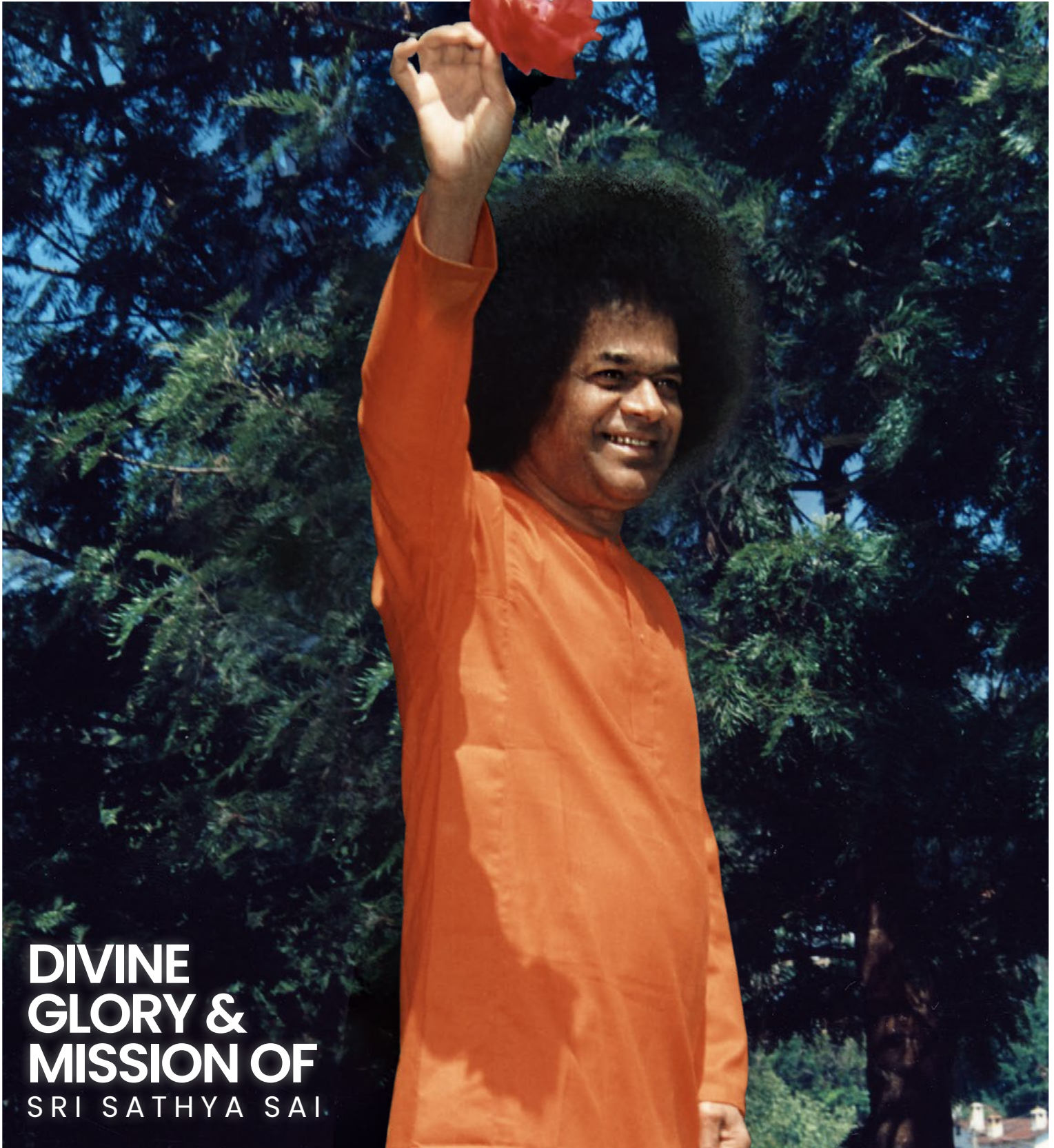


SATHYA SAI  
THE  
**ETERNAL**  
COMPANION



VOLUME 2, ISSUE 5  
MAY 2023



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



True *sadhana* (spiritual exercise) is the eradication of all evil in a man. Study of sacred texts, meditation and penance do not constitute the whole of *sadhana*. To remove all the impurities in the mind is real *sadhana*. After this comes what Buddha called *Samyak-Samadhi* or *Nirvana* (Realization or Liberation). What is meant by *Samadhi*? It means treating pleasure and pain, gain and loss alike. *Sama-dhi* (equal mindedness) is "*Samadhi*." To look upon light and darkness, pleasure and pain, profit and loss, fame and censure with an equal mind is *Samadhi*. Buddha termed this equal mindedness as *Nirvana*.

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**  
May 15, 1997

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DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO  
**BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA**





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# THE WAY TO NIRVANA

The auspicious festival of Buddha Purnima is celebrated this year on May 5th. Whenever there is decline in the practice of *Dharma* (righteousness), the Lord incarnates to reestablish *Dharma* and teach people to practice it. When Lord Buddha incarnated in 600 BC, people were caught up in ritualism, forgetting the spirit of the scriptures. They followed various dogmas and indulged in 'animal' sacrifices. **Buddha came to teach man love, compassion, and nonviolence. He declared that *Ahimsa* (nonviolence) is the highest *Dharma*.** Let us express our love and gratitude to Lord Buddha by studying His life and message that includes important concepts of Buddhism.

## His Life

Buddha Purnima is a thrice-blessed day because:

- It is the day when Lord Buddha was born in Lumbini, in present-day Nepal.
- It is the day when Prince Siddhartha became the 'Enlightened One'—Buddha, under a Bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*) at Bodh Gaya, India.
- It is the day when Buddha took Parinirvana—leaving His mortal coil at a place called Kushinagar, near a renowned holy pilgrimage place in India, Varanasi.

Born a Hindu prince, Siddhartha, with all the comforts and luxuries of royal life, also had a beautiful family and was blessed with

a beautiful wife and son. One day, when he left the protected confines of the royal palace, he saw four sights that changed his life. First, he saw an old man, bent over and holding a stick for support. Second, he came across a man suffering from a debilitating illness. Third, he saw a dead body being carried to the cremation ground. He realized that life was temporary, subject to old age, sickness, and death. Then, he came across the fourth and final sight—a young renunciate with no possessions, yet exuding joy and peace. He understood that he needed to search for the ultimate truth for his own redemption (and, in turn, for the redemption of humanity).

**He developed two qualities essential for a spiritual seeker:**

1. ***Viveka* (Discrimination)—To distinguish between the unreal and the real.**
2. ***Vairagya* (Dispassion)—Detachment from worldly entanglements.**

He left the royal palace with all its comforts and his loving family in search of the truth. He practiced penance and severe austerities (*tapas*). He went to the forest, stopped eating, and did penance under the guidance of great spiritual masters and sages. As a result of his severe fasting, he became weak and emaciated but still could not attain his goal.

# “Buddha presented an ideal for leading a life of nonviolence.”

## The Middle Path

He then realized that neither self-mortification nor self-indulgence would lead to the goal. He realized that this was not the path and that he should adopt the ‘middle path.’ One needs moderation in food, sleep, and recreation to be happy.

In Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 6, Slokas 16 and 17, Lord Krishna says that *Yoga* (union with God) is not possible for those that eat too much or abstain from eating anything and for those that sleep too much or are always awake. **But Yoga is attained by the one who is moderate in eating, recreation, activities, sleep, and wakefulness. Swami also emphasized that life is a ‘limited company.’** He elaborated, saying that both high blood pressure or low blood pressure, high temperature or low temperature, and excess weight or underweight are all detrimental to one’s physical and mental well-being. He said that for spiritual progress, we should practice moderation in everything.

Siddhartha practiced this middle path and Self-inquiry to know, “Who am I?” He finally realized, “I am I,” and became the Enlightened One. Thus, under the Bodhi tree, Prince Siddhartha became Lord Buddha and proceeded to teach His sermon at Sarnath, India.

## The Four Noble Truths

Lord Buddha taught four noble truths:

- **Everything is sorrow and everything is transient** (*Sarvam Dukham; Sarvam Kshanikam*). Lord Krishna also says that life is *Dukhalayam* (home of sorrows) and *Ashashwatam* (impermanent).
- **The cause of all suffering is desire (*Tanha*).** Swami says, ‘*Man minus Desire is God.*’
- **The cessation of suffering is through *Nirodha*.** *Nirodha* is renouncing craving and desire.
- **The path to the cessation of suffering is the eightfold path.**

## The Eightfold Path

Lord Buddha declared that following the **Eightfold path is the way to end suffering.** He emphasized that one should practice:

1. Right vision
2. Right thinking
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right living
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right concentration

**This will lead to the state of Nirvana (attainment of bliss and liberation from bondage and grief).**

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba summarizes that spiritual journey is to realize our divinity by purifying our hearts and realizing the inherent unity or Oneness of all. For purity of heart, one should overcome the six inner enemies, namely, desire, anger, greed, infatuation, pride, and jealousy by the practice of the universal, eternal, and fundamental human values of truth (*Sathya*), right conduct (*Dharma*), peace (*Shanti*), love (*Prema*) and nonviolence (*Ahimsa*). He simplifies the eightfold path for practical living, saying, **“See no evil; see what is good. Hear no evil; hear what is good. Think no evil; think what is good. Speak no evil; speak what is good. Do no evil; do what is good. This is the way to God.”**

### ***Ahimsa Paramo Dharmaha* (Nonviolence is the Highest Dharma)**

In Buddha’s time, animal sacrifices were prevalent in the name of religion. Buddha presented an ideal for leading a life of nonviolence. He also practiced forgiveness. There are **two divine incidents that exemplify how He lived in Divine Love.**

The first is the incident of His cousin, Devadutta, who hated Him so much that he even tried to kill Him! He threw boulders at Buddha, shot arrows at Him, and even sent mad elephants to trample Him. But when Devadutta became sick and was on his deathbed, Lord Buddha visited him against the advice of His disciples. Sitting beside him, He said, “If I love you like I love my own son, Rahul, you will get up and walk.” Devadutta got up and walked! This is divine love—practicing forgiveness.

The next incident is about Angulimala, a dacoit and a cruel highway robber who would cut off the thumbs of his victims and keep them as mementos, strung into a garland around his neck. He collected 999 thumbs, and for the 1,000th one, he was going after his own mother! Lord Buddha, the compassionate one, wanted to save

him from this heinous sin. He crossed paths with Angulimala and, with His love, transformed him. Angulimala became a saintly person and a great monk. Later on, he attained *nirvana*.

**Swami says that the underlying principle of all human values, including nonviolence, is Love.** Love in thought is truth (*Sathya*). Love in action is right conduct (*Dharma*). Love in feeling is peace (*Shanti*). Love in understanding is nonviolence (*Ahimsa*). **But Swami also gives the highest meaning of nonviolence, saying that it should be at all levels—thought, word, and deed.** Not only should we abstain from physical violence, but we also should not use any hurtful words or think hurtful thoughts. Hurting people by speech is more damaging than physical violence. That is why Swami said that our speech should be not only truthful but also pleasing and non-hurtful. We should also entertain only loving and helpful thoughts.

### ***Brahma Viharas* (The Four Divine States)**

Buddha taught the four states to be practiced and meditated upon:

- *Metta* (Loving kindness)
- *Karuna* (Showing compassion)
- *Mudita* (Practicing sympathetic joy)
- *Upeksha* (Maintaining equanimity)

These are very important concepts because, in life, we come across people who are either equal to us, less fortunate than us, more fortunate than us, or inimical/critical of us. These four states or precepts of Lord Buddha teach us how to maintain good human relationships as spiritual seekers with all types of people.

***Metta*:** This is the practice of cultivating universal love, friendliness, and loving kindness. It is benevolence to all beings without discrimination or attachment. **It is unconditional love where ‘I’ and ‘You’ disappear.** It is loving kindness to ourselves, our peers, and even people who are difficult to





“Swami says that Love is the greatest wealth and power that one can have.”

deal with. Lord Krishna speaks about this in describing the qualities of a devotee in Chapter 12 of Bhagavad Gita that a devotee should have no hatred towards any being and be friendly with all.

**Karuna:** This is sympathy towards people who are less fortunate than us. Swami says, “The heart with compassion is a temple of God.” He says that a spiritual seeker must have the heart of Buddha, the hands of Emperor Janaka, and the head of the renowned vedic scholar and saint, Adi Shankara. Lord Krishna says, “**He is the greatest Yogi who feels the pain and suffering of others as his own.**”

**Mudita:** This is the practice of altruistic joy. It is the ability to take delight in others’ good fortunes or good deeds as a way to maintain calmness of mind and equanimity. In this state, one identifies with others and does not get jealous if they are more fortunate or have higher achievements. This is also emphasized in the Bhagavad Gita where a true Yogi feels the happiness of others as one’s own and doesn’t get envious, which is the antithesis of *Mudita*.

We practice *Mudita* when we celebrate the success of others.

**Upeksha:** This is a **state of equanimity** when people criticize us, find faults, or hurt us. Swami’s definition of devotion is treating profit and loss, success and failure, praise and blame, pleasure and pain, as the same—as gifts of God. You accept everything for what it is and let go, for balance and composure. Thus, we are not agitated by expectations, attachments, and emotions.

### Refuge in the Three Jewels (*Triratna Sharanam*)

***Triratna Sharanam* is the highest Buddhist prayer of refuge.** In the Dhammapada, the Buddhist Scripture, this is defined as:

- *Buddham Sharanam Gachchami* (I take refuge in Lord Buddha)
- *Dhammam Sharanam Gachchami* (I take refuge in Dharma)
- *Sangham Sharanam Gachchami* (I take refuge in the organization/ community of spiritual seekers)

It is said that people who practice these will understand the significance of the

four noble truths and will be able to practice the eightfold path to attain *Nirvana*. **Swami reveals the inner meaning of the three jewels.** He says that when we say '*Buddham Sharanam Gachchami*' it means that we should take refuge in our '*Buddhi*' (intellect). We need to follow our fundamental discrimination between what is real and what is unreal. Also, we should have discrimination to see what is the highest good for all and not just self-ish ends. Similarly, when we say, '*Dhammam Sharanam Gachchami*', Swami says that **we should use *Buddhi* to walk on the path of *Dharma* (right conduct) and a righteous way of living to help others.** When we say, '*Sangham Sharanam Gachchami*' it means we should serve society by using our intellect and following the path of *Dharma*. Swami said in a discourse that this can be done by following the three maxims of *Daiva Preeti* (Love for God which corresponds to *Buddham Sharanam Gachchami*), *Papa Bheeti* (Fear of Sin which corresponds to *Dhammam Sharanam Gachchami*) and *Sangha Neeti* (Morality in Society which corresponds to *Sangham Sharanam Gachchami*). This practice will help us experience divinity and bliss.

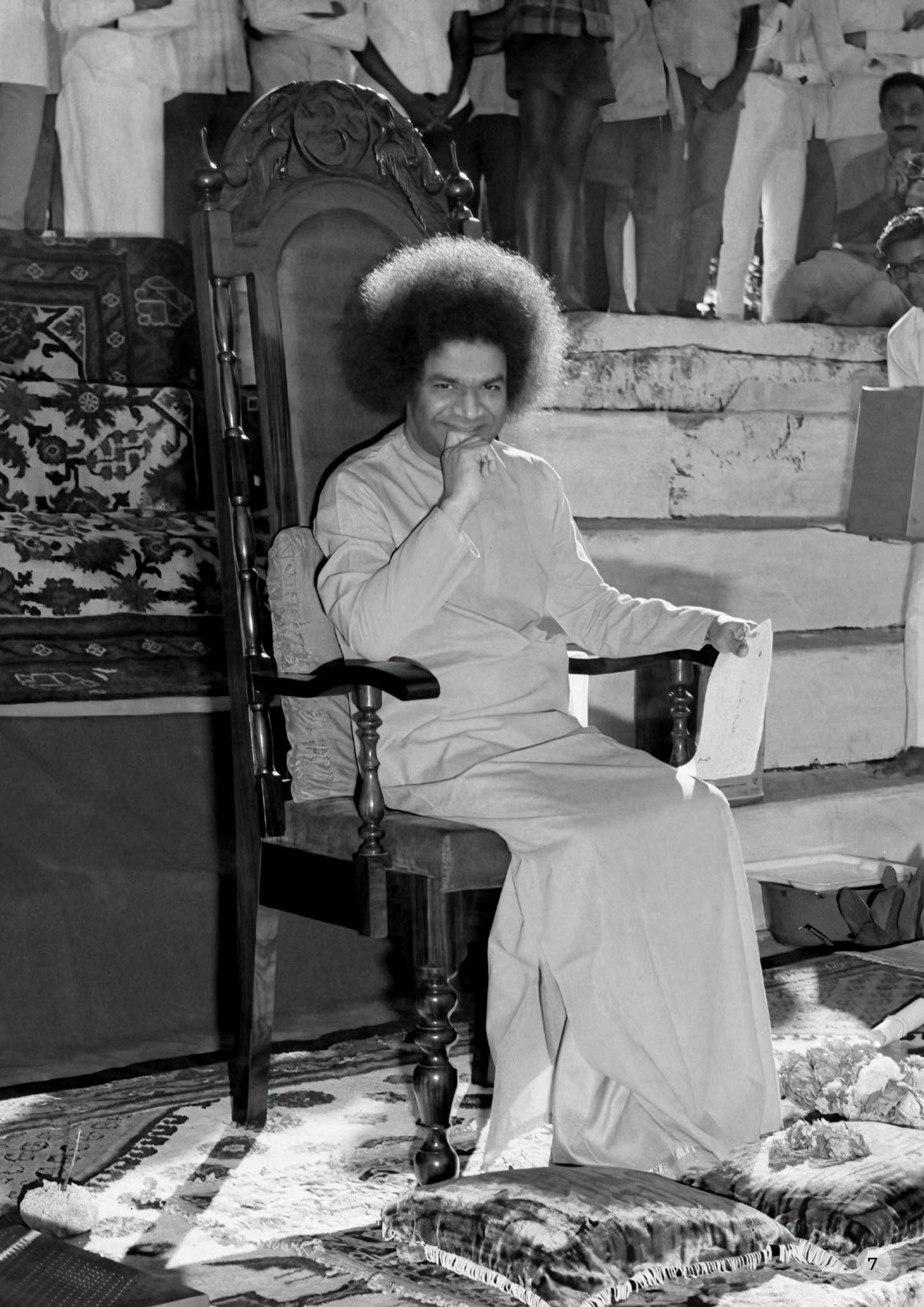
In His May 13, 2006 discourse on the occasion of Buddha Poornima, Swami gifted

three more *Ratnas* or jewels to Buddhists and all humanity. **The first one is '*Sathyam Sharanam Gachchami*' (I take refuge in Truth).** For us devotees, it is also about taking refuge in our Swami, whose first name is 'Sathya.' **The second is '*Ekam Sharanam Gachchami*' (I take refuge in Oneness).** The ultimate truth is that there is only One. The dualistic feelings of 'I' and 'You' have to be given up. Swami says that a dual mind is half-blind. Real wisdom is experiencing Oneness. **The third one is '*Premam Sharanam Gachchami*' (I take refuge in Divine Love).** Swami says that Love is the greatest wealth and power that one can have. He also says that God is Love, and Love is God. He exhorts us to live in Love as Love is the source, path, and goal of human life.

**One who always lives in Divine Love will realize Oneness and divinity. This way, every human being can become enlightened. Everyone is a potential Buddha, truly divine.** Thus, realizing the Four Noble Truths, practicing the Eightfold Path and understanding the concepts of *Brahma Viharas* (four divine states), and taking refuge in the Three Jewels (as expounded by Buddha and Swami), one attains *Nirvana*, the state of ultimate bliss.

*The same divine principle of love is present in all of you. When you take to the path of love, you will become Buddha yourself. Today is Buddha Poornima. Poornima means full moon. The underlying message of Buddha Poornima is that the mind should shine with total purity like the full moon. It should unite with its source, i.e. the Atma, which is pure and effulgent. There is no darkness on the full moon night. On this auspicious day of Buddha Poornima, we should attain full purity of the mind.*

Sri Sathya Sai Baba  
May 13, 2006



# Message of Lord Buddha

*The more you grind sandalwood,  
The greater the fragrance;  
The more you chew sugarcane,  
Sweeter is the taste;  
The more you heat gold,  
The greater is its brilliance.  
Likewise, trials and tribulations will only  
enhance the goodness in noble souls.*

*(Telugu poem)*

The more one loves one's fellow beings, the greater would be the Bliss that one enjoys. The more you love others, the happier you would be. **Therefore, if you wish to be constantly happy, you must always love all. Love is the royal path to God. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all.** This is the lesson that Buddha taught humanity.

*Ahimsa* (nonviolence) is the greatest *dharma* (righteousness) of all.

Buddhists chant the following:

*Buddham Sharanam Gacchami.  
Dharmam Sharanam Gacchami.  
Sangham Sharanam Gacchami.*

These three maxims imply that, first, one must sharpen the intellect and the capacity for spiritual discrimination. Next, intelligence must be used for the service of society, and finally, service must be based on *dharma*. If these three steps are followed, they will lead to Bliss. Never harm

any living creature in any way whatsoever. **Help ever, hurt never—this is the essence of Buddha's teachings.**

**Nonviolence is the Supreme Dharma  
(Ahimsa Paramo Dharmaha)**

One must never ever hurt or injure another person by thought, word, or deed. You may wonder: "Is such a thing possible?" Yes, it is, provided you have firm conviction. With resolve and absolute determination, there is nothing in this world that cannot be achieved. Fear is a great obstacle to achievement. Once you realize that the same divinity resides in all, you will never be afraid of anything or anyone.

Prahlada saw unity in diversity. He clearly perceived Narayana (God) to be the substratum of everything in creation and happily surrendered to Him. He realized that God is Omnipresent. His father, Hiranyakasyapu, was just the opposite. He saw diversity in unity and became deluded by the multiplicity of forms in Creation. These



forms are all transient, whereas God represents the Eternal Truth.

God is known by various names, and of these, the greatest and the most appropriate is *Satchitanada* (Being, awareness, bliss). *Sath* means that which remains unchanged in all three periods of time—past, present, and future. Strict adherence to truth would enable one to experience *Sath*. *Chit* means total awareness or complete knowledge. It is that which enables one to experience divinity in all its aspects. Once *Sath* and *Chit* are experienced, *ananda* or bliss would follow automatically.

Everyone wants to be happy. Such a desire is natural, and it springs from the fact that man's true nature is Bliss. Bliss is God, but man does not understand that. He does not understand that he originated from God, that life's undercurrent is God, and that his ultimate destination is God. Man is born of *ananda*, the basis of his life is *ananda*, and his goal also is *ananda*. Truly speaking, it is not difficult to know what the basis of life is and what should be the goal of life. Bliss should be the goal, and one must seek it in all

earnestness. The human body is temporary; the pleasure that it can give is also fleeting. **Therefore, one must seek that which is permanent, that is to say, God or eternal Bliss.**

It is meaningless to seek this Bliss by ways of impermanent means. The body can give only physical pleasure, and the mind can, at best, give only mental satisfaction. But these do not represent true Bliss.

Buddha left his home in quest of the secret of *ananda*. In his wanderings, he saw a dead body, an old man, and a sick person. These painful sights made him inquire deeply about the purpose and goal of life. He realized that death could not be avoided. Old age is also inescapable, the natural culmination of childhood, youth, and middle age. Such changes form part and parcel of the physical world, which itself is ephemeral. These changes are natural, and one must not be perturbed or agitated by them. Buddha asked himself, "What is the cause of death? Why do old age and sickness come upon humans?" After much pondering, Buddha concluded that the body is like a water bubble, while the sick-

ness of the body originates in the mind. **In modern parlance, the psychological attitude of a person determines his actions and behavior.**

Vishnu (God) is all-pervasive. He is powerful. In the human being, Vishnu is represented by the mind. The mind is thus a very powerful instrument in the possession of man. The body must be used in conjunction with the mind to experience divinity and not be diverted to other activities. In life, the alternation of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, good and bad, is inevitable. One must not be deluded by it. Despite performing innumerable *Yajnas* and *Yagas* (Vedic ritual worship), man is deluded by duality and fails to realize the Omnipresence of the Lord and engages in all forms of ritualistic worship.

One day in his wanderings, Buddha came to a village. The residents of the village were performing a *Yajna* and, as a part of the ritual, were preparing to sacrifice an animal. Buddha saw this and advised the villagers not to do so. **He said, "No harm must be done in any manner whatsoever to any living being because God dwells in all."**

*Ishana sarvavidyanam. Ishwara sarvabhutanam.*

God is all knowledge. God dwells in all beings.

Buddha added, "This is what I have learnt. God dwells in all; therefore, the individual is God and God is the individual. Hence, it is wrong to kill this animal." The head priest replied, "Sir, we are not killing this animal; we are offering it liberation."

Amused by the reply, Buddha said, "You are offering liberation to an animal that did not ask for it. Instead, why don't you liberate a person who is asking for it? Your argument has no basis in the scriptures. No Veda advocates what you are saying. Your observation is false and untrue. Do

you think liberation can be granted by inflicting harm, pain, and injury? No! Your father, mother, wife, and son all want liberation. Why don't you offer them in sacrifice and grant them all the liberation that they seek? You are so eager to liberate an animal that has no desire for it but you are unwilling to liberate fellow humans who are hungering for it. What kind of perverted logic is this? What you are trying to do is the worst of sins. Never hurt, injure, or kill living beings."

This is how Buddha conveyed the idea: *Ahimsa Paramo Dharmaha* (Nonviolence is the greatest *Dharma* of all).

The love principle inherent in man is equally present in all beings, birds and beasts included. Therefore, one must place the same value on the lives of all beings. **Share the love latent within you with not only fellow human beings but also with all creatures in nature. This is the true universal principle of love.** Such a principle alone should be the basis of one's life.

### **The Real Meaning of Liberation**

People have strange ideas about liberation, imagining it involves going to heaven and having eternal existence there. That is not the meaning of liberation. It means achieving selfless love that is constant, unabating, and total. This is the state that one must seek to attain; it is only when this state is reached that one is truly liberated. In the name of liberation, seekers are trying all sorts of spiritual paths. All such exercises can, at best, confer temporary satisfaction. **The path of Pure Love alone can truly get you there and confer permanent Bliss.**

You are aware of the nine traditional paths of devotion:

1. *Shravanam* (Listening to the sacred word)
2. *Keertanam* (Singing the glory of the Lord)

“He said, “No harm must be done in any manner whatsoever to any living being because God dwells in all.

3. *Vishnusmaranam* (Chanting the name of the Lord)
4. *Padasevanam* (Service to the Lotus Feet)
5. *Vandanam* (Offering salutations to the Lord)
6. *Archanam* (Offering worship)
7. *Dasyam* (Service to the Lord)
8. *Sakhyam* (Being the Lord's friend and companion)
9. *Atma Nivedanam* (Surrender)

These paths, if followed mechanically, will fetch nothing more than temporary satisfaction. If you want liberation, a flood of love must accompany such pursuits. Pure love must be the undercurrent of whatever path you choose to adopt. Indeed, it must be so in every spiritual endeavor. Everything must be done out of love for God, and for God—this is true devotion. *Bhakti* (devotion) does not mean mere chanting of the name, ritualistic worship, studying the Vedas, etc. All such activities represent but one aspect of devotion. **True devotion is the direct flow of love from you to God. Unconditional and selfless love for God is true devotion.** Worship of God must be totally free from any demands, especially the fulfilment of worldly desires and the expectation of worldly rewards. However, people always worship God with a lot of self-interest or selfish motive. This is not true devotion. What you must offer to God is pure and selfless love. It is such love alone that would secure liberation. **Indeed, such love itself is liberation because it frees you from worldly desires. As Swami often says, liberation from attachments**

**and desires is true liberation (*moksha* is *moha-kshaya*).**

### One God, But Many Names

Pure love cannot be learnt from books, nor can it be taught by others. It has to well up from deep within. Your heart is the source of Eternal Joy and Eternal Bliss. You yourself are *Ananda Nilayam* (the Abode of Bliss). This love originating from your heart must be offered to the Lord. Swami said the other day:

*Deho Devalaya Prokto Jivo Devah  
Sanatanah.*

The body is a Temple, and the indweller is God Himself.

**The same God resides in all bodies. Therefore, you must love others to the same extent you love yourself.** This is a body [Swami pointed to Himself], and that is also a body [Swami pointed to another person]. Bodies may be different, but the God within is the same.

There is a man who is addressed as the father by his son. The daughter-in-law calls him father-in-law, while the grandchildren call him grandfather. The individual is the same, but the way different people address him varies. Similarly, the same God is given different names by the followers of different religions; they hail Him as Allah, Jesus, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, and so on.

**Though the names vary, God is one and the same. Therefore, there is really no room for dispute between people belonging to different religions. You may address God by the name of your choice, but all calls go to the same destination.** The goal

is one, and God is also one. Thus, in respect to God, there should be no difference of opinion. In fact, the salutations to any being reaches God (*Sarva Jiva Namaskaram Keshavam Pratigacchati*).

No matter to whom you offer salutations and greetings, they all go to God Himself. Since the same God resides in all, where is the room for arguments based on caste, creed, race, etc.? As the Deputy Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka (who spoke earlier) said, we all belong to the caste of humanity.

*There is only one caste, the caste of Humanity.*

*There is only one religion, the religion of Love.*

*There is only one language, the language of the Heart,*

*And there is only one God, He is Omnipresent.*

This one God can be given any name you choose. These are names given by you to God, but in fact, **God has no names of any kind. He is nameless and formless. He is pure consciousness and pure energy.** This divine energy and consciousness are present in you, and you must use these extraordinary powers and capabilities in a most reverential manner for sacred activities only.

### **From *Prema* (Love) to *Poornam* (Totality)**

God has blessed you with pure love, but due to worldly distractions and your food habits as well as lifestyle, this love gets contaminated. It gets adulterated by *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (attachment), *mada* (pride), and *matsarya* (jealousy). The aberrations and pollution of divine power that one sees these days are entirely due to food and habits. **Sathwic food is the proper diet for man because it alone fosters good, noble, and pious tendencies.** Buddha ate only *sattvic* food, which in due course led to the

blossoming of *buddhi* (intellect) in all its fullness. The Vedas declare:

*Chandrama Manaso Jatah,  
Chaksho Suryo Ajayata.*

Moon is the presiding deity of the mind, while Sun is the presiding deity of vision.

The moon is not self-luminous; it shines by reflecting the light from the sun. The light is the same; it originates in the sun and gets reflected by the moon. However, while the direct light from the sun is bright and brilliant, the light reflected from the moon is soft and subdued; it is cool to the eye. **Sunlight represents *jnana* or spiritual wisdom, while moonlight represents *prema* (love).**

You know how a fruit develops. It starts as a flower, becomes a bud, grows big, becomes fruit, and finally transforms by ripening into a sweet fruit. The flower, the bud, and the ripe fruit merely represent different stages in the evolution of the same entity. Similarly, in the pathway to God, the *karma marga* (path of action), the *bhakti marga* (path of devotion) and the *jnana marga* (path of wisdom) represent different aspects of the same underlying principle. That underlying principle is *Prema*, and the three paths mentioned are three different ways of showing one's Love for God. *Prema* is fundamental, and that is what you should focus on. You have to develop humility on the one hand and divine feelings on the other. **The festival of Buddha Poornima is celebrated to remind us that *Prema* is the pathway to *Poornam*.**

### **Avoid Sycophancy**

Buddha wandered across the length and breadth of the land, advising people to follow the path of divine love. In the process, He became physically exhausted. Thus, once when He stopped in a village, He decided to take some rest and asked



“*You must be able to experience bliss all the time, and you can do so by following the teachings of Buddha.*”

one of his disciples to speak to the villagers in His place.

Happy about his good fortune and charged with great enthusiasm, the disciple said during his talk, “Buddha is the One of love, wisdom, and compassion. Such an exalted One was never born before and never will be in the future.”

The villagers were thrilled to hear this and responded with loud applause. Buddha, who was resting, heard the sound. He came out of His room and went to the disciple. Motioning the disciple to stop talking, He asked, “Son, how old are you?” The disciple replied, “Lord, I am twenty-five.”

Buddha then asked, “What places have you visited?” The disciple mentioned the names. Buddha said, “You are young and inexperienced and have seen so little of the world. With such limited knowledge, how can you be sure that none like this Buddha was ever born or will not be in the future? You do not know the past, nor do you know the future. You do not even know everything about the present. Then, what authority do you have to make assertive statements about both the past and the future? By talking the way you did, you are merely exposing your utter ignorance.”

Buddha declared, “Many great souls have been born in the past, and many more will be in the future. None can contradict this truth.” Buddha disliked pomp, show, and sycophancy. **He was simple, ever calm, pure, humble, and always full of love and compassion. Only a person equally full of love can appreciate His greatness.**

### **Practice Alone Leads to Bliss**

Embodiments of Love! It is not enough to be happy just on this day of Buddha Poornima. **You must be able to experience bliss all the time, and you can do so by following the teachings of Buddha.**

These days, people are great heroes in making speeches on stage but zeroes when it comes to practice—platform heroes but practical zeroes. It is far more important to put Buddha’s teachings into practice than to make eloquent speeches. This is the proper way to enjoy happiness. This is also the right way of showing respect and reverence to Buddha.

The teachings of Buddha are lofty, sublime, and sacred. His most important teaching is:

*Ahimsa Paramo Dharmaha.*

Nonviolence is the greatest dharma of all.

Buddha asserted this with great emphasis and force. Buddha also advised that one’s vision must be sacred. He said, “Sacred vision is a must for leading a pure life. You should cultivate *Samyak Drishti* (pure vision) and *Samyak Shravanam* (pure listening).” For Buddha, everything had to be pure and sacred. If you throw a pebble into a well, ripples are created, and they travel up to the edge of the well. In the same way, if you throw a pebble called ‘good thought’ into the well called the ‘Heart’, the ripples generated travel throughout the body. When the ripple reaches the eye, it stimulates pure vision. When the ripple reaches the ear, it tunes the latter to sacred sounds. When the

“*The world may not give you what you want, but from the Lord, you can certainly get all the good things you want.*”

ripple reaches the hands, it swings them into good action. In this manner, when the ripples spread across the entire body, there is a symphony of sacred activity all around. Thus, good and noble thoughts are fundamental to sacred activity.

Such are the great teachings of Buddha. What is your response to them? No doubt, you all read books containing Buddha's teachings. But the moment the book is put down, all the teachings are forgotten. Remember, it is only when the sandalwood is continuously ground that the fragrance can be experienced. It is only when sugarcane is well chewed that the sweetness can be experienced in full measure. **In the same way, it is only the continued and sustained practice of sacred teachings that can lead to Bliss.** Great people of the past have left behind innumerable teachings that must be followed and ideal examples that ought to be copied. It is enough if you practice just one or two of these great lessons from the past.

### **Sanctify Time, Do Not Waste It**

God has given you the gift of time. What for? For you to sanctify it. But are you doing that? Introspect and find out how much time you are wasting. **Time is God; don't waste time. Time wasted is a life wasted.** These days, people are wasting their time in every conceivable way. They can find time to remain glued to TV sets but have no time for service or doing something sacred. Why do you have to waste time on useless pursuits? Instead, why can't you use that time for charitable and service activities?

This is what Buddha did; always serving others. The moment came when He had to give up His body. He had a small coin with Him at that time. There is a story behind that coin. To please Buddha, kings and emperors built great mansions for Him to stay, but Buddha was not happy with this. One day an old lady came to Him and said, "Sir, I am poor and do not have much money. But I love you and want to give you something. I have this small coin. Please accept this as my offering." Buddha was very happy; the amount was small, but the heart of the giver was large and full of love.

Large amounts gifted with pomp and ostentation do not count for much. **A small gift with pure love is far more precious.** As Swami often says, one teaspoon of cow's milk is far superior to a barrel of donkey's milk.

Buddha was once resting in a forest. He was by Himself. A fearsome demon came to Him and said, "I am very hungry. Are you prepared to become my meal?" Buddha smiled and replied, "I am ready! Death is certain to come someday or the other. Why then should I not die today, especially if I can satisfy your hunger?"

Never be afraid of death because it is a certainty; no one can escape it. Buddha was not afraid of death, and that was why He was ready to become a meal for the demon. The moment the demon heard the reply, it transformed into a dove and said, "Today, you have demonstrated your enormous capacity for sacrifice. From now on, I too shall spread your message everywhere."

**God And Love Are Not Different**  
Buddha's teachings were based on the love principle. The same is true of Sai also. Love is the basis for all incarnations. No one is making any effort to understand this fundamental truth. You must develop selfless love. If you do, the whole world would be in your control. This love is blissful and nectarine. The sweetness of nectar may have limits, but the sweetness of divine love has none.

It is beyond all measure. It is beyond description, too; it can only be experienced. **Buddha discovered this love, experienced it, and became one with it. God and love are not different.**

*The bubble is born in water,  
It grows and lives in water,  
And it finally merges back in water.  
Man is a bubble,  
And God is the water!*

Man is a bubble born of water that is God. The individual is God, and God is the individual. The two are not distinct, as people imagine.

Embodiments Of Love! Regard all as just different forms of God. Parents give you a name, and that is the name you print on your visiting card. The card that you present to God must not have your given name but love. When you show your card to another person, that person recognizes you by the name and address on the card. God, on the other hand, recognizes only love, love, love!

Start the day with love  
Spend the day with love.  
End the day with love.  
This is the way to God!

**Therefore, starting from today, the auspicious day of Buddha Poornima, vigorously develop your love for God. Propagate and spread selfless love. There can be no greater spiritual preaching than love.** The study of scriptures can make a person scholarly but not wise. Who is a

true scholar? Who is the truly wise one? **He who has perfect equanimity and is equal minded under all circumstances alone can be described as scholarly and wise.** They pore over books, claim to have mastered all the texts, and proclaim themselves to be highly learned. Such self-praise and self-acclaim are sure signs of the ego. The ego is very dangerous because it certainly drags one to ruin. What is the use of mere study? Do these scholars practice even a bit of what they have studied? Hardly. The scholarship will not protect or redeem you; only pure love can.

Pure love is like a well-paved, one-way road with no speed breakers. You can rush along it to God at whatever speed you want. Rivers also illustrate this principle. All rivers speed down from the mountains. They flow fast and swiftly to somewhere. Where to? To the ocean. In the process, they go over boulders and rocks, skilfully avoiding obstacles on the way. They never stop but keep moving all the time towards the goal. Life must be a river rushing toward the ocean called God. The flow should never stop or falter. Overcoming all obstacles, you must keep rushing toward God. That must be the characteristic of your spiritual journey.

Be strong-willed, resolute, determined, and sincere. There should be no room whatsoever for weakness. **If your vision, hearing, thoughts, feelings, and actions are good, you will experience nothing but Bliss.**

### **Obey God's Command and Spread Love**

Embodiments of Love! You need not go in search of God; He will come in search of you. God does not reside in temples, mosques, and churches. These are structures built by man. God resides in a temple that He has built for Himself, and that is the human body. **The human body is a living temple, a walking temple, and a talking temple. No man-made temple can match this**

“You think you are taking care of yourself and protecting yourself. This is not true! It is God who is really doing so.

**God-built temple in power and sanctity.**

This temple has not been built with brick and mortar. No architect has designed it, and no engineer has built it. This temple has come into existence by the will of God. You must treat your body as a precious gift of God and safeguard this sacred gift. **Obey God's command and engage only in sacred actions. Spread love as much as you can and the fragrance of the *Atmic Principle*.**

**Body and Head  
Must Both Be Oriented Toward God**

*Sariramadyam Khalu  
Dharmasadhanam.*

The body has been given for following the path of *dharma*.

Man is not born to eat, drink and make merry. No doubt, food is necessary to sustain life.

*Bhikshannam Deha Rakshartham,  
Vastram Seetha Nivaranam.*

Food is for maintaining the body and clothes are for protecting the body from the weather.

That should be the guiding principle. Food and head must lead you only to God and nowhere else. There must be perfect harmony between food, the head, and God. By itself, the head carries no value. There is a story that illustrates this point.

Emperor Ashoka was once going through a forest. Seeing a Buddhist monk, he alighted from his horse and prostrated at the feet of the monk. Ashoka's minister, who was accompanying the emperor, was shocked. He wondered, "How can such a

great man bow before such a lowly one as a renunciate?" Nevertheless, the minister kept quiet and did not voice his misgivings. Later when they were back in the palace, the minister gently raised the topic. He said, "O Emperor, how can such a great and intelligent one like you place your head at the feet of an inconsequential monk?" Ashoka just smiled and did not reply. Some days later, he summoned the minister and quite casually said, "Obtain first the head of a sheep, a goat, and a man. Take these three and try to sell them in the market. Afterward, come back and report to me."

The minister was taken aback by this most peculiar command, but then, orders are orders, especially when they come directly from the emperor. The minister procured three heads, as told, and tried to dispose of them in the market, as per the emperor's command. He was able to find a buyer for the heads of the sheep and goat, but no one came forward to buy the human head. The minister went back and reported the matter to the emperor. Ashoka said, "Well, if no one is prepared to buy the human head, give it away for free." The minister went back to the marketplace, but to his dismay, no one wanted the human head, even if given free. He went back to the palace and reported to the emperor. Ashoka smiled and said, "Do you remember how you protested when I placed my head at the feet of a monk? Now you have discovered for yourself that the human head has no value! The head is not eternal, yet you were agitated by what I did. Though the head has no value, when placed at the

feet of a noble one, it brings blessings and grace. That is what I wanted you to learn.”

*Darshanam Paapa Nashanam  
Sparshanam Karma Vimochanam  
Sambhashanam Sankata  
Nashanam*

**The vision of the Lord wipes out all sin; the touch of the Lord destroys all karma; conversing with the Lord removes all difficulties**

Ashoka continued, “The moment my head brushed against the foot of the monk, all my sins were wiped out.” Wisdom slowly dawned on the minister.

Realize the usefulness of the body while you are alive. It is when you are alive and in possession of the body that you can have *darshan*, *sparshan* and *sambhashan*, (i.e., the opportunity to see the Lord, touch the Lord, and converse with the Lord). Can you have these after the body is gone? Impossible! **The world may not give you what you want, but from the Lord, you can certainly get all the good things you want.**

### **Resolve to Follow Buddha’s Teachings**

Embodiments of Love! All of you have come here with great devotion. Your sincerity is praiseworthy. You must resolve to follow the teachings of Buddha. He was a noble soul. **The best way of celebrating Buddha Poornima is to put into practice the teachings of this holy one. It is not enough to be happy just on this festival day. By constantly re-living the experience of this holy day, you must experience joy all the time.** The cow first grazes; it then sits down quietly to chew thoroughly what it had eaten earlier. If an animal can do this, cannot a human do the same with respect to the teachings he acquires? When you get back home, ruminate over what you

have learned today. Recall repeatedly the experiences you have had today. This is the way to digest what you have learned and be happy. It is only when you do this that your journey to this place would become worthwhile. You should not forget the lessons the moment you leave here.

### **Spiritual Lessons Must Soak In**

God has a special name: *Raso Vai Saha*. It means that in the human body, God is present as the Divine Essence. This divine essence spreads all over the human body to every limb and organ.

Therefore, God is also given another name—*Angeerasa*. *Angam* means limb; *Angeerasa*, therefore, means One who pervades over all the limbs, soaking them with His divine power and essence. Thus, God is within you as *Angeerasa*. You think you are taking care of yourself and protecting yourself. This is not true! It is God who is really doing so. Who do you think protects you when you are fast asleep and do not know what is happening around you? Who takes care of you, then? It is God who does so. **In fact, He always cares for you, at all places, and under all circumstances.**

Since God always protects, there is no need to be afraid of pain and sorrow. Difficulties are bound to come, but they will also go away. They do not stay forever; they are like passing clouds. But God is steady and permanent. **Make Him the basis of your life and think of Him always. This is the lesson you must grasp today as a part of your pilgrimage to this place.**

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**  
Buddha Poornima  
May 21, 2000

# the INVISIBLE presence

**AS FAR AS MY MEMORY GOES, I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A ‘DEVOTE-TEE’ OF GOD**—visiting temples from childhood and participating in ritualistic worship. I accepted and worshipped all deities without the slightest trace of doubt. However, I had serious reservations about Swami, Sathya Sai Baba. I was exposed to Swami because the Sai Center was just three homes away on the same street where we lived in Chennai, India. I often made fun of Swami—from His hair to His miracles.

## Swami Enters My Life and My Home

Swami decided it was time for Him to have some fun with me. He shaped my destiny so that I married Lalitha, His devout follower! And thus, **Swami became an integral and inescapable part of my life.** Lalitha was keen to attend *bhajans* regularly, and I was okay with that as long as I did not have to attend those sessions. I was so obstinate that even when I waited for my wife to finish attending the *bhajan* session, I would sit outside or in a back room! After a while, the family that hosted the *bhajans* at their home moved out of town. In an ironic twist of fate, they presented us with a photograph of Swami’s feet and requested us to host the *bhajans* regularly at our residence! They were such lovely people that I reluctantly agreed. Though Swami had not yet gotten into my heart, He was surely in my hearth now!

## The Three Challenges to Swami

I slowly began to enjoy the devotional aspect of the *bhajans* now that I was forced to participate in them. But my heart was still reluctant to embrace Swami. So, I challenged him by asking, “If You are divine, show me clearly that you are the same as

**“Earlier, as a non-believer, I considered Swami’s miracles mere coincidences. Now, I take every coincidence and, in fact, every incidence, too, as His miracle!”**

Shirdi Baba.” That very night I had a dream where I saw Shirdi Sai and Parthi Sai, and they slowly merged into one form. Swami had answered my question immediately. I was taken aback but not yet thoroughly convinced.

Later, I heard of vibhuti manifestations in the homes of devotees. For the second time, I challenged Swami, asking, “If You want me to have faith in You, materialize vibhuti in our home.” Soon, showers of vibhuti began. First, vibhuti began to manifest in a picture of Swami. Then one by one, every image of God in our home began to pour out vibhuti. Swami took it to the extreme when He began manifesting the holy ash even on bookmarks with His name or teachings!

Any time I had a doubt or question, He would visit me in my dreams and provide precise answers! I developed a strong desire to visit Puttaparthi and have His darshan during His 80th Birthday celebrations. But critical deadlines at work made it impossible for me to get leave. That was when I challenged Swami a third time. I prayed, “Swami, clear the path for me to come to Puttaparthi for Your 80th Birthday.” Sure enough, a few weeks later, my manager told me that if I really wanted to go to Puttaparthi, I could go as long as I got the work done. Swami had done it again and listened to my heartfelt prayer!

My first darshan of Swami in Sai Kulwant hall was very special as there were no

bounds to the joy welling up in my heart. **For the first time, I realized what true bliss or *ananda* meant.** I have had that feeling only a few times since then, but I can never forget that particular experience. Even today, I try to relive that blissful experience over and over again in my mind and heart. Tears well up every time I think of those experiences with Swami.

I felt that I had tested Swami enough. It was now time for me to accept Him and strengthen my faith. As I decided this, however, I realized that Swami’s had decided to test me. It is fair, after all, for Him to test us before accepting us as devotees!

### **Swami’s Challenge to Us and His Loving Guidance**

We had settled down in Knoxville, Tennessee, and were doing well. Lalitha and I had good jobs, our kids enjoyed their school, and we had a lovely Sai Center with SSE classes. That was when my boss asked me to move to Saudi Arabia for a few years on a challenging assignment. I politely declined, not wanting a drastic relocation and being negatively influenced by the media about Saudi Arabia. Yet, my manager was insistent and persistent!

If we moved, Lalitha and the kids would live 3.5 hours away (by car) from where I would work and live, and I would see them only on weekends. I would take on a significant leadership role at work, but there were cultural challenges due to my ethnicity. Not knowing what to do, Lalitha and I prayed to

**“Challenges in life keep coming like waves in an ocean. But His omnipresence reminds us to focus on the limitless ocean of love and compassion that He is.”**

Swami for His guidance. It was as if He was waiting for our call to step in.

For the next ten days consecutively, He appeared in my dream, telling me to move to Saudi Arabia. Whenever I discussed the topic with Lalitha, we sensed the distinct fragrance of jasmine or vibhuti! But Lalitha had no dreams about Swami and was not convinced to make a move. That day, Swami manifested honey on our cactus plant at home. This was another hint for us to move to the desert, i.e., Saudi Arabia! At this point, Lalitha asked Swami why He was not answering her. That night, we both had dreams of Swami almost simultaneously. I woke up right after the dream, around 3 am, and saw her sitting on the bed as she had just awakened from her dream too! Both our dreams guided us to go to Saudi Arabia!

The next day, while leaving work, I turned the radio on, which I hardly did. A Christian pastor came on the air and talked about how God gives us tests but guides

us. The pastor specifically gave an example of someone getting a job opportunity they were considering. Instead of thinking about it, he said they should follow God's guidance and take that job without hesitation. That is how I took up the stint in Saudi Arabia. **Swami says that tests are His taste.**

### **Swami Is Our Eternal Companion**

Earlier, as a non-believer, I considered Swami's miracles mere coincidences. Now, I take every coincidence and, in fact, every incidence, too, as His miracle! **Challenges in life keep coming like waves in an ocean. But His omnipresence reminds us to focus on the limitless ocean of love and compassion that He is.** We must constantly pay attention to His invisible and constant presence in our lives.

**Mr. Nandakumar Srinivasan**

USA



*(Adapted from an article in the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memory Book, Sri Sathya Sai Center, Pittsburgh, USA, 2022)*



*Mr. Nandakumar Srinivasan was born and raised in India by devout parents. He moved to the USA in 1993. After completing his MBA, he has lived and worked in several countries, including China, Australia, Saudi Arabia, and the USA. He has served as devotional coordinator of the SSSIO in Australia and president of Sri Sathya Sai Center in Quad Cities, Iowa (USA). Nandakumar lives in Pittsburgh, USA, with his wife and two daughters, who are devout followers of Swami. He and his family actively participate in center activities.*





# PARADISE Lost and Regained

**IN 1972, MY MOTHER HAD A HEALTH CRISIS.** She became sick after major surgery, and despite the best treatment by the specialists, she showed no signs of recovery. During one of those hospital visits, she heard the distant soothing sounds of bhajans emanating from the local Sathya Sai Center (Samithi). She felt comforted by the bhajans and soon asked my father, Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju, to take her to Puttaparthi.

My father came from a *Brahmo Samaj* background. The *Brahmo Samaj* is a reform movement with beliefs based on the teachings of the Vedas, the ancient Indian scriptures. It is focused on monotheism and rejects the caste system and the traditional Hindu practices of idol worship. So, accepting 'man' as God and the concept of 'Avatar' was anathema to him, but he kept aside his beliefs for my mother's sake. Cutting a long story short, **the family pilgrimage to Puttaparthi did wonders for my mother's health. She was not only cured but transformed** and filled with energy and enthusiasm. She would cook food for over 100 people every Thursday and serve it to the homeless on the streets of Guntur, our hometown in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. She also inspired others to join in the service activities. Seeing the phenomenal change in my mother's health, my dad also gravitated toward Swami and His teachings, and soon joined the Sathya Sai Organization, beginning a lifelong spiritual journey dedicated to Swami.

## **An Unforgettable Interview**

As young children playing on the sands of the Mandir, we experienced Swami's limitless love in many ways. We especially looked forward to our visits to Swami. However, after experiencing 'Mother's Love' in Swami for years, we experienced 'Father's Discipline' for the first time when He called just the four of us siblings for an interview as we were on the verge of entering college. Swami told us sternly, "*I know what happens in colleges these days. You go in as individuals, and you come out as couples! Why do you need such distractions? If*

I REMEMBERED HIS WORDS THAT **GOD** ALONE  
WOULD BE WITH US AS OUR BEST FRIEND WHEN  
THINGS ARE NOT GOING WELL.

*you think that no one is watching you, you are wrong. **God is always watching. I am always watching you.***

We were stunned at this unexpected admonishment. Swami continued, *“Your parents have trusted you and given you freedom. I want you to get a good name for your family and Swami.”*

Exhorting us to focus only on our studies and God, He said, *“When things are going well, and your father holds a position, people will come to you. But when things go wrong, no one will come to help you except God. **God alone is your best friend.**”*

Finally, He called me aside and told me about my future, *“I will find a suitable husband for you. Come to Puttaparthi when I call you.”*

I panicked and responded, “But I want to study and work, Swami.”

*“You may do all of that later. But when I call, just come.”*

There was a tone of finality in His voice, and I nodded in agreement.

### **The Gift of Paradise**

A few months later, we received a telegram from Swami calling us to come to Prasanthi Nilayam. He introduced us to Shyam Kanagala’s family; Shyam and I were married in the divine presence on July 6, 1988. Swami showered us with pearls of wisdom in the interviews following the wedding. He showed us His ‘empty’ hand and said, *“Everything is in this hand. You ask me, and I shall give you.”*

Shyam was quick to respond, “Swami, we want to be near and dear to You....”

*“What do you mean by being near?”* Swami asked.

*“To be in Your proximity, Swami....”*

*“What do you mean by being dear?”*

*“To please You at all times, Swami....”*

Swami smiled and narrated a beautiful analogy. He said that there is a lake filled with lotuses. The bees come from far away and enjoy the nectar in the flowers. But the frogs which keep hopping nearby are not even aware of the existence of nectar in the flowers!

***“Distance does not matter. You become near to God when you are dear to God.”***

He also added, ***“You will be dear to me.”*** These words took deep root in my heart.

With Swami’s blessings, we settled in a lovely home in Bengaluru. Shyam had an excellent job. We constantly received Swami’s guidance and assurance—either directly or indirectly. Our parents were around to help us to bring up our son. Life was smooth and beautiful!

### **Paradise Lost**

Avatars or incarnations do not come to help settle us comfortably in worldly life. We are mistaken if we think this way. Swami came to ignite the divine spark in each of us so that we realize our oneness with Him through Self-knowledge. This can occur only when we are removed from our worldly comfort zones.

In 1994, we moved to the Texas A&M University campus, Commerce, Texas, USA. Our life, which had been beautiful so far, got shattered quickly! Shyam, who had been a manager in India, became a student with

two dependents in a foreign land. He was working two part-time jobs while studying full-time to support the family. The degrees and job experiences we had gathered so far were of little value in the new land, and we had to start all over again. We were also deprived of Swami's reassuring physical presence and our parents' support which we had taken for granted so far. The university campus was a very lonely place, and I was on the verge of a physical and mental breakdown.

### **Sai is a Call Away**

One day, I was exhausted and poured my heart out to Swami. I wondered whether He still remembers us as His children. If He did so, I sought His presence in my life. It was an outburst of emotions that I forgot about soon. Then I went about my daily routine. Later that day, I received a phone call from my father in India. He said, "I am just back from *darshan* in Whitefield. When I was leaving, Swami inquired about all of you. He asked me how you, Shyam, and my grandson were doing. He also gave vibhuti to be sent to you."

This message was so timely and reassuring. It infused me with the strength to go on. That was when I remembered His words that **God alone would be with us as our best friend when things are not going well.**

Things began to improve as we continued life with His name on our lips and His form in our hearts. We moved to Dallas, Texas, and Swami introduced us to a loving Sai Center. We began participating in the Center activities enthusiastically, especially the community outreach events. This made me happy once again.

Swami called us for an interview when we went to Puttaparthi in 1998. During

the interview, Swami showered us with motherly love and *padanamaskar* and told Shyam, "*You thought you were separated from me, and I was away from you. You even packed your bags and wanted to return, right? I have always been with you. I even saved your life when you met with a head-on collision.*"

How can we ever forget that fateful night when Swami saved Shyam from the jaws of death? We are eternally grateful to Him. One night Shyam was returning late from work, around 1:30 am, as there were deadlines to be met on his project. As he was driving home, he felt rather sleepy, so he pulled over to the side of the road to rest for a few minutes before continuing. As he was resting, a drunken driver slammed his SUV from behind, and Shyam's car was "crumpled" all the way to the area behind the driver. The car was flung to the slope and changed direction. Shyam immediately lost consciousness. After some time, paramedics came and extricated him from the wreckage by cutting open the driver's side door, which was severely damaged. Shyam was hospitalized. Fortunately, by Swami's Grace, he had only a minor fracture of the collarbone from the restraining seat belt. Swami assured us, "***Don't ever forget that Swami is always with you.***"

In His omniscience, Swami shared details about the talks we gave about Swami and His teachings. He spoke about the different activities we were undertaking. With His encouragement, we also shared details of the activities at the Dallas Sai Center. Swami was happy, and He gave us Vibhuti to be distributed to Center members. He also conveyed His blessings to my sister and said, "*Tell her to take care of her health. If she, as a doctor, neglects her health, how can she take care of others?*"

The interview was full of assurance and love. Overwhelmed, I prayed, “Swami, please shower us with more opportunities to serve....”

Swami's reply surprised me. He said, “*Yes! Service is necessary, and you must serve. But from now on, you should make efforts to keep your heart pure.*”

I must say that I was disappointed when I heard this. I felt my heart was always pure, and I expected Swami's guidance to do more service activities. But no word of Swami is casual or in vain—knowing this, I kept quiet.

Swami then told me to visit my grandfather before leaving for the USA. However, we had a flight to catch, and there was no time. So I told Him I would not be able to do it this time. He kept quiet, and the interview was over.

### **Paradise Lost—Again**

Slowly but surely, the meaning and import of all of Swami's words began to dawn on me. In a couple of weeks, my grandfather passed away. I felt guilty and repentant that I had not met him despite Swami's advice. But that was just the beginning, and drastic changes began to disrupt our lives again.

Shyam was relocated to another workplace, and the new place did not suit us. Soon, I was forced to quit my job. At the same time, I began to face health challenges. It was a tough time compounded by financial chal-

lenges. In these circumstances, the friends we considered very close to us chose to distance themselves. Instead of supporting us in those trying times, they did not even want to be associated with us! Today, I do not find this surprising because this is the nature of the world. But back then, I was shocked. I was at crossroads yet again. A constant dialogue in my mind about these misfortunes took a toll on my physical and mental health. I desperately needed inner peace, and I pleaded with Swami to help me experience it again.

### **Pleasure is an Interval Between Two Pains**

My inner balance was severely disturbed when I went through all this external turbulence. That is when I realized what Swami was referring to when He said that I must try to keep my heart pure. I had to let go of my expectations, conditions, and judgment. Only when I dropped this baggage could I become light and free. Till then, I would be stuck in the endless, vicious cycle of pleasure and pain. It was at this time that Swami led me to meditation. I slowly learned how to tune out the restlessness and noise while tuning into inner stillness. All these answers came from the Swami within me. I understood that I needed to hold on to the temple in my heart. I know that Swami continues to guide me and work with me on my spiritual journey.

**Mrs. Sarojini Kanagala**   
U.S.A.



*Mrs. Sarojini Kanagala is a longtime devotee of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and enthusiastically shares Swami's love and message through her inspiring talks and books. She is married to Mr. Shyam Kanagala who serves as the Regional President of Region 10 of SSSIO, USA. Swami graciously performed their wedding in the year 1988 at Puttaparthi. Mrs. Kanagala authored a book in Telugu titled “Sai Spandana” (Sai's Divine Response) for Swami's 85th Birthday and co-authored a book with her husband, titled “Faith, Hope, and Love” for Swami's 90th Birthday. She is the eldest daughter of Prof. Anil Kumar Kamaraju who translated many of Swami's Discourses.*

# SATHYA SAI SPEAKS ON MOTHER EASWARAMMA

Easwaramma, the mother of this physical body, was first christened as Namagiramma at the time of birth. But after her marriage, Kondama Raju, the grandfather of this physical body, being a jnani (one of wisdom) and blessed with a vision of the future, started calling her Easwaramma (mother of Easwara)..

..One day, he (Kondama Raju) called Pedda Venkama Raju and told him to change his wife's name to Easwaramma. He said this because he felt the divine vibrations originating from within. His intention was to convey that she was the mother of Easwara, God Himself. But Pedda Venkama Raju was not aware of the inner meaning of this name. He implicitly obeyed the command of his father and changed the name of his wife to Easwaramma..

..After the construction of Prasanthi Nilayam, I went to see Kondama Raju one day. He asked Easwaramma to get a glass of water. He told her, "God has come to take me away. He promised that He would pour water into my mouth with His divine hands before I leave this body. He has come to fulfill His promise." Puzzled by Kondama Raju's request, Easwaramma said, "You are not suffering from any disease; you don't even have a fever or a cold. What makes you think that your end has approached?"

Kondama Raju said, "Death occurs as per the will of God. Just as birth has no reason, death, too, has no reason. This is the truth of truths."

Easwaramma did not want to argue with him. According to his wish, she brought a glassful of water and gave it to him. He sat down on the floor and made Me sit on the cot. He kept his head on My knees and said, "Swami, please listen to my prayer." Easwaramma was watching all

this. She wondered how he had so much love and regard for his young grandson.

Kondama Raju said, "As You know, I do a small business to make both ends meet. Perhaps I may still have to pay a paisa or an anna to certain people. Please bless me, so I am not indebted to anyone in my death."

I said, "So shall it be," and started pouring water into his mouth. He breathed his last as he was drinking water. His desire was fulfilled. Before leaving his mortal coil, he told Easwaramma not to get deluded by body attachment. He said, "Bodily relationship is temporary, whereas Atmic relationship is permanent. So, give up body attachment and develop attachment to the Atma."

From that day onward, Eswaramma never stayed at home; she started staying in Prasanthi Nilayam. Every day, in the morning and evening, she used to come upstairs and talk to Swami. She also understood My divinity very well. When I appeared in the form of Lord Siva to her, she would ask, "What Swami? Why are you adorning the snakes around your neck?" I would act innocent, "Well, I don't have snakes on Me." She would move away, saying, "Look, there are some snakes inside." But later, on not finding any snake inside, she would ask for forgiveness. Like this, she had the experience of My Divinity on many occasions. Similar was the case with Kausalya and Yashoda. Though they knew that their sons were divine, they used to get carried away by their motherly affection toward them.

May 6, 2006  
Brindavan, Bangalore

At the time of My departure for East Africa, Easwamma tried to dissuade Me from going, saying, "Swami! I hear there are many fierce animals in those forests, and the place is full of all kinds of dangers. Therefore, You should not go there. Whatever You will, all that will come here. Then, why do You want to go there?"

I told her, "I am not going to see the wild animals there. I am going in response to the loving prayers of My devotees."...

...Easwamma kept thinking about Me with great concern and did not even eat her food properly, with the result that she became quite weak. I kept her informed everyday morning and evening by phone from Kampala, saying, "I am quite all right." Hearing this, she used to be somewhat comforted. When I came from Kampala, she was very happy.

She came near My car and garlanded Me, saying, "Swami, You look very happy and healthy." She took Me inside and rotated a coconut in front of Me to ward off the effect of the evil looks of others. She was beside herself with joy and said, "Swami, I never imagined that Your trip would be such a grand success." She shared her joy with one and all in Puttaparthi also.

Whenever we visited other places, on our return to Puttaparthi, Easwamma used to describe to the people all that happened during these visits and exhorted them to follow the ideals set by Swami.

May 6, 2007  
Kodaikanal



Mother Easwaramma used to go to the house of Gogineni from Brindavan. On the day of her passing away also, she walked all the way to their house and came back. After coming back, she had a cup of coffee. She used to have paan (betel leaf). In fact, I Myself used to like paan in the early days. She was pounding the areca nut in a mortar and was eating it bit by bit.

Suddenly she shouted, "Swami, Swami, Swami!"

I called back, saying, "I am coming, I am coming, I am coming!"

She said, "Come quickly, come quickly."

As I came down, she caught hold of My hands and said, "You are capable of helping all the people of the world to any extent. But children need more help. You have to transform them. You need not make them scholars. Make them good and virtuous."

Saying this, she placed My hands on her eyes and breathed her last. She had 'anayasa maranam' (peaceful death). What more can one desire in life than a glorious death?..

..Good people have a good death. What sort of death? Anayasa maranam (peaceful death). How was that possible for the parents of this body? They shared My sacredness and led a sacred life. I Myself chose My parents. My selection is always correct. That is why My parents had such a blissful life.

May 6, 2002  
Brindavan, Bangalore

# LOVE IN ACTION



## **BOSNIA** Offering Refuge for Refugees

During 2022, SSSIO volunteers in Sarajevo lovingly served those in need in their community in many ways. **They delivered more than 1,400 kg of fruits and vegetables to the Pomozi.ba (Bosnian humanitarian organization) kitchen, which serves food to refugees from other countries.** They also helped to relocate a family in Hrasnica whose apartment was flooded. The volunteers paid for temporary accommodation for the family while they repaired the apartment



## **NEW ZEALAND** Special Fun for Special Children

On March 11, 2023, sixty SSSIO volunteers came together with the leaders of various indigenous and faith groups to organize a “Fun Day Out for Our Special Children.” The event was organized in partnership with several Special Needs Community Support Agencies and the local Kaipataki Community Facilities Trust. **Over 400 participants, including children with special needs, their parents, caregivers, and the community, enjoyed a variety of fun-filled, creative, and challenging activities.** In addition, the participating families and caregivers received health checkups and valuable information to access the support available for their loved ones with special needs.





## SOUTH AFRICA

### SMILE Initiative for Children

Boys Town Genazzano in South Africa has been a sanctuary to many children subjected to physical and emotional abuse. As part of their regular service, on December 4, 2022, eight SSSIO Young Adults from South Africa spent the day engaged in a team-building activity with the children, and shared Swami's teachings. **An inspiring talk by one of the volunteers on the significance of Christmas captivated the young children and touched their hearts.** The volunteers lovingly served a warm meal, and distributed 32 care packages containing sweet treats, stationery items, a pencil case, hygiene products, and a motivational quote.



## SURINAME

### Christmas Love and Joy

Volunteers from the Sri Sathya Sai Centre, Sonjastraat, celebrated Christmas and **spread the joy of the season by distributing care packages to more than 100 children in three homes for needy children** during the week of December 15–21, 2022. Each care package included Christmas treats such as bread and cookies and rice, oil, kidney beans, green peas, oatmeal, peanut butter, and chocolate spread.



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

# SSSIO ZONE 2B



ARGENTINA • BOLIVIA • BRAZIL • CHILE • COLOMBIA • ECUADOR • PARAGUAY • PERU  
URUGUAY • VENEZUELA

## COLOMBIA

### 1986

Weekly devotional meetings begin in Bogotá by a group of devotees inspired by meeting Swami.



### 1992

SSEHV Course, Bogotá

### 1989

First Public Meeting, Bogotá



Tree Planting in Medellín



**2007**

Chico Group, Bogotá



**2010**

Medical Camp



**2012**

Second National Conference and  
Public Meeting



**2019**

Activities at adopted community,  
Barroblanco



Adopted Community in Funza

# There is Only One God—He is Omnipresent

**MEETING SATHYA SAI BABA HAS BEEN THE BEST THING THAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME IN MY LIFE.** After years of spiritual quest, I discovered in 2001 that a group from my country, Colombia, would travel to India to visit a spiritual master. Ever since I was a teenager, I had felt a strong desire to travel to India, which was finally coming to fruition in my 40s! Such was the intensity of my desire that I did not even find out in advance who was the Guru that the group would meet.

As I watched my first sunrise in India, in my heart, I knew that I belonged to this place. The place seemed familiar as I entered the ashram in Puttaparthi. It was as if I had always lived in Prasanthi Nilayam, even though I resided in Colombia! And when I saw Baba for the first time, my eyes filled with tears, and I could not stop crying. Although my mind resisted and questioned why I shed tears daily during my stay in the ashram, my soul recognized Him! **I could feel His love and compassion sprout in my heart—thus, I began a life of unending adventure.**

## **Doubt and Deliverance**

Doubt is a major obstacle to overcome in our spiritual journey. Despite my experience during the first visit, I doubted whether I was doing the right thing. I was greatly concerned about disloyalty to my beloved Jesus and Mother Mary, to whom I was devoted from childhood. As I walked towards

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**“May we experience His presence in our lives at every moment, everywhere. May we realize that life itself is one continuous miracle with Swami!”**

the Mandir in Prasanthi Nilayam, these thoughts scorched me more than the hot Puttaparthi sun. And then, it happened! In the sweltering heat, I heard a loud, clear voice as I stood at the crossroads leading to the Mandir and the Western canteen. **Standing at the crossroads of my spiritual journey, I heard the voice say, “THE MOTHER AND SON BROUGHT YOU TO THE FATHER; MY NAME IS BABA.”**

I stopped and looked around, but the streets were empty. My heart felt indescribable joy and peace, and I understood that Baba had clarified my deep concern. Right away, my path became easier and clearer. Since then, my life has been a constant miracle, as I feel His presence every day, with increasing frequency and intensity.

### **A Roller Coaster Journey**

**He is my Father, my Friend, my Comfort, and my hope. He is my everything. He has allowed me to understand more and more that everything is His will.** I understand that the dedication and gratitude that I feel for everything that happens in my existence, for knowing Him, for His Love, sustains me and allows me to improve a little more every day as a human being. Among the hundreds of His *leelas* (divine plays) that I have experienced, the most amazing event that still makes me cry with joy and gratitude is the miracle

leading to the birth of my third grandchild. It happened in 2009, and the divine drama began two days before I traveled to Puttaparthi.

My eldest daughter, who was in the sixth month of her second pregnancy, called me. She said she had been diagnosed with Placenta Accreta, a severe condition that occurs when the placenta grows deeply into the uterine wall. I asked her to see other doctors at the Columbia University Hospital, who are experts in treating such conditions. But the next appointment was not available until two months later!

Praying to Swami was my only resort, and He answered by ensuring she got an appointment the next day! But then, the doctors advised the condition was actually Placenta Percreta, the most severe (third-degree) complication during pregnancy. It occurs when the placenta penetrates the uterine wall completely and attaches to an adjacent organ, in this case, the bladder! This was extremely dangerous which could lead to unstoppable bleeding.

### **The Omnipresence**

My daughter was advised to stay at the hospital. I canceled my trip to India and decided to serve Swami by looking after my daughter, and I surrendered the whole situation to Baba. As His benediction, Swami sent David, a beautiful young adult of the

SSSIO, to me. He was blessed to receive Baba's robe and lent it to me as I left for New York to be with my daughter. **Upon arrival at the hospital, I placed the robe on her belly, and after a few moments, the cramps and pains ceased! We both expressed our infinite gratitude to Baba.**

Is it any surprise that two weeks later, the doctors who had recommended that she stay in the hospital for the remainder of her pregnancy advised that she could go home and return to the hospital only in case of emergency? They were pleased with the improvement in her pregnancy but also astonished at the miraculous turn of events.

After a month in New York, I returned to Bogotá to attend to my work. I called the same taxi that had taken us earlier from the hospital to the apartment, driven by a man from the Dominican Republic named Cecilio (my name is Cecilia). He loved Jesus, and we talked about God during both journeys. When the doctors advised that my daughter be admitted to the hospital for surgery and delivery, I returned to New York.

### **Delivery and Deliverance**

**The name of the obstetrician in charge of my daughter was Dr. Divine, while the operating surgeon was an oncologist named Dr. Right!** This was a highly complex surgery; 22 people were in the operating theater, including surgeons, nurses, specialists, and medical students. My daughter had headphones placed over her ears through which the sacred Gayatri

Mantra was played throughout the surgery. It was estimated to be a 6-hour surgery.

Barely two hours later, the surgeon came to the waiting room and told us that the newborn baby and the mother were doing fine! The baby had been taken to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and placed in an incubator, and my daughter was in Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Though thrilled and joyous on hearing this good news, my happiness evaporated when I saw my daughter was in great pain and distress. I felt sick, and however much I prayed, it did not help. **I kept on repeating His Holy name and the Gayatri mantra. I surrendered to His will and placed the situation in His Hands.** I could not take it anymore and walked out of the hospital and toward the subway to pick up my daughter's elder child from the nursery.

That was when I heard a voice calling "Cecilia." I thought it could not be for me because I did not know anyone in New York. The voice called again, and I felt a hand on my shoulder. When I turned around, I recognized Cecilio, the taxi driver from the Dominican Republic! He asked me about my daughter and told me he would take me back home. I expressed my gratitude but told him I was taking the subway. He led me by the arm to his taxi, opened the door, seated me inside, and said, "This is my gift to you."

As soon as I sat down, I saw the fish symbol at the back of the seat, a reference to a great miracle of Christ. **I felt my Swami guiding me along the stream of life, sitting in the driver's seat. I was bathed**



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**I kept on repeating His Holy name and the Gayatri mantra. I surrendered to His will and placed the situation in His Hands.**

**in infinite peace, unimaginable contentment, and equanimity.** Cecilio drove me to the nursery to pick up the child and then dropped us off at the apartment.

The next time I saw my daughter, she was smiling—no pain, no distress! Needless to say, the mother and baby recovered well and are doing fine by His grace.

**With Swami,  
Life is a Continuous Miracle**

Life's experiences taught me patience, forbearance, and surrender, but most of all, they strengthened my faith in my inner Self, my inner Swami. He is part of my daily life and always ready to respond, guide and

protect me. I remember an occasion when I was thinking about Swami's visit to Africa and dozed off in a waiting hall in Frankfurt. When I woke up, imagine my surprise at meeting the person who had driven Swami around during His stay in Uganda!

I can go on and on but will never be able to fully share all the stories of His love and grace. **May we experience His presence in our lives at every moment, everywhere.** May we realize that life itself is one continuous miracle with Swami!

**Mrs. Maria Cecilia Villamizar**  
COLOMBIA



*Mrs. María Cecilia Villamizar studied psychology at the Pontificia University Javeriana in Bogotá, Colombia. She has worked in clinical and educational fields in several universities and other entities for 18 years. Mrs. Villamizar also served for 18 years in regional commercial management and currently coordinates the Quality Management of a company.*

*She came to know Swami in 2001 and has served in several positions in the SSSIO, including National Service Coordinator, National Council President of SSSIO, Colombia, and the Central Coordinator of Region 22, Zone 2B, for the past ten years. Maria is part of the team of facilitators of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Human Values in Colombia.*

# *from the* International Sai Young Adults

This month, we bring you exciting updates from the YAs “down under” in Australia with a look at their recent retreat, and a beautiful reflection by a Sai Young Adult also from Australia. Next, the Ocean of Music team has released a new album of songs dedicated to Swami on the occasion of Aradhana Mahotsavam. May 6 is Easwaramma Day and May 14, 2023 is Mothers’ Day! What better occasion could there be to get to know more about the chosen mother? Enjoy the quiz we have prepared on Mother Easwaramma!

## Quiz: Celebrating Mother Easwaramma

1. Sri Sathya Sai Baba said, “I resolved on my birth. I decided who should be my mother.” Although her christened name was Namagiramma, Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s grandfather \_\_\_\_\_ prophetically gave her the name Easwaramma, meaning mother of Ishwara (God).
2. The start of motherhood: One morning, while she was drawing water from the well, a big ball of blue light came rolling towards her. She fainted and fell. She felt it glided into her. This blue light was indicative of Bhagawan’s birth being \_\_\_\_\_ (an advent), not \_\_\_\_\_ (conception).  
*(Hint: Both words start with P)*
3. Swami always addressed the Mother as \_\_\_\_\_ (lady of the house).

***(answers at the bottom of page 42)***

*I*t is the privilege and duty of the young men and women to promote the welfare, progress and peace of the world. Transform all your actions into sacred duties. Experience the love of the Divine. That is the meaning of Swami’s declaration: “My life is my message.” Adhere to the ideals set before you by Swami.

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**  
July 16, 1997

# AROUND THE WORLD

## Young Adults Retreat in Australia

The Sai Young Adults of New South Wales, Zone 3, had the opportunity to come together in Satsangh at their YA Retreat on March 25, 2022. The communion was held amidst the beautiful views of Mona Vale where everyone shared their views and expressions of love for Bhagawan.

The day included a Sattvic food workshop, a Paint 'n' Pray session, enrichment toys making for the animals at Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and building Prasanthi at Basin Beach along with dynamic guest-speaker sessions, melodious devotional singing and many more activities. The YAs felt it was a beautiful day connecting as YAs to reflect and experience the theme of Unity of Body, Mind and Soul.



## Ocean of Music Volume 4

The Sai Young Adults of the Sri Sathya Sai International Organisation have now launched the fourth volume of the Ocean of Music Bhajan Album Series as an expression of our love and gratitude to Bhagawan for the grace and guidance that He has blessed us with.

These musical renditions, by Sai Young Adults bring waves of Divine Bliss through multilingual Bhajans, Devotional songs and Value-Based songs to the homes and hearts of all. You can listen to and download Ocean of Music, Volume 4 here:

- <https://soundcloud.com/sathyasai/sets/ocean4>

If you would like to participate in the upcoming recordings for subsequent volumes, please contact the Ocean of Music team at: oom-team@sathyasai.org. Stay tuned for Volume 5, coming soon!

# Holding on to Swami

Sometimes we do not get answers immediately from God regarding things happening to us, but He knows the right timing, as He knows our past, present, and future!

As a child, I attended bhajans religiously at our Sai Center in Ponda, Goa, along with my mother, Srimati Janaki. I used to rest my head on her lap while she would lovingly pat me to sleep with bhajans as a lullaby. The bhajans must have seeped into me because **I started singing bhajans when I was only a three-year-old!**

My father (*Naanna*) had a major heart attack when I was barely four. He was admitted into the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (SSSIHMS) in Puttaparthi. Two weeks later, he walked out hale and healthy from the hospital! Soon, I was enrolled in Sai Spiritual Education (SSE), called *Bal Vikas* in India, and successfully graduated from the program as a Young Adult.

## The Downhill Slide

Despite singing for Swami, listening to His stories and glories, and learning about His teachings throughout my childhood, I was in the grip of worldly temptations. I succumbed to teenage distractions and became lax in attending bhajan sessions. That was the beginning of the downhill slide. While 'climbing up' takes time and effort, 'sliding down' happens fast and effortlessly! My biggest blow came when my *Naanna* died when I was only 16. My world crashed as I was (and still am) extremely close to my *Naanna*. However, I didn't cry in order to be strong and support my mother.

However, I realized only later that I hadn't processed my father's loss and became traumatized. I had anger issues and got easily frustrated. Having lost control over my father's life, I desperately wanted to ensure I was always in control of my life. **I also got angry at Swami and blamed Him for losing my father. Unknown to me then, this contributed to my downfall.**

## A Nadir for Me

My attempts to get admitted to medical college were not successful. With a broken heart, I enrolled in an engineering college, blaming Swami again. As soon as I completed my education, the job market crashed! Misfortune seemed to accompany me everywhere! After a temporary stint teaching computer science, I got a job as an associate consultant at a multinational corporation. Things didn't go smoothly there, either. While all my colleagues were assigned to good projects and traveled abroad, gaining valuable experience, I was stuck in a rut! This turn of events was indeed rock bottom.

My workplace was very close to Swami's Whitefield *Ashram*. But I never went for *darshan* as I was angry and upset with Him. Mothers are magically aware of everything in their children's lives. My mother, too, was aware of my situation. One day, she told me, "Ashu, why don't you go to the *Ashram* and sit for a few hours during the *Akhanda bhajans*?"

Strangely, I readily agreed. It was more of a desperate move to seek peace, as my methods weren't working.

## Sai's Touch

Thus, in 2014, three years after Swami's Mahasamadhi, I finally attended *bhajans*. An hour passed, during which my whole life flashed right before me. **In that 'movie,' the happiest times were when I attended bhajans with my parents.** I couldn't control my tears and spoke to Swami in my heart, asking, "Why, Swami, why aren't You there for me? Why do I feel like a loser?"

Once I was done crying and speaking to Him, I wiped my tears and instantly felt lighter. A burden was lifted, and I returned home happy.

And then, things started changing for the better!

In just a week, I got a call from my manager asking me to get ready to travel to Germany immediately! I was pleasantly surprised. Things seemed to be happening 'out of nowhere'! My status at work rose so fast that, by Swami's grace, I could purchase a new home for my mother in India!

**Once the divine connection was back, everything turned around for the better. The pieces of the puzzle in my life started falling into place. I realized that it was Swami, beyond doubt, who was scripting my life.** He had ensured that I did not join a medical school because I would still be studying and couldn't help my mother resolve a challenging financial situation. I wouldn't have been able to do many other things that make me happy, and life would have been different!

## A Startling Revelation

As many Indian parents do, my mother got my birth chart read by a scholarly astrologer. The astrologer looked into the charts, shook his head, and asked my

mother, “Ashwinii doesn’t seem to have her father’s love at all. Did she lose her father when she was very young?”

My mother replied, “No, she was 16 when we lost him, and Ashwinii is still very close to her father.”

The astrologer seemed stupefied. “Strange, this is nothing short of a miracle! There’s no way her father survived for so long!”

I had tears in my eyes as I realized that Swami was taking care of my family all along. He kept my father safe for more than ten years so I could know him and experience his love! Swami also ensured my father had enough time to secure our family’s future. Per my astrological chart, I wasn’t supposed to spend these years with my father, which Swami granted graciously!

### Into Swami’s Arms Through the Sai Organization

Since then, there has been no looking back! All I did was hold onto Swami. **He taught me how to be grateful. He taught me how to share love and receive love! He**

**taught me to recognize my faults and love myself as He loves me!**

My move to Australia and calling it home was never in my plans! But as I mentioned earlier, Swami is guiding my life, and things unfolded at the right time. I found an excellent job in Australia, and Swami welcomed me through my Sai Family here! I started to immerse myself in Swami’s work in the SSSIO, and I firmly believe I have never felt away from home, my mother (Amma), or Swami! I have never experienced such closeness to Swami, although I am physically thousands of miles away from Puttaparthi! **Swami is everywhere, and He has His ways of responding to His devotees!**

I cannot overemphasize that there’s nothing more precious in life than holding on to Swami’s hand like a small child holding her parents’ hands. **Swami knows our past, present, and future. He knows it and He will guide, protect, and take care of us.**

Life has never been the same anymore!

Ms. Ashwinii Mahanti   
AUSTRALIA



*Ms. Ashwinii Mahanti works as a Business Analyst in Brisbane. She is an active member of the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization of Australia. She serves as the Regional Education Coordinator for Queensland..*

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**Sai Young Adults**

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*Solutions to Quiz: (1) Kondama Raju; (2) Pravesha, Prasava; (3) Griham Ammayi*

सत्य धर्म शांती यो



# Mother Easwaramma



**L**ove is the driving force behind Mother Easwaramma's three wishes. Mother Easwaramma, the mother of our beloved Swami, left a legacy emphasizing her love and passion for selfless service. She had three wishes she requested from Swami:

1. Build a primary school for children in Puttaparthi
2. Build a hospital in Puttaparthi
3. Provide drinking water for residents of Puttaparthi

Her humble wishes all involved selfless service to the community. Easwaramma wanted to improve the lives of residents of Puttaparthi. Her love for service mirrors the qualities Swami continually reminds us to follow.

After learning about Mother Easwaramma's selfless wishes, I started a project to make and donate blankets, scarves, hats, and cards for patients at a local hospital before the Easwaramma Day 2022 celebrations. We formed a group of 20 adults and children to make over 100 items for patients at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) Hillman Cancer Center. Initially, this project idea seemed daunting, and I began to doubt if this would even be possible. However, my parents reminded me that Swami was with me and would guide me. I then realized that in order to continue the project, I would have to be humble and understand that I was just His instrument and that He was working through our team and me.

We purchased the required supplies, and I was extremely grateful for the generous donations of supplies and materials from members of the Sai Center. Within just a few days, we had enough materials, including fleece for blankets, a loom for scarves and hats, as well as art supplies for the cards. Despite not knowing how to make any of these items, Swami guided our team to move forward and complete the project. Once we surrendered to Swami's will and took on the attitude of His instruments, obstacles were removed.



Lipi K. | Group 1 | USA



Not only was I able to learn a new skill, but I was able to strengthen my relationships with many members of our Sai Center, all of which occurred while completing a service project for the community. Once we were done with making the donation items, they were packaged into boxes for delivery to the hospital. I counted the items and I asked Swami to give us a sign that He blessed the donations and was happy with our service.

There were 96 donated items, which was amazing because preparations for Swami's 96th birthday were underway at the time! I was so happy that Swami blessed the donations. With the help of my sister, we donated the items to the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center. The coordinator was overjoyed with the donations. She said that they were unexpectedly low on donations in January 2022 and that the patients would

love these items! At that moment, I realized that all along, it was Swami and who was planning this specific month and time for these items to be donated to the hospital when they were needed most.

I am extremely grateful to Swami for teaching me the true meaning of selfless service through this project, which we are planning to do every year. I can definitely learn more from Mother Easwaramma's selfless actions and love for service, and I will continue to practice what I have learned, through how I behave at home, school, and other places. I will do my best to be humble, knowing that I am just His instrument, and that Swami is doing everything for me and through me, which is a mentality that I will adopt in my everyday life. Thank you, Swami!

Saipreeti S. | Group 4 | USA



"I practiced divinity by helping those around me."

Shubhada V. | Group 1 | USA

# 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](https://sathyasai.org/live) page.

Please visit [sathyasai.org/events/worldwide](https://sathyasai.org/events/worldwide) for further details on scheduled events, local dates and timings.

Date of Online Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
May 5, 2023	Saturday	Buddha Poornima
June 17-18, 2023	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri
July 2, 2023	Sunday	Guru Poornima



[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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- [Sri Sathya Sai Education](#)
- [Healthy Living](#)



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It is the foremost duty of children to fulfil the wishes of their mother and make her happy. Serve others to the extent possible. You need not take up any service activity beyond your means and capacity. If you find your neighbors suffering, give them solace. Help them to the extent possible and make them happy. This is what I expect you to learn today. On the occasion of Easwamma Day, I exhort all of you to practice these three principles of service, experiencing bliss, and sharing it with all.

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

May 6, 2006

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**sathyasai.org**

Love All • Serve All  
Help Ever • Hurt Never