endearing activity towards Mother Nature. Saplings of Mulberry, Acerola Cherry, Jamaican Roselle, Atte, and Duranta were planted with an admirable team spirit, thus encouraging Young Adults and SSE students to undertake similar exciting projects in the future. This project was also a step towards the large-scale, worldwide reforestation project of the SSSIO to celebrate the upcoming 100th Birthday of our beloved Lord, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Values-based action blended with gratitude and love for trees, flora and fauna saw the daylight with this noble activity.



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Sai Young Adults

<https://sathyasai.org/ya>

yacoordinator@sathyasai.org



Email





Mr. Samir Vedantham USA

Growing up, my family and I would always visit Puttaparthi, at least for a day, whenever we visited India. It was always a short stay in our hectic schedule. So, I always prayed to Bhagawan in my heart, "Swami, I want to stay here longer, ten days!" One year, I received a text message from my Regional Young Adults Coordinator that a Sai devotee was looking for a YA to participate in a Christmas play in Puttaparthi. I immediately responded with a "Yes" without requesting my employer for vacation or knowing any other program details.

Is it any surprise that my employer granted my leave? When the yearning is sincere, Swami's grace is spontaneous! It was my first time traveling to India alone without my family, and that too for an extended period. The organizer asked us to plan to stay in Puttaparthi for precisely ten days. I was chosen as one of the main characters in the play! The only catch was that I had to grow a mustache - something I did not want to do! But since it would bring me closer to Swami, I agreed. Anything that takes us closer to God is good; anything that takes us away is bad!

In Puttaparthi, I spent my time diligently rehearsing my lines, trying my best to avoid any distractions that kept coming in my way. Instead of venturing out and exploring the town, I kept to myself and focused on the opportunity Swami had granted me. I found myself constantly trying to improve the delivery of my dialogue. The day before the play, the organizer noticed my hard work and gave me the privileged opportunity to offer *Arati* in Sai Kulwant Hall after our program ended. I was overjoyed! As I was returning, Bhagawan even "arranged" that my train compartment included a high-ranking Government Official who was also visiting Puttaparthi. As he was provided with high-security detail, all my nervousness about traveling alone vanished. Swami sent me home with armed guards!

I learned at His Lotus Feet that He always fulfills our desires, in His own way, at the right time. We must enthusiastically say "Yes!" to every opportunity He affords us, and any trials along the way are His way of securing His choicest blessings! Thank you, Swami!



WHAT DOES CHRISTMAS MEAN?

FORT LAUDERDALE SAI CENTER | GROUP 1 - 4 | USA

CHRISTMAS MEANS...



Jesus, Santa Claus,
Love, Season of Happiness,
Giving back to others,
Exchanging our love
with each other.



A CHRISTMAS FAMILY TRADITION

Opening presents on
Christmas morning in
front of Swami's picture,
Baking cookies and cakes,
Putting up lights for senior
citizens to enjoy.



HOW WE CAN BE MORE GIVING AT CHRISTMAS TIME

Give away Christmas gift
bags for needy children
and families.



GIFTS I WOULD GIVE BABY JESUS

Somewhere warm and cozy
to live, serve the needy and
poor



HOW I THINK SWAMI AND JESUS ARE SIMILAR

Healed the sick, brought
someone back to life, lives
on even after they left
this Earth



HOW I KNOW LORD JESUS AND SWAMI LIVE WITHIN ME

I always feel protected,
the Divine within activates
my goodness within.



SSE STUDENTS | FORT LAUDERDALE SAI CENTRE



HAMSINI K. | GROUP 1 | USA

A Memorable Christmas

Story by Vaidehi S & ShreyaSai | Group 2 | USA

Once upon a time, a young girl was sending Christmas greetings to her father who was far away in another country, and she had absolutely no hope for having a happy Christmas. All her friends were talking about how they were going to have celebrations for the upcoming holidays. The poor girl went to her mother, upset over her current situation. Her mother decided to console her by telling the beautiful story of Jesus Christ.

“My little one,” she began, “There was once a young boy named Jesus Christ. He wasn’t any ordinary boy however. He was one of miracles! Jesus transformed water into wine, made the dumb speak, and was even able to walk on water! Sure these miracles are captivating, but that wasn’t the real reason why people loved him. ***It was because of His kind and loving heart. The way He always put others before Himself. He always shared whatever He had with others, and dedicated His life to spread the message of God. We celebrate Christmas, not to feast and have enjoyment, but to celebrate the birth of Christ.*** Today is to smile and be happy as we all live in a beautiful world. Each one of us is able to have a glorious life. And today is the day we remember and bask in that heavenly truth.”

At that instant, they heard a knock on the door. It couldn’t be! She almost didn’t believe it. But it was no illusion when she saw, with her own eyes, her loving father, right in front of her! And with her full heart, she knew that although she may not have big parties on Christmas day, this was going to be her most memorable Christmas ever!



Upcoming SSSIO Online Events

SSSIO has been conducting online events to share Swami's love, message, and works with everyone around the world. Hundreds of thousands of people have been reached through these events streamed on the sathyasai.org/live page.

Please visit sathyasai.org/events/worldwide for further details on scheduled events, local dates and timings.

Date of Online Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
December 10-11, 2022	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri
December 25 & 26, 2022	Sunday, Monday	Christmas: <i>The Divine Teachings of Jesus Christ and Sathya Sai Baba</i>
January 14, 2023	Saturday	Zone 9 Presentation
February 4, 2023	Saturday	Chinese New Year
February 11-12, 2023	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri



[Streaming on sathyasai.org/live](https://sathyasai.org/live)



Stay in touch with SSSIO news and activities, by visiting the SSSIO websites and following/subscribing to the various communications channels below. **Click on each icon or name to visit the site.**



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Telegram



Email



Eternal Companion email list



- Sri Sathya Sai International Organization [↗](#)
- Sri Sathya Sai Universe [↗](#)
- Sri Sathya Sai Humanitarian Relief [↗](#)
- Sri Sathya Sai Young Adults [↗](#)
- Sri Sathya Sai Education [↗](#)
- Healthy Living [↗](#)



The heart of Jesus was pure and calm. Hence, it is honored as sacred. We must make our hearts sacred so that either we merge in Jesus or Jesus merges in us. When we merge, it is called *Bhakthi* (devotion); to have Jesus awakened in us is the path of *Jnana* (wisdom). Jesus was a messenger of God; but note this, that all of you are also messengers of God. Jesus was not the only Son of God; you are *all* His children. Jesus and His Father are one. You and God are also one, and you should be aware of it.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

December 25, 1982



sathyasai.org

Love All • Serve All
Help Ever • Hurt Never