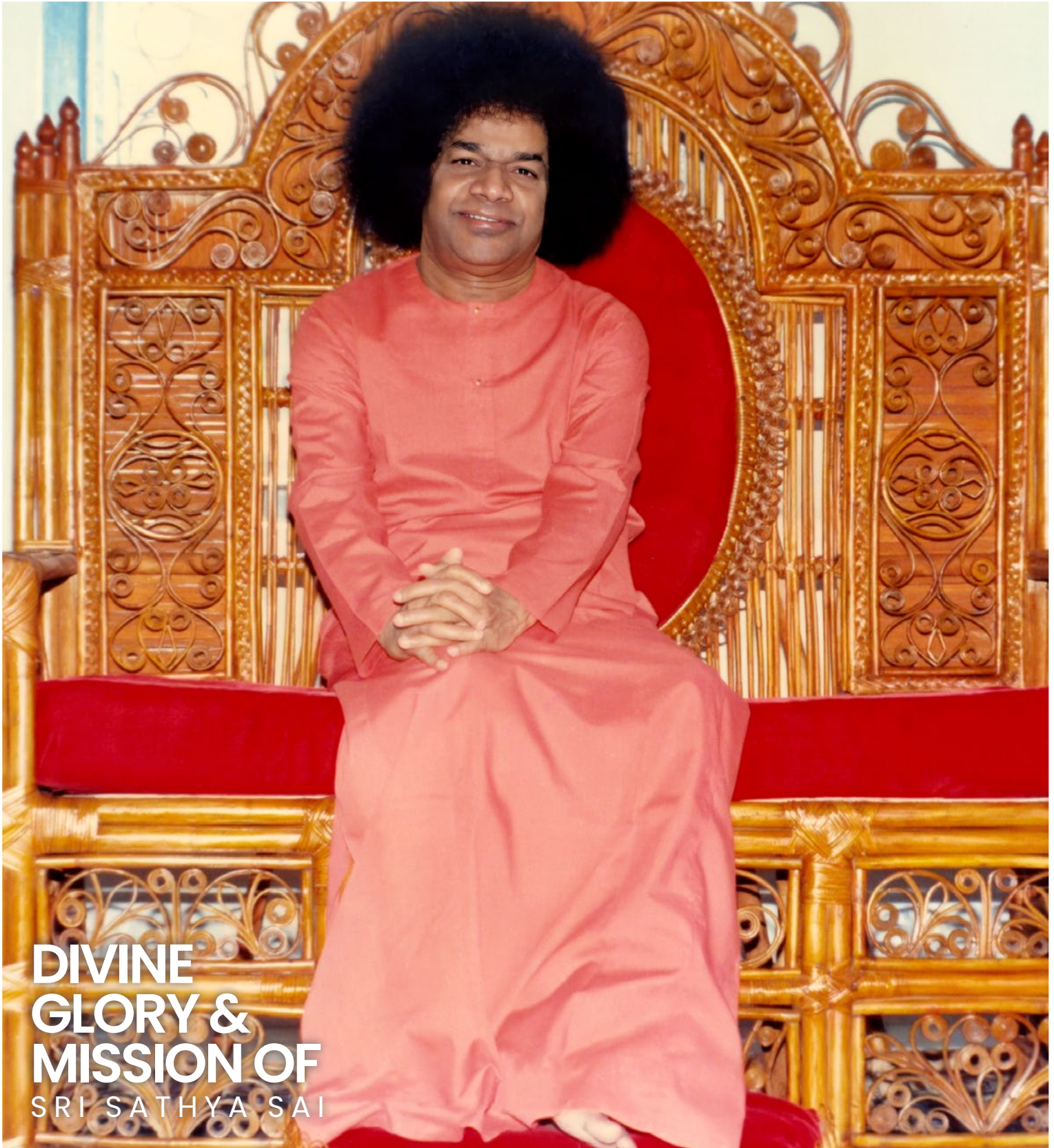


SATHYA SAI
THE
ETERNAL
COMPANION



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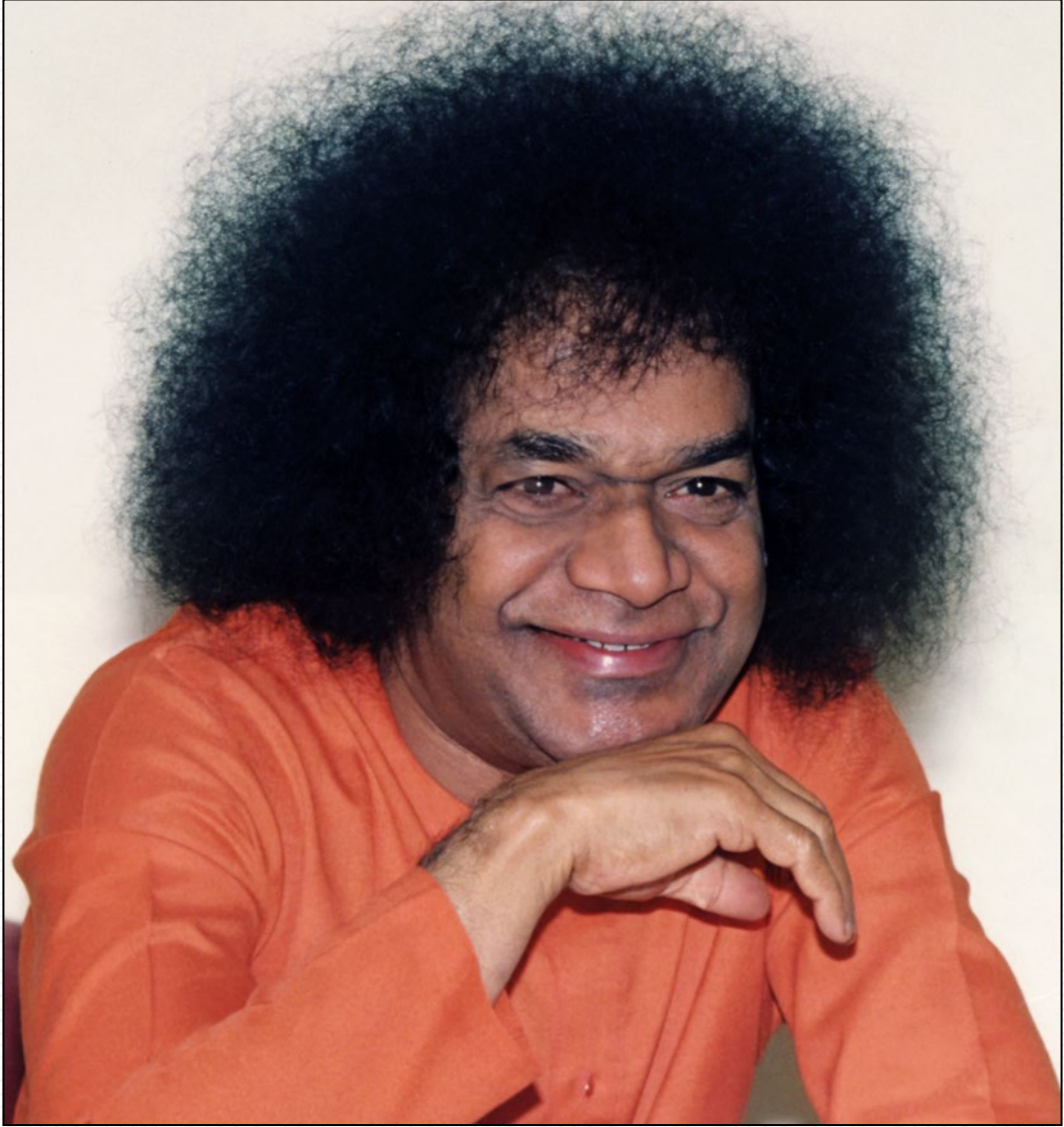
**DIVINE
GLORY &
MISSION OF**
SRI SATHYA SAI



Vinayaka (Ganesha) is one who drives away all sorrows, difficulties and miseries. He is the enemy of all obstacles. He will not allow any obstacles to come in the way. He is the destroyer of obstacles. He confers happiness and peace (on his devotees). He is the master of all these powers—*Buddhi* (intellect) and *Siddhi* (spiritual attainment). What is this *Siddhi*? When there is purity of mind you achieve peace which is *Siddhi*. Vinayaka is thus the Lord of *Buddhi* and *Siddhi*. Hence, every human being should acquire control over the mind.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

August 29, 1995



DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO
BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA





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THE GANESHA PRINCIPLE

We celebrate Ganesha Chaturthi on September 19, 2023. Ganesha is a universal deity. So, along with millions of devotees in the Indian subcontinent, millions more around the world also celebrate this festival. Swami celebrated Ganesha Chaturthi on a grand scale for many decades in Prasanthi Nilayam. The festival is also called Vinayaka Chavithi, indicating that it comes on the 4th day in the holy month of Bhadrapada (6th month of the Hindu calendar). Swami says that a festival 'holiday' becomes a 'holy day' when we understand the spiritual significance behind its celebration.

The Same Divine Principle Behind All Names and Forms

Bhagawan Baba often reminds us:

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

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

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

*There is only one God,
and He is Omnipresent.*

In His divine discourse on May 17, 1968, during the First World Conference of the Sathya Sai Organizations in Bombay (known as Mumbai today), Swami reveals glimpses of His divinity and further elaborating on this declaration, He proclaims,

*"This is a human form in which every
Divine entity, every Divine Principle,
that is to say, all the Names and*

*Forms ascribed by man to God, are
manifest."*

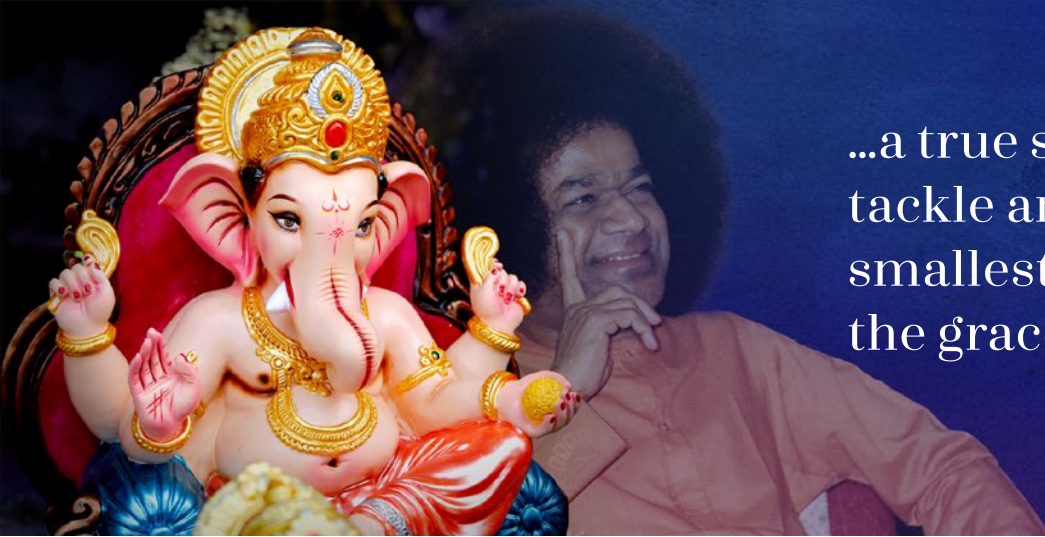
In this issue of the Eternal Companion, we relive the experiences of two devotees with Lord Ganesha—Swami Amritananda from India and Prof. John Grimes from the USA. These experiences demonstrate that our **Bhagawan encompasses all names and forms, including Ganesha, also known as Vinayaka and Ganapathi.**

Why Immersion?

Ganesha Chaturthi is the day people offer their homage, adoration, and worship by remembering Ganapathi and singing His glories. Devotees revel in making different forms and artistic styles of Ganapathi idols for worship. On one occasion, 750 unique forms of Ganesha were exhibited in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Referring to the grand presentation, in His Divine Discourse on September 1, 2000, Swami says,

*"Today, devotees from Bangalore
have brought 750 idols of Lord Ganapathi
to worship, as this year happens to be
the commencement of the 75th year of
Swami's physical body. One may bring
750 idols or 7 crore (70 million) idols,
but Ganapathi is only One. No benefit
accrues from offering worship to any
number of Ganapathi idols without
purity of heart. It is enough if you
worship one Ganapathi idol with the
feeling of oneness."*



...a true spiritual seeker can tackle any task, from the smallest to the largest, by the grace of Lord Ganesha.

Ganapathi idols are made in clay and, after being worshipped for the stipulated days, are immersed in water bodies—ponds, lakes, seas, or oceans, in an auspicious ritual known as *vijarjan* or *nimajjanam*. There is an important inner significance behind this ritual. Understanding the 'spirit' behind the 'ritual' makes it 'spiritual.'

The ritual symbolizes the concretization of the formless into a form and the dissolution of that form into the formless.

Clay, which has no form, is used to create a beautiful idol of Ganesha. Immersion in water dissolves the form into clay again. The manifest Universe comes from the formless and returns to the formless state. The *nirguna nirakara* (attributeless and formless) God takes a beautiful form for our redemption before returning to the original state. This is true for all Avatars—Rama, Krishna, Jesus, Buddha, Shirdi Sai, and our Swami. **The 'descent' of God is for the 'ascent' of Man.**

Inner Significance of Ganesha

All the *ashrams* and institutions that Swami set up have idols of Ganesha, apart from the temples dedicated especially to Him. Swami says that Ganapathi stands for wisdom and purity of the heart. Ganapathi is the one who gives us spiritual potency and endows us with supreme intelligence. These two blessings are called *Siddhi* and *Buddhi*, respectively. These qualities are essential to understand the principle of Ganapathi as well.

Swami has delivered many discourses on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi over the decades, expounding on the inner significance of this unique form of God.

Lord Ganesha has many endearing names, such as Vinayaka, Ganapathi, and Vighneshwara. Vinayaka means the one who has no leader (*Vi+nayaka*; *Vi* = without, and *nayaka* = leader). He is the supreme leader, with nobody above Him. He is the highest. Swami says He worships nobody, but all Gods and Goddesses bow to Him. In fact, Vinayaka is also called *Prathama Vandana* (the first worshipped deity). Any ceremony or worship always begins with the worship of Ganapathi. That is why, He is called Gana-pati, meaning the 'Master of Ganas,' and Ganesha, meaning the 'Lord of Ganas.'

The Ganas are all Shiva's friends and followers in the yogic lore and are of 12 kinds. But Swami again gives us the inner meaning for these. He says that the 12 Ganas are there in each one of us. They are the 5 *Karmendriyas* (organs of action), the 5 *Jnanendriyas* (organs of perception), the mind, and the intellect. These 12 'Ganas' take us toward God when we tread the path of truth and righteousness. They take us away from God when we tread the path of untruth or unrighteousness. **These Ganas are mastered when we worship Ganesha, thus taking us toward God.**

The Elephant-Faced Lord Riding a Mouse

Two aspects stand out among the many unique features of the Ganesha form—the elephant face and the mouse, which serves as His vehicle. Ganesha is called Gajanana, meaning ‘the elephant-faced one’ (*Gaja* = elephant; *Aanana* = face). Swami explains that *Ga* stands for *Gamyam* (goal), *Ja* stands for *Janmam* (birth), and *Aanana* is face. **Gajanana is the one who brings us face to face with the ultimate goal of our birth, i.e., God.** This explanation reinforces the inner meaning of ‘Ganesha’ and ‘Ganapathi.’

The elephant head is also symbolic of great intelligence. Apart from that, the elephant has large ears but a barely visible mouth, which conveys the message to listen more and talk less. Swami often says, “*Shut your mouth and open your heart.*” The trunk of an elephant is unique in its ability to lift the smallest needle and also the largest log. This implies that **a true spiritual seeker can tackle any task, from the smallest to the largest, by the grace of Lord Ganesha.**

The elephant is also known for its extreme loyalty to its master. It is ready to sacrifice its very life for the one it loves. The direct proof is Sai Gita, Swami’s favorite elephant and ardent devotee. Swami has often spoken of her devotion and dedication to Him. Therefore, like Lord Rama, who did the last rites for the great bird devotee, *Jatayu*, Swami too performed the last rites for the elephant devotee, enduring long hours in the hot sun.

Ganesha is called *Mooshika Vahana* (One whose rides a mouse). What does the mouse represent? The mouse moves about in the night, and thus, it represents darkness, symbolizing ignorance. Ganapathi, riding the mouse, is regarded as controlling the darkness of ignorance. The mouse is also known for its strong sense of smell (*Vasana*). Based on the smell of

an object, however faint it might be, the mouse finds its way to it. In fact, if anyone wants to trap a mouse, they exploit its acute sense of smell as a weakness for trapping it with a piece of food.

The inner significance of *Vasana* concerning humanity is our inherent tendencies (*Vasanas*) from previous lives. These *Vasanas* trigger our actions in our present lives. They also signify desires. **Vinayaka riding the mouse, signifies the triumph of wisdom over the twin problems of ignorance and desires that trap man in bondage.** Thus, He drives away our ignorance and inauspicious selfish tendencies (*ashubh vasanas*) and makes us inculcate auspicious selfless tendencies (*shubh vasanas*), thus helping us progress toward Self-realization.

Vighneshwara (Lord of Obstacles) is another name for Ganesha. Swami beautifully explains that Lord Ganesha removes obstacles whenever we do good and selfless acts of service. But Lord Ganesha also creates obstacles when anyone is involved in evil deeds or unrighteous activities. Either way, He helps us progress in the right direction in our spiritual path.

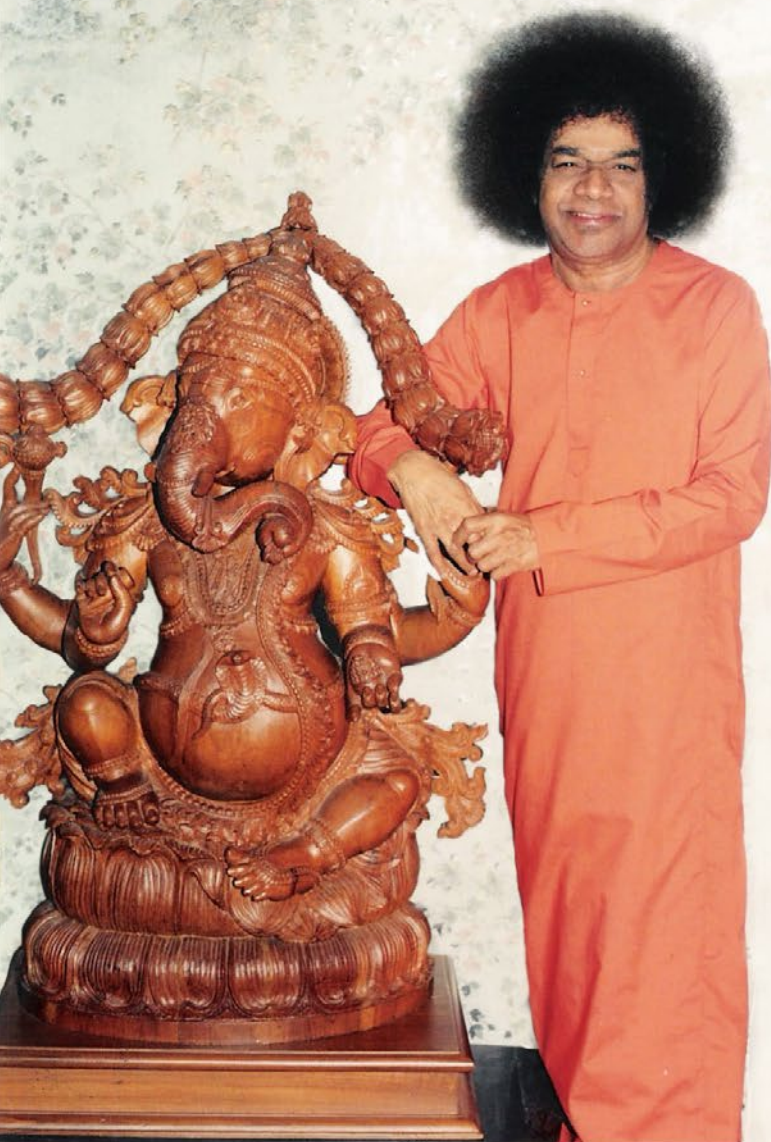
A Common Prayer to Ganesha

*Shuklambaradharam Vishnum
Shashivarnam Chaturbhujam,
Prasanna Vadanam Dhyaayeth Sarva
Vighnopashantaye*

Here is the literal meaning of the words and the inner significance as given by our Beloved Swami:

1. *Shuklambaradharam*: One who is clad in white. White signifies purity.
2. *Vishnum*: Vishnu, in Sanskrit, means one who is omnipresent. Ganesha pervades all.
3. *Shashivarnam*: One with a grey complexion (*vibhuti*). *Vibhuti* also refers to glorious divine powers.

Swami emphasizes that the merit of visiting all the pilgrimage places in the world cannot surpass the merit of adoration and service to one's parents.



4. *Chaturbhujam*: One who has four hands. These four hands represent the four aspects of Ganesha's compassion and benevolence. He holds the *pasha* (rope) in one of the hands to pull us toward God when we adore Him or put us into bondage when we forget Him. The second hand carries the trident, used to redeem the good and punish the bad. The third hand is the *varadahasta* or boon-bestowing hand. The fourth hand is *abhayahasta*, or the hand bestowing fearlessness to devotees. In other versions, the fourth hand carries a mace, a tusk, or a steam-boiled sweet (*modaka*).
5. *Prasanna Vadanam Dhyayeth*: We meditate on Lord Ganesha, who has a pleasant and smiling face. Swami's ABC of life is 'Always Be Cheerful.' He would often say, "Have a smiling face. Don't have a long face or a 'castor oil face' (a face with a grimace when one is given castor oil as a laxative)."
6. *Sarva Vighnopashantaye*: Removes all obstacles (when we act right) to make us progress in the right direction.

Ganesha's Dedication to Work

The broken tusk in Ganesha's hand is His own. He has only one whole tusk and is hence called *Ekadanta* (single-tusked). The story behind this is connected to the great Sage Veda Vyasa. The sage needed a skilled scribe to transcribe the great epic Mahabharata, which contains more than 200,000 verses. The Mahabharata is considered the *Panchama Veda* (Fifth Veda). It has in it the three greatest scriptures for one's salvation—Bhagavad Gita (Lord Krishna's discourse to Arjuna), Vishnu Sahasranama (1000 names of Vishnu given by the great Bhishma to Yudhistira), and Sanatsujateeyam (*Advaitic* treatise on how to achieve Self-realization).

Lord Ganesha agreed to be Vyasa's scribe on the condition that Vyasa had to narrate

it without pause. To maintain the pace, Vyasa composed complex verses, requiring Ganesha to comprehend them fully before writing. When He was energetically and passionately writing, Ganesha's writing quill broke. To continue, He broke one of his tusks and used it as the writing instrument. This dedication preserved the epic's completeness and depth. **Ganesha's broken tusk thus symbolizes sacrifice and commitment to work and knowledge, which is a lesson for all of us.** We should put all our heart, mind, soul, and strength in doing the work.

The Ganapathi Atharva Shirsha

The other common prayer chanted for Lord Ganesha in the divine presence of our Lord Sai is the Ganapathi Atharva Shirsha which is part of the Atharvana Veda, one of the four Vedas. The Ganapathi Atharva Shirsha is a profound and mystical composition that praises and describes Lord Ganesha's qualities, attributes, and significance. It is considered a form of meditation and devotion to Ganesha, seeking his blessings for various aspects of life, including removing obstacles, attaining knowledge, and spiritual growth. Let us review the major aspects of this hymn.

Right at the beginning of this Vedic prayer is the proclamation, "Ganapathi, you are the epitome of *Tat Twam Asi* (Thou Art That), *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (All this is indeed Brahman) and the *Atman* (Eternal, unchanging reality). You are the *Kartasi* (creator), *Dhartasi* (sustainer), and *Hartasi* (destroyer)."

It declares Lord Ganesha as the protector from all ten directions (N, S, E, W, NE, NW, SE, SW, Above, and Below). It proclaims Ganapathi to be Satchitananda (*Sath-Chit-Ananda*—the embodiment of Truth, Awareness, and Bliss). It announces Ganesha to be the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and space). It also says, "You are Brahma (creator), Vishnu (sustainer), Rudra

(destroyer), Indra (rain god), Vayu (wind god), Surya (sun god), Chandra (moon god) and the ultimate entity responsible for all the three *Lokas* (planes of existence) and the Pranava (primordial sound)—OM."

It further mentions that Ganesha is an embodiment of and beyond.

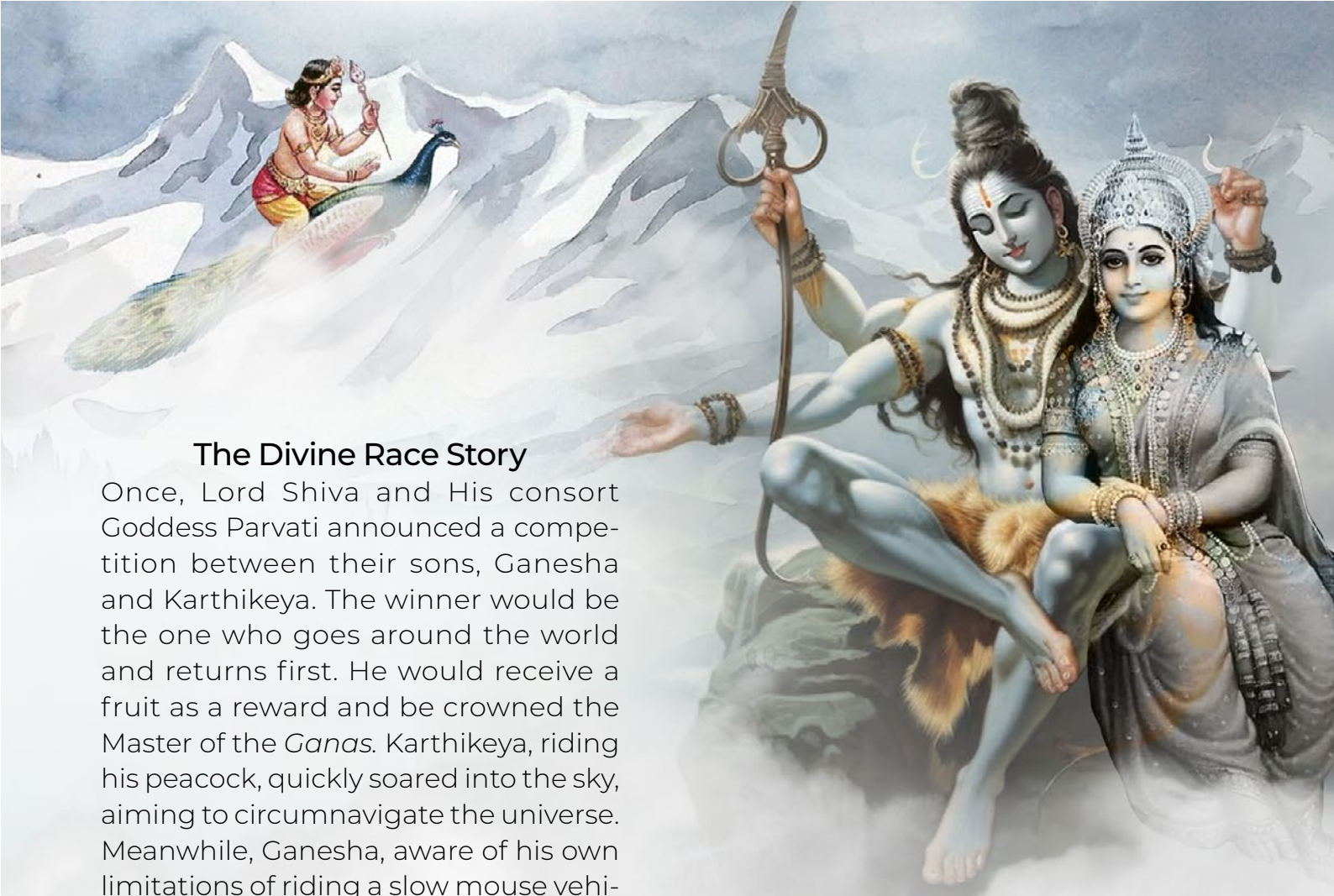
- the three *gunas* (*satva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*)
- three states (waking, dreaming, and deep sleep)
- three bodies (gross, subtle, and causal)
- three times (past, present, and future)
- three powers (*ichcha*—will, *jnana*—knowledge, *kriya*—action)

Ganesha is then revealed as the resident of the *Mooladhara Chakra*, which is responsible for arousing the *Kundalini* power. The Ganapathi Atharva Shirsha also describes a potent **seed mantra (*Beejakshara Mantra*) for Ganesha—*Om Gam Ganapathaye Namaha*. This mantra contains the *beeja* (seed) letters 'Gam,' which removes all obstacles and bestows knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual enlightenment.**

Significance of Offerings to Ganesha

We make offerings of tender grass and steam-boiled sweets (*modakas*) to Lord Ganesha. This highlights the importance of *sattvic* and healthy food. In the modern context, this could be taken as vegetarian foods, salads, and simple healthy fresh food preparations.

What then of the pot belly of Ganesha despite taking healthy foods? Swami says that Ganesha's belly is a metaphor for the ability to digest and assimilate life's experiences, both pleasant and unpleasant. The large stomach is also a repository of *Jnana* (wisdom). Just as the stomach ensures nourishment for all the organs and limbs, Lord Ganesha distributes *Jnana* to all the devotees.



The Divine Race Story

Once, Lord Shiva and His consort Goddess Parvati announced a competition between their sons, Ganesha and Karthikeya. The winner would be the one who goes around the world and returns first. He would receive a fruit as a reward and be crowned the Master of the *Ganas*. Karthikeya, riding his peacock, quickly soared into the sky, aiming to circumnavigate the universe. Meanwhile, Ganesha, aware of his own limitations of riding a slow mouse vehicle, just sat, thinking. His astute intellect prompted Him to circumambulate his parents.



He explained that, for Him, His parents embodied the universe. He then claimed victory in the race because Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati were not just His parents but parents of the whole Universe. Impressed by Ganesha's wisdom, Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati declared him the winner, as his act symbolized devotion and supreme wisdom.

Apart from reflecting Ganesha's intelligence, this story highlights that one's parents are verily one's universe, and they should be so revered. **Swami emphasizes that the merit of visiting all the pilgrimage places in the world cannot surpass the merit of adoration and service to one's parents.**

The One Principle in Diverse Forms

The Ganesha Purana describes the 32 forms of Lord Ganesha, and among them, Mahaganapathi is widely worshipped. The first 16 forms of Ganesha are known as “Shodasa Ganapathi,” and the latter 16 are known as “Ekavimsathi.” Each form has special powers and characteristic features. Depending on our problems and issues, we can choose an appropriate form.

1. *Bala Ganapathi*: Lord in child form
2. *Taruna Ganapathi*: Youthful one
3. *Bhakti Ganapathi*: One who grants devotion
4. *Veera Ganapathi*: Valiant one
5. *Shakti Ganapathi*: Powerful one
6. *Dvija Ganapathi*: ‘Twice-born’ one (‘Second Birth’ is a reference to the initiation into Gayatri Mantra)
7. *Siddhi Ganapathi*: Spiritually attained one
8. *Ucchhishta Ganapathi*: Lord of blessed offerings
9. *Vighna Ganapathi*: Lord of obstacles
10. *Kshipra Ganapathi*: Lord who is quick to act
11. *Heramba Ganapathi*: Lord who protects the weak and helpless
12. *Lakshmi Ganapathi*: Lord of prosperity and well-being
13. *Maha Ganapathi*: Great one
14. *Vijaya Ganapathi*: Victorious one
15. *Nritya Ganapathi*: Lord of dance
16. *Urdhva Ganapathi*: Exalted one
17. *Ekakshara Ganapathi*: Single-syllabled one (*Gam*)
18. *Varada Ganapathi*: Lord who bestows boons
19. *Tryakshara Ganapathi*: Lord of the three syllables, A-U-M (OM)
20. *Kshipra Prasada Ganapathi*: Lord who is quick to reward
21. *Haridra Ganapathi*: Lord of beautiful golden hue
22. *Ekadanta Ganapathi*: Single-tusked one
23. *Srithi Ganapathi*: Lord of creation
24. *Uddanda Ganapathi*: Lord who enforces dharma
25. *Rinamochana Ganapathi*: Debt-redeeming one (worldly and spiritual debts)
26. *Dhundhi Ganapathi*: Lord who helps in attaining liberation (*moksha*) through spiritual practices
27. *Dvimukha Ganapathi*: Lord with two heads who sees in all directions
28. *Trimukha Ganapathi*: Lord with three heads who is beyond three gunas
29. *Simha Ganapathi*: Fearless one riding a lion who protects the devotees and removes their fears
30. *Yoga Ganapathi*: Lord of yoga
31. *Durga Ganapathi*: Lord in the form of Goddess Durga who destroys sins and karmic bondage
32. *Sankatahara Ganapathi*: Lord who removes hardships and troubles of life

Ganapathi has these names and forms, but the underlying principle is the same—*Brahman* or *Satchitananda* (Truth, Awareness, and Bliss). **Thus, when we worship Lord Ganesha with intensity and love, wherever we are, He responds to our prayers.** Let us all pray to Him, understanding the meaning of the prayers, and make Ganesha our role model in our journey to attain liberation.

Jai Sai Ram.



Love for God is the Only Real Wealth

Sweeter than sugar, tastier than curd, sweeter indeed than honey are the Names of Rama and Krishna.

Constant repetition of these sweet Names gives one the taste of divine nectar itself.

Therefore, contemplate on the Names of Rama and Krishna incessantly.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Divine Love! Verily all this is Brahman (*sarvam khalvidam Brahma*). Everything is the manifestation of Divinity. It is easy to criticize the divine play (*leela*) and the supreme powers of Avatars, but it is difficult to understand the principle of their Divinity.

God, who is all-pervasive, is present both in truth (*sathya*) and untruth (*asathya*), righteousness (*dharma*), unrighteousness (*adharma*), and good and bad. Such being the case, how can you call something good and some other thing bad, something divine and something not? Since ancient times, people have been investigating the principle of Divinity and propagating it throughout the entire world. Based on their own experiences, people say that the Divine has a particular form with some attributes.

Divinity shines in everyone. The entire world is governed by three principles, namely,

creation, sustenance, and dissolution. One may belong to any country, time, or faith, but one cannot deny this truth, be one a scientist or a philosopher. However, these three principles can only teach you the principle of Divinity; they cannot grant you the vision of Divinity. They are only pointers to the existence of Divinity. Looking from a distance, you say that the pole star is on top of a particular tree, but in reality, the pole star is not located there. The tree is just an indicator of the position of the pole star, which is millions of miles away. Likewise, the scriptures, epics, and ancient texts (Vedas, Sastras, Ithihasas, and Puranas) are only pointers to the existence of Divinity, but they cannot give a direct experience of the divine principle.

When you see a dense forest, a mighty mountain, or a flowing river, your heart is filled with bliss. All these demonstrate the mighty power of God. The stars shine in

When one offers everything to God in total surrender and with full faith, and believes that God's Heart is one's permanent abode, then there will be bliss, bliss, and bliss.



the sky, the planets revolve in their respective orbits, the sun gives light, and the wind blows—all these are indicators of Divinity.

When you recognize the nature of the spark of fire, you will know the nature of fire. When you know the nature of a drop of water, you will know the nature of the entire holy River Ganges (Ganga). Likewise, when you understand even a fraction of the principle of Nature, it will be possible to understand infinite Divinity. That is why the Upanishads have declared in this context, "Brahman (God) is smaller than the smallest and vaster than the vastest (*anoraneeyan mahato maheeyan*)." **Therefore, the human being is verily the embodiment of Divinity, endowed with innumerable divine powers and abilities. It is this Divinity that manifests, expresses, and shines brilliantly in everyone.** But people are unable to understand their innate Divinity because of their body attach-

ment. We should consider everything in the world as Divinity and conduct a search for truth (*sathyanveshana*). What is meant by the search for truth? Where does truth exist? When truth exists in everything, why then search for this truth? However, there is something called fact (*nijamu*), which is different from real truth. For example, we say that the Sun rises in the east and sets in the west every day. Here you have to conduct a search for truth, whether it is a fact or the truth.

When you go by your daily experience, it is a fact that the Sun rises in the east and sets in the west every day. But, when you investigate it deeply, you will know that it is not the truth. The Sun is stationary and does not move. It is because the earth rotates on its axis that you see the sunrise and sunset every day. This investigation is called the search for truth.

The Sun does not move; it is the earth that moves and rotates, and as a result, we experience the phenomenon of sunrise and sunset. In the same manner, you should make efforts to search for Divinity in humanity. In what way can we know the Divinity innate in a person? It is in this context that the Upanishads exhort, "Know thyself." When someone asks you who you are, if you say that you belong to such and such country, such and such heritage, and that you are the son of so and so, does it amount to knowing yourself? This is not the correct answer. **Knowing yourself amounts to realizing your true Self, which is beyond the body, the mind, the intellect, the mind-stuff (*chitta*), and the ego (*ahamkara*).**

It is in this reference that the Vedanta teaches the principle of "not this, not this (*neti, neti*)." The body, the mind, the intellect, the mind-stuff, and the senses—all these are mere instruments. You are the Divinity, which is beyond all these, and which illuminates these. It is Divinity that is responsible for their functioning.

However, when you start conducting such inquiry into the truth, you may encounter many difficulties, troubles, and sorrows.

When the demons and gods churned the ocean of milk, the first thing to emerge from the process of churning was deadly poison. It was only after this that various precious treasures were received including Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth), wish-fulfilling cow (*Kamadhenu*), and celestial elephant (*Iravatam*). And finally, divine ambrosia itself appeared, after the emergence of poison.

The human heart is like the ocean of milk (*ksheera sagara*). **When the human heart, which is like the ocean of milk is churned with the rod of wisdom, kindness, compassion, tolerance, empathy, and love will manifest.**

The human heart is pure, like the ocean of milk (*ksheera sagara*). But today, it has become an ocean of salt water (*kshara sagara*). Desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride, and jealousy (*kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, and matsarya*) have taken place in the heart. The human heart which should be filled with precious and sacred qualities, because of the entry of beastly qualities, the human heart which should be an ocean of milk has become like an ocean of saltwater. Saint Thyagaraja sings, "Oh the One reclining on the ocean of milk, please look after me (*Ksheera sagara sayana nannelu*)." God reclines on the ocean of milk. It means that God dwells in everyone's heart. That is His true abode.

Atma is the Source of Bliss

Mother Yashoda was distraught when Balarama (Krishna's brother) told her that Krishna was eating clay when there was plenty of milk, butter, and curd at home. Yashoda held Krishna's hands and chided saying, "Krishna, don't we have butter at home? If I feed you, won't it taste good? You go to cowherd's homes for butter. This is not proper." The words of the Divine are mysterious and filled with inner meaning. Krishna, smiling, replies in a manner revealing the inner meaning of Vedanta, "Mother, am I a child to eat clay or have I gone mad? Am I mischievous? I am not mad. No." **By His reply, child Krishna conveyed to His mother indirectly that He was not a mere child but God Himself.** God always teaches in an indirect manner.

Since people are always immersed in worldly life, with inherent tendencies (*vasanas*) and worries, it is not possible for them to understand teachings related to transcendental principles when they are conveyed directly. A person's life is centered around worldliness, the outward path (*pravritti*) whereas God's acts are related to the inward path (*nivritti*). To understand the principle of the inward

“One cannot derive bliss from people or material possessions or worldly endeavors. Atma is the only source of bliss.

path, one should transform one's path. One should know how to conduct oneself in accordance with the time, place, and circumstance. Sri Adi Sankaracharya, a saint and renowned teacher of Advaita Vedanta, says:

*Yoga ratova, bhoga ratova,
Sanga ratova, sanga viheena.
Yasya Brahmani ramate chittam,
Nandati, nandati, nanditi yeva.*
(Sanskrit verse)

One, whose mind is fixed in Brahman is always in bliss, whether engaged in spirituality (yoga) or worldly pleasures (*bhoga*), in solitude, or in social company.

Yogis lead an unostentatious lifestyle. Can the yogis attain Divinity just because they lead a very simple and austere life? *Bhogis* (those who revel in worldly pleasures) live and immerse themselves in all sorts of comforts. Can the *bhogis* attain Divinity just because they enjoy all pleasures and comforts? People live in society in a variety of ways among relatives and friends. Can they attain the knowledge of the Spirit? No, no. **When one offers everything to God in total surrender and with full faith, and believes that God's Heart is one's permanent abode, then there will be bliss, bliss, and bliss.** One cannot derive bliss from people or material possessions or worldly endeavors. Atma is the only source of bliss. A person by very nature is a seeker of bliss, a repository of bliss, and the very embodiment of bliss. Then what is the reason for one's misery? Body attachment is the main cause of this.

You need not leave your home and go elsewhere. You need not give up your worldly duties and responsibilities. You may continue to perform all your duties, living in society, being a member of the society—but see that God, the indweller of the heart (*Hridayavasi*), never leaves you.

For the one with no love for God in the heart, there is no use in having any amount of wealth. Your true property, true earning, and true prosperity are God's love and God's love alone. What is the use of a person's existence in this world if they do not become the recipient of God's love? Worldly love is temporary, like passing clouds. It comes in a moment and goes away the next moment. God's love which is permanent doesn't come and go, and it confers permanent bliss. Make yourself deserving of such divine love.

The Gopikas, the cowherd maidens, and all the people of Repalle village became recipients of such Divine love. But many people criticized the divine plays (*leelas*) of Krishna due to their worldly ways of thinking.

Krishna lived in Repalle only until five years of age. It is meaningless to say that such a small child indulged in acts that were beyond the norms of society. After going to Mathura (the capital city near Brindavan), at the age of seven, He never returned to Repalle.

Unable to understand the sacredness of Divinity, people attribute their own feelings to God and become distant from Him due to their misunderstanding. As is the

feeling, so will be the result (*Yad bhavam tad bhavati*).

First, recognize the true nature of Divinity. The Conscience (*chaitanya*) present in everyone is true Divinity. We should make efforts to understand the nature of this conscience (*chaitanya*). This *chaitanya* is *Chit* or awareness. It illumines everything.

There are so many people seated in this hall. This verily denotes 'Being'. It is the light and illumination that makes us aware of their presence. Existence is denoted by *Sath* (Being), and awareness is denoted by *chit*. When *Sath* and *Chit* come together, there is satisfaction (*trupti*). This satisfaction is bliss (*ananda*). Therefore, Being, Awareness, and Bliss (*Sathchitananda*) denote our true nature.

They are not outside us. Divinity pervades inside, outside, and everywhere—they are all within us. That all-pervasive God is present within and without (*Antarbahischa tatsarvam vyapya Narayana sthitah*). **The same Divinity is present inside and outside. If only a fraction of this Divinity is understood, even for a moment, one can experience immense bliss.** All feel that they know the nature of Divinity, but in truth, they do not know anything. What is the reason? The reason is that they have no experience of Divinity.

The World is an Illusion

*kala lo choochina medalu, middhelu,
kannulu therachina levu kada*
(Telugu verse)

The mansions and buildings
appearing in a dream do not exist
when one opens the eyes

Once upon a time, a person not able to support his family left the home without informing anybody. After some time, upon earning some money, the person decided to return home. When he left his house, he had a son who was very much attached to him. After his father left the house, unable to bear the pangs of separation from his father the child died. As the father was returning home with the money, suddenly, there was a heavy downpour with lightning and thunder, and it also became dark. He thought it was not safe to travel in such a situation. He took shelter in an inn in a nearby village for the night.

As soon as he fell asleep, he had a dream. He saw that he had become a king attended by many servants, and he was seated on a golden throne. He also dreamt that he had six sons dressed in princely attire. In the dream, he saw that he was on a majestic royal bed reclining, free from worries.

Meanwhile, his dream ended because of loud thunder. He got up at once and looked around. He thought, alas, what happened to the royal bed? Till now I was a king, where has my throne gone now? What happened to all my servants who were attending to me? And where have my six children gone? Now he was in a state of despair, as he realized that it was all a mere dream, and so were the six sons seen in the dream.

The next morning, he got up and returned home. Seeing her husband, his wife started crying bitterly. On one hand, she was happy to see her husband return home, but on the other hand, she was grief-stricken at the loss of their only son. When he asked

his wife where their son was, she told him that he had died due to separation from his father. On hearing this, the man was shocked and stood there like a rock, without showing any grief. His wife asked him why he was not grief-stricken about the death of their son, whom he loved so dearly. He replied, "Oh foolish woman! Last night while asleep at the inn, I had a beautiful dream in which I was a King served by several servants, and I was reclining on a royal bed. I had six sons dressed as princes. But I lost those six sons. Whom should I cry for now? Should I cry at the loss of those six sons, or should I cry at the loss of our one son? They were my sons in the dream, and he was my son in the waking state. **There is no dream in the waking state and there is no waking state in the dream, but I am present in both. Therefore, I am the only reality, and everything else is a mere illusion.** I am present in both states. So, I am omnipresent, all other things are passing clouds." He realized that this world was just an illusion.

How to Experience True Bliss

To experience true bliss, three things are necessary. **First** and foremost, one should know what one is supposed to know. **Second**, one should give up what one is supposed to give up. **Finally**, one should reach where one has to reach. Only then can one experience true bliss.

What is a person supposed to know? One should enquire: What is the nature of this world? How long is my stay here? What am I experiencing here?

We see many people taking birth and many others leaving this world in front of



The same Divinity is present inside and outside. If only a fraction of this Divinity is understood, even for a moment, one can experience immense bliss.

“Where there is purity, there will be unity.
When unity and purity come together, divinity
manifests.

our eyes. As the name *jagat*–‘ja’(comes) ‘gat’ (goes) indicates, everything comes and goes in this *jagat* (world). **Once you recognize the transient nature of the coming and going of this world, you will experience bliss.** So, one should know what one is supposed to know. You have come to know the nature of the world. So, you have to know what you are supposed to know.

Then, one should give up what one is supposed to give up. What are we supposed to give up? It is the imaginary illusion (*bhramanti*). Under illusion, you consider unreal things to be real and experience sorrow in trying to cling to them. On top of that, you think that illusion (*maya*) and sorrow have taken you in their grip and are not going to leave.

Does sorrow have hands, feet, eyes, and nose? Only you have these. Therefore, it is you who have caught hold of sorrow and not the other way around. Sorrow has no limbs. So, one is imagining the limbs that are not there, forgetting what is within, you imagine that something is catching hold of you and causing sorrow, which is the cause of your suffering. So, it is not sorrow that is causing the suffering. One should realize that it is oneself who is holding onto the sorrow and suffering. This is ignorance (*ajnana*). Therefore, one should give up this ignorance. Only then we can experience bliss.

Lastly, where are you supposed to go? We should go back to the place where we came from. Having come from Atma, we

have to merge in the Atma. It is but natural for all living beings to return to their source of origin (*Ecchata putte nakkadi keguta nijamu pranikotikin*). Having come from Atma, we have to merge in the Atma. Then only, we experience bliss.

This is declared in the Upanishads as, *Asatoma sadgamaya, Tamasoma jyotirgamaya, Mrityorma Amritamgamaya*. First **‘lead me from unreal to real’ (*Asatoma sadgamaya*)**. Where there is Truth, there also follows the shadow of untruth. Then in the prayer, **‘lead me from darkness to light’ (*Tamasoma jyotirgamaya*)**, what is darkness? What is light? There is only one thing, light. When you don’t see the light, you experience darkness. Light and darkness do not exist separately. The absence of light is darkness. Knowing this, we should let go of the darkness. We should keep in view the light only. And finally, **‘lead me from death to immortality’ (*Mrityorma amritamgamaya*)**. What is it that has birth and death? It is only the body, not the real you. You have no birth and no death. That which is born is bound to die. Therefore, birth and death are related to the body and not to the Atma. The Atma alone is true, eternal, and immortal. We should enter the realm of these truths. Then only, we can experience true bliss.

Every day you recite this prayer, *Asatoma sadgamaya, tamasoma jyotirgamaya, mrityorma amritamgamaya* (**lead me from unreal to the real, lead me from darkness to light, and lead me from death to immortality**). We have been praying for

these three, but we are not trying to understand them. Hence, we should know what we are supposed to know. Give up what we are supposed to give up and reach where we are supposed to reach. Then there will be true bliss. Until then, the bliss that one experiences is only worldly and temporary, and not permanent.

The state of eternal bliss is called immortality. This state of bliss is described by the Vedas as attributeless, unsullied, final abode, eternal, pure, enlightened, free, and embodiment of sacredness (*nirgunam, niranjanam, sanathana nicketanam, nitya, suddha, buddha, mukta, nirmala swarupinam*). Develop firm faith in God to experience true and eternal happiness.

Avatars Come to Demonstrate Great Ideals

Where was Lord Sri Krishna born, and what was His property? He was born in a prison, brought up in the house of Nanda, and lived in Mathura. But He attained great name and fame in the world because He never considered worldly wealth as real. Worldly wealth is temporary, and, in fact, it is no wealth at all. Bliss was Krishna's real wealth, and He was always blissful.

Here, you should understand the difference between the two Avatars, Rama and Krishna. Krishna always performed everything in a state of happiness, whereas Rama derived happiness from the work He performed. Rama battled with the enemy after being provoked, whereas Krishna Himself would provoke the enemy to fight. Both Avatars acted according to the need of the times. Krishna personified bliss (*Ananda*), whereas Rama symbolized duty (*Dharma*).

Rama incarnated to demonstrate the matchless power of truth and righ-

teousness to the entire world. Rama + *ayana* (journey) is Ramayana, meaning Ramayana is the story of Rama's earthly sojourn.

The principle of Krishna was different in the sense that He was a world teacher. He never desired anything for Himself, nor was He attached to anything. He offered all that He had to His people. He killed His evil maternal uncle Kamsa but did not take his kingdom. He gave it to Kamsa's father, Ugrasena. Likewise, He took the side of the Pandavas, defeated the Kauravas, and anointed Dharmaraja as the King.

Krishna never aspired to become a King. He was the King without a crown. **He was the King of kings and Lord of lords without any kingdom. In fact, He was the emperor of the heart of everyone.** This is the truth demonstrated by the Krishna principle. When you enquire deeply, you will understand that every Avatar comes to demonstrate an ideal.

Krishna Stole Pure Hearts

Krishna always uttered the truth, even when He said something in fun. He never uttered a lie even in a lighter vein. But those who do not understand the import of Krishna's words think that He indulged in untruth. In every age (*yuga*) and during the time of every Avatar, some people are afflicted with this type of misunderstanding.

Once, the cowherd maids (*gopikas*) came to Yashoda and complained:

*Mother, your Krishna came to the top
of our terrace in the middle of the
night*

*And tied the plaits of our hair when
we were fast asleep.*

Ask Him, oh mother, ask Him.

(Telugu Song)



God is ready to grant anything the devotee asks for. In fact, He is ready to give Himself.

Then Yashoda asked Krishna:

*What work do You have in others' houses at midnight?
It seems You tied the plaits of their hair and came back running.
I am not going to leave You now.*

(Telugu Song)

Krishna replied with a smile:

*Mother, was I not lying by your side without moving anywhere at night?
When did I go and when did I come back? You yourself tell Me.*

(Telugu Song)

What Krishna meant to convey was. "I am here, there, and everywhere, wherever you look." He demonstrated such supreme truths through His divine sports.

Another group of *gopikas* once came and complained to Yashoda:

*Oh Mother, when we were carrying pots of buttermilk for sale,
Krishna accosted us and asked us to pay tax.
Then He hit the pots making holes in them. Oh Mother, ask Him!*

(Telugu Song)

Krishna said to Yashoda:

*They wanted to offer those pots of buttermilk to God, and God Himself came and made holes in them
But unknowingly, they are blaming Me.
I don't know anything about it; I am innocent.*

(Telugu Song)

Here, Krishna conveyed to Yashoda indirectly that He is God Himself. He was trying to explain to His mother in a way she could understand His Divine nature.

Many a time, Krishna would steal milk and butter from the houses of cowherd maidens (*gopikas*) and would run away when they tried to catch Him. What do milk and butter symbolize? Butter and milk are white in color, which symbolizes purity. Therefore, **Krishna accepted the pure and sublime (*sathwic*) feelings of the *gopikas*.**

Once Yashoda chided little Krishna:

*Oh Krishna! You do not eat what I
serve You at home.
But You go to the houses of the
gopikas and steal their butter.
Oh dear Krishna! It spoils our good
name.*

(Telugu Poem)

She complained, "Oh Krishna! You are such a small child, but You are creating such a great commotion in the entire village by Your mischievous acts. Doesn't the butter, prepared at home, taste good to You? Is the butter in the houses of the *gopikas* so tasty to You?" When Yashoda chided Him in this manner, Krishna said to her, "The hearts of the *gopikas* are pure, sacred, and without any trace of selfishness. But there is an element of selfishness in your motherly love toward Me. Therefore, I am not interested in the butter you prepare at home. I am stealing from the houses of the *gopikas*, not butter but their pure and selfless hearts. I steal the hearts of those who are pure and totally devoid of selfishness".

That is why devotees praise Krishna by singing the song, *Chitta chora Yashoda ke bal navaneeta Chora Gopal* (Oh Krishna, the son of Yashoda, You are the stealer of butter and the hearts of devotees). People think Krishna stole butter but, in fact, He stole the pure hearts of the *gopikas*.

*What is the point in offering worship
to the Lord if the heart is not pure?
Without inner purity, what is the point
of following ritualistic practices?
What is the point of cooking delicious
items in a vessel that is not clean?
The word of Sai is the truth.*

(Telugu Poem)

Krishna's Leelas Reveal His Divinity

If you chant the Name of Rama even once with purity of heart, He will at once respond. He alone can bestow on you real happiness.

The great saint Purandaradasa said, "Sri Rama and Yama (God of death) are not different from each other. Both are one and the same." The same Rama appeared as Yama to the wicked Ravana and as God to the pious Vibhishana, who totally surrendered to Him. He appeared as Rama or Yama based on the feelings of the respective individuals.

The same Krishna appeared as God to Ugrasena, who had faith in Him, and as Yama to wicked Kamsa, who considered Him to be his enemy. Similarly, He became Yama to Hiranyakashipu (demon king), who hated God and appeared as Narayana to young Prahlada, who contemplated on Him with great devotion all the time.

Once, the cowherd maidens (*gopikas*) became tired of Krishna's mischievous pranks. Despite their best efforts, they could not catch Him. Therefore, one day Krishna thought: "The poor *gopikas* are pure-hearted; they are innocent and totally devoid of selfishness. It is not proper on My part to escape from them whenever they try to catch Me. I am the servant of devo-

“*There is only one religion, the religion of humanity. There may be something wrong with mathi (mind) but not with matham (religion).*”

tees (*bhakta paradhinudu*), and I should not put My devotees into hardship. This time, I will let them catch Me.” He devised a plan by which the *gopikas* would know His whereabouts and catch Him. Sensing that Krishna was in the house of a particular *gopika*, all others stood like soldiers around the compound wall so that He could not escape from them. What did Krishna do? He poured down all the milk from a pot hung to the ceiling, dipped His tiny feet in it, and ran away when the *gopikas* came to catch Him. The *gopikas* followed His footprints and caught Him.

There is a message for the *gopikas* in this episode. **Krishna conveyed, “Follow My footsteps, and you will be able to attain Me.”** Many such incidents in the Bhagavata convey a profound message to devotees, but they appear to be mere pranks to those who consider them so. Opinions vary from person to person (*Munde munde mathir bhinnah*)—different people have different thoughts.

The Bhagavata is nothing but the story of the Lord. The divine pranks of Krishna are the basis of understanding His Divinity. In the episode about hiding the clothes of the *gopikas*, Krishna climbed a tree and would not reply, no matter how many times the *gopikas* called out to Him. They could not come out of the pond. Finally, with upraised hands, they prayed to Krishna to give back their clothes. What is the inner meaning of this episode? When the attachment symbolized by the clothes is discarded, the Lord, who is the Atma will appear. The Bhagavata conveys many such teachings about the Atma. All these stories demon-

strate great ideals. They cannot be made a subject of ridicule, misunderstanding, or sacrilege, as some people tend to do.

Radha was made to go through many ordeals; like in the episode of the churning of the Ocean, Krishna churned her heart and granted her the precious jewel of spiritual wisdom (*Jnana*). She considered Krishna her only refuge and never relied on her relatives, sisters, or brothers. She shared all her anguish with Krishna only.

I have no refuge other than You.

Oh Krishna, I am carrying on this burden of life only for Your sake.

My mind becomes restless if I don't see Your smiling face.

At least appear to me in my dreams.

I cannot live without You even for a moment.

(Telugu Song)

God is ready to grant anything the devotee asks for. In fact, He is ready to give Himself. You cannot find such a supreme spirit of sacrifice in your friends, relatives, or anyone in the world. Radha had become completely weak and was about to breathe her last. At that moment, Krishna appeared before her and asked, “What is your last wish?” Radha replied, “Krishna, I don't want anything. My only wish is to listen to the melody of Your flute for one last time.”

Oh Krishna! Sing a sweet song and fill my heart with nectarine words and bliss.

Distil the essence of the Vedas, transform it into divine music, play it on Your enchanting flute and captivate me with Your melody.

Sing, Oh Krishna! Sing for me!

(Telugu Song)

The human body is like a flute. Radha prayed to Krishna to make the essence of the Vedas flow through His 'flute.' Accordingly, Krishna played a sweet song on His flute, listening to which Radha gave up her mortal coil. Then and there, Krishna discarded His flute for good. From that day, He never touched it again as a loving gesture to Radha's great devotion toward Him.

The Devotion of Gopikas is Worth Emulating

Once, Rukmini, the first queen, and wife of Sri Krishna, invited Radha to her house. On receiving the invitation, Radha came to her house at once. In her excitement and happiness, Rukmini offered Radha a glass of very hot milk. Radha always offered everything to Krishna before partaking it. She said, "I offer it to Krishna" (*Krishnarpanam*) and drank the boiling hot milk.

In the evening, when Rukmini came to perform *padaseva* (massaging His holy feet) to Lord Krishna, she was shocked to notice blisters on His feet. She asked, "Oh Lord! What has happened? Who caused blisters on Your feet?"

Krishna replied, "It is all your doing. When Radha came to you in the morning, you offered her boiling hot milk without bothering to check whether it was fit for drinking. She offered that milk to Me before drinking. These blisters have come on My feet as I accepted her prayerful offering."

Some people think that these are mere fables (*kathas*). They are not mere stories but divine sports, which are meant to alleviate the sufferings (*vyathas*) of people.

All the divine sports (*leelas*) of Krishna are meant to remove the sufferings of people. He utilized all His divine powers only for the sake of devotees. When you try to understand the significance of the sacred

Bhagavata, you will realize the supreme power of Divinity. For the sake of the bliss of Radha, Krishna offered His most beloved flute, His eternal companion. All the divine sports (*leelas*) of Krishna are meant to remove the suffering of humanity. Whatever is offered to God, becomes sanctified.

Devotion of Meera

Meera's husband was King Maharana. Suspecting that his enemy Emperor Akbar had offered a necklace to Krishna, Meera's husband King Maharana, developed hatred toward Meera who was devoted to Sri Krishna. Meera was served milk mixed with a potent poison. If the poisoned milk is taken by anyone, their body turns blue, and the blood circulation stops. Before drinking the milk, Meera offered the milk to Krishna, praying, '*Krishnarpanam*' (sacred offering to Krishna). Accepting her offering, Krishna took the poison and returned the delicious milk to Meera. This is the reason why one should chant the food prayer,

*Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir
Brahmagnau Brahmanaahutam,
Brahmaiva Tena Gantavyam
Brahmakarma Samadhinah*

The act of offering is God. The oblation is God. By God, it is offered into the Fire of God. God is That which is to be attained by him who performs this action with the attitude that all is Brahman.

When you thus offer the food to God, it becomes pure (rendering everything pure—purity of the vessel, purity of cooking materials, and the purity of the cooking process). Through this offering to Brahman, everything becomes pure. **When the food is offered to God prior to partaking, it becomes a sacred offering (*prasadam*).** It will no longer be a material object (*padaratham*). The *gopikas* left everything in the world and spent their life performing their

duties with constant contemplation on Krishna. They were not educated; they did not have any degrees. They never attended any universities nor studied any Vedas, *ithihasas* (epics), or Upanishads. They had only one Upanishad. That was Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, the name of Krishna. They had only one Veda. That was Gopala, Gopala, Gopala, the name of Krishna. They had only one scripture (*sastra*). That was the words of Krishna. The *gopikas* contemplated on Krishna in that manner. That's how the *gopikas* redeemed their lives and experienced bliss.

The *gopikas* were united in their love for and devotion to Krishna. All devotees should be united and give up all differences based on caste, race, and religion. What is the caste of the five elements which are present in us? What is the caste of fire, wind, space water, and earth? There was a great spirit of unity among the *gopikas*. Where there is purity, there will be unity. When unity and purity come together, divinity manifests.

Suguna had the Vision of Krishna

In Repalle village, a newly married daughter-in-law named Suguna arrived. She was yearning to see Lord Krishna. She could not express the anguish in her heart. She could not convey it to her mother-in-law and father-in-law. She was afraid of how her husband would react if she were to express her desire to see Lord Krishna. Every day in the evening, there was a tradition in the village to light the lamp of their home using the lamp from the residence of an affluent person (Yashoda's residence). Every day, the mother-in-law used to light the lamp. The mother-in-law commanded the daughter-in-law not to visit Yashoda's

house, see Lord Krishna, or become a devotee of Lord Krishna.

As is the feeling, so will be the result (*yad bhavam, tad bhavati*). Each one's difficulties, feelings, and desires will recoil on them. None has the authority to say that one cannot see God. A flower, whether it is held in the right hand or left hand, will exude the same fragrance. Religions are many, but God is one. One day, the mother-in-law had a fever with a high temperature and could not get up. She was left with no choice but to send Suguna to Yashoda's house to get the lamp lit. Suguna was overjoyed and felt very lucky. In that feeling of extreme happiness, she lost all awareness of herself as she entered Yashoda's house. She was lighting her lamp from the lamp placed on the verandah of Yashoda's house. As she was lighting the lamp, whatever she witnessed, she lost herself. As she lit her lamp from the lamp kept in Yashoda's house, she could see Krishna in the flame. She was so lost in the vision of Krishna that she did not realize that her hand was getting burnt. From inside the house, Yashoda came running as she smelt her burning skin, and asked, "What is happening? Can't you see that you are getting burnt?"

But Suguna was not able to hear the words of Yashoda because her mind was totally focused on Krishna. Krishna was smiling at her, and she too was smiling at Him. Therefore, she did not feel any pain. The *gopikas* then took her outside. When the *gopikas* asked her about this incident, she told them, "I had the vision of Krishna in the flame. He smiled and that made me smile too." In a moment, the news spread like wildfire. The *gopikas* joined together

and sang a song reminiscing about the incident.

*Sugunaku kanipinchenanta
Nanduni Inta Gopaludanta
Deepana kanipinchenanta
Adiye veliki tagilina manta*
(Telugu Song)

It seems Suguna had a vision of
Gopala in the house of Nanda.

She saw Krishna in the flame!

That must have caused the burning
sensation in the finger.

The mother-in-law of Suguna who had a fever also came to know about this incident. But Suguna was not worried about others coming to know about this. She was happy that she had the vision of Krishna. It is not possible to describe the glory and grandeur of the divine sports (*leelas*) of Krishna. Krishna was always one among the people around Him. He was a woman among women, a man among men, a child among children, and an elder among elderly persons. That is why the Bhagavad Gita says,

*Sarvatah panipadam tat
sarvathokshi shiromukham,
sarvatah shrutimalloke
sarvamavruthya thishtati*

**With hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth,
and ears pervading everything, He
permeates the entire universe. He
resides in the hearts of everyone.**

Therefore, never observe differences with regard to Divinity based on name and form. God is one without a second (*Ekameva adviteeyam Brahma*). You may call Him by any name, Allah, Jesus, Zoroaster, Buddha, Rama, or Krishna. Don't observe any differences whatsoever. There is only one religion, the religion of humanity. There may

be something wrong with *mathi* (mind) but not with *matham* (religion). Therefore, set your mind right. Do not give scope to conflicts and hatred based on religious differences. Only students have the capacity to revive the ancient culture of Bharat (India) by adhering to the path of devotion and surrender.

Students! You should propagate the principle of oneness to the entire world. Never give scope to differences. This is the real education you have to acquire.

Swami's Words are Verily Swami

There is another important subject I want to tell you. Devotees coming to Prasanthi Nilayam are increasing in number day by day. Swami is happy seeing the devotees, and the devotees are blissful seeing Swami. Those who want to get married can happily do so wherever it is convenient for them and come here. I will happily bless them.

If anyone wants to get married, they can do so in the Kalyana Mandapam (Wedding Hall). I have no objection to that. Get married and come to Me; I will bless you with all My love. Lead an ideal married life by serving the country and propagating the principle of oneness.

Today is Krishna's Birthday (*Gokulashtami*). But what is a Birthday for God? This is only the birthday of the physical form. Do not give importance to birthdays; instead, give importance to the teachings and ideals, and commands of Krishna. **Krishna is not different from His words. Swami is not different from Swami's words.**

Gita is Krishna. Krishna is Gita. Do not allow any scope for any difference.

–Sri Sathya Sai Baba
September 4, 1996

LORD GANESHA STORIES

Professor John Grimes sat on the hallowed *darshan* grounds in Prasanthi Nilayam, having completed his morning ablutions at the Chitravati River. Getting a seat in the front lines for the *darshan* of Sri Sathya Sai Baba was relatively easy in the early 1970s. The exception was on Thursdays and Sundays when more devotees visited Puttaparthi.

That day, as Swami walked out for *darshan*, He seemed to be headed straight toward the professor. Standing before him, He looked deeply into his eyes. John drank in the bliss that emanates from such an experience. Then, Swami lifted His hand, and John looked at it. There was a coin, about 4 centimeters in size, with the image of Lord Ganesha embossed on it. Swami stared at the coin briefly and then looked into John's eyes. Once again, He looked at the coin and then back to John's eyes. He did that maybe 8-10 times!

"Hand," He said.

John complied, and Swami lovingly placed the coin in his outstretched hand. He waved His palm, created sacred *Vibhuti*, and poured it over the coin. Then, He just walked away.

The professor was both thrilled and puzzled by the experience. Though He wondered about the meaning of it all, he cherished and treasured the precious divine gift.

Divine Instructions in a Dream

Four decades later, years after the Mahasamadhi of Baba, John had *darshan of Swami* in a dream. In the dream, Swami said to him,

"The Ganesha coin..."

"Yes, Swami?"

“You will today, after an interval of seventy-eight years, get the reward mentioned in the Scriptures.”

“Get a silver cup and a silver spoon...”

“Okay, Swami...”

“Place the coin in the cup and cover it with water. Every day, sip three spoonfuls of water from the cup using the spoon.”

“Definitely Swami...”

“And then chant the mantra—Om Gam Ganapataye Namaha.”

The professor woke up from the profound dream. From then on, he meticulously followed Swami’s advice.

Lord Vighneswara

Swami has gifted many devotees with His materializations that show Lord Ganesha’s

image. He has also guided many people on spiritual practices to worship Ganesha. Lord Ganesha is also known as Lord Vighneswara. Vighneswara is often translated as ‘Remover of Obstacles,’ but in the complete sense, it means ‘Lord of Obstacles.’ Often, people surmise that He clears all the obstacles in one’s path. But people forget the second aspect which Swami reveals in His Ganesh Chaturthi discourse.

“No worship can succeed unless the heart is pure and the senses are mastered. Ganesha is the God who helps overcome obstacles when doing good deeds and creates obstacles if one undertakes bad actions. He will clear



During an interview, John felt that Swami’s materializations, though awe-inspiring and miraculous, are not as exquisite as man-made objects. The above pendant was materialized by Swami as an instant response to his thought! Swami gifted it to the professor who received the pendant gratefully and humbly.

the path for the sincere spiritual seeker (Sadhaka). He is Prasannavadanam, of benevolent looks, when you pray to Him for good ends, but He will not be that when you seek His help for nefarious stratagems!"

–Sri Sathya Sai Baba

August 24, 1971

As Bhagawan Baba puts it, Ganesha also places obstacles on the path if one's chosen path is the wrong one! The gift of a Ganesha pendant, coin, or idol possibly carries a two-fold message from Swami to the devotee:

1. To always pray to God before and during all actions.
2. To always view obstacles and challenges as messengers from God.

Ultimately, Lord Ganesha is a form or aspect of God who teaches everyone these lessons. In fact, Swami Himself is the manifestation of all names and forms of God (*sarvadevathaswarupa*), including Ganesha. He is also the manifestation of all sages and saints. That is the lesson from the profound experience of an elderly ascetic, as narrated below.

Swami Amritananda's Déjà Vu

"Amritham!"—Swami Amritananda was pleasantly surprised when addressed thus by Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The 85-year-old Swamiji was genuinely astonished at the familiarity and affection of the endearing divine call. It reminded him at once of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi (a renowned saint and great advaitic teacher of Arunachala, who lived from 1879 to 1950). He was the only person to address him as "Amritham" in that loving manner and tone. Amritananda spent 17 years with the sage. He had now been residing at the Prasanthi Nilayam *ashram*. What followed turned out to be a remarkable and unforgettable divine interaction.

A Flashback

Baba asked the elderly Swamiji about a Ganapathi *Homa* (fire sacrifice for Lord Ganesha) that he had done for 41 days at the tender age of 7, over 78 years ago! Baba then shared all the details, including the powerful mantra "*Om Sreem Hreem Kleem Gloum Gam*," which he had repeated as a child 1,000 times daily, offering 1,000 coconuts in the sacred fire of the *homa*. Swami Amritananda continued listening to the details of his special worship of Ganapathi, dumbstruck at Swami's omniscience.

"But tell me, what is the reward promised for this endeavor in the Scriptures?" Swami probed.

"Swami, if the sacrifice is made per the scriptural injunction with discipline and dedication, Lord Ganapathi Himself will appear in *homa kunda* (sacred fire-pit) in His golden-colored effulgent form with the elephant-head."

"And..."

"And, with His trunk, He will receive the final and concluding offerings..."

"And," Swami prodded him on.

"And, with that *darshan*, He will grant everlasting bliss!"

"Did you have that vision?"

"Swami, how can a mere 7-year-old boy get that vision by a mere number of repetitions of a mantra and some quantity of coconut offerings?"

"No, no! It is due to all that mantra-chanting and all the sacrifice you have done that you have now come to Me."

The Golden Ganesha

The revered octogenarian silently absorbed what Swami told him. He wasn't prepared for what came next.


"You will today, after an interval of seventy-eight years, get the reward mentioned in the Scriptures."



After saying that nonchalantly, Swami asked the elderly Swami Amritananda to look at Him. Lo and Behold! Swami Amritananda was blessed with the *darshan* of the golden-colored elephant-headed Ganapathi as described in the ancient texts! The vision was extremely powerful and overwhelming. Such was the bliss the elderly Swamiji experienced that he relinquished food, drink, and sleep for four days after that divine *darshan*!

Indeed, Lord Sai is Lord Ganesha.

As we celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi and worship Ganapathi, **it is essential to remember the message behind this unique form of God and put it into practice to lead peaceful and joyous lives.**

Mr. Aravind Balasubramanya
INDIA 



Ganapathi is also called Mooshika Vahana (one who has a mouse as his vehicle). You may wonder how a small *mooshika* (mouse) can carry on its back a hefty personality like Vinayaka. Here, *mooshika* does not mean a mere mouse. It symbolizes the darkness of ignorance because it is in darkness that the mouse moves about. Hence, Mooshika Vahana is one who subdues ignorance and dispels darkness. We should understand the inner significance of the Vinayaka Principle.

–Sri Sathya Sai Baba
September 10, 2002

From Atheist to a Theist!



I was an atheist. I found it hard to believe in the existence of God after seeing poverty, diseases, and other human suffering. I felt that 'God' was created by the human mind to escape responsibilities and avoid rational thought. But, ironically, it was my life's destiny that I married into a staunch Sai-devotee family!

My father-in-law was very eager for me to accept his God, so he gave me many books on Baba to read. I accepted these books, only to oblige him, and returned them a few days later, totally unread! However, although an atheist, I had a spiritual mindset. I would read the books by Swami Vivekananda and be inspired by his message. I felt Baba's writings and talks were too simplistic, and therefore He could not be God. Whenever anyone told me that Sai Baba was God incarnate, I silenced them by questioning why He had not cured all the sick in the world, why wars continued to take place, and why qualities like hatred and jealousy thrived.

Real Life in A Drama

In 1993, we moved to Thailand, and my wife, Deepa, connected with the Sathya Sai organization in Bangkok. In a couple of years, my children also joined the **SSE (Sai Spiritual Education) classes, which provide a spiritual grounding to the child without proselytizing.**

*“I realized ... my faith in God was not lost but was asleep.
Swami was giving me multiple wake-up calls.”*

In 1995, Deepa persuaded me to travel with her and our four-year-old son to Puttaparthi. I reluctantly agreed to go for my first visit. Once we were there, I found it very hard sitting for long hours in the scorching heat for Swami's *darshan*. I did not want to go for *darshan*, yet I was expected to go twice daily! On the second day, as I walked past the North Indian canteen in the *Ashram* with my son, a Malaysian devotee approached me. He asked if my son could participate in a drama that would be staged in five days in front of Swami. Since it involved afternoon practices which would help me avoid *darshan*, I readily accepted the offer. Thus, my son joined the drama program.

Two days later, seeing me simply sitting during the practice sessions, the drama director asked me if I could play the role of an atheist! For the act, I needed to cover my face with black cloth and use a rope to pull back people from going to worship. I agreed to the role. The very next day, the director told me my role had changed. I was now to play the role of a transformed man with complete faith in God!

Was my life playing out before me through phases of my drama roles?

During our last practice at the Poornachandra Hall, Swami arrived from His residence! There was pin-drop silence as everyone stayed still. Swami came and stood right in front of me. He glanced at me from top to bottom and quipped, “*Is it Bal Vikas (education for children) or Vriddha Vikas (education for the elderly)?*”

Something stirred within me. I felt that participating in the drama was a step in the spiritual progress of both my son and me!

I felt that I had to grow spiritually to get the answers to my burning questions about God.

After the drama was presented, we received thunderous applause for our performance. I decided to visit Puttaparthi more frequently and learn more about Swami.

Impact of Service

One day, while coming out of the men's toilet at the *Ashram*, I saw a *Seva Dal* (volunteer) cleaning the floor. Out of curiosity, I enquired where he was from and what he did for a livelihood. I was surprised to find out that he was a successful businessman from Chennai, and he came twice a year to serve at the *Ashram*! I was amazed to see the spirit of selfless service.

On subsequent visits, I met many doctors, engineers, government officials, and other professionals who served at the *Ashram* as *Seva Dal* with great humility. This made me believe that **something far more rewarding than power, position, and money drew people to Swami to do this Seva. That was the pivotal point in my journey to Swami.**

I decided to become more involved in service activities in the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO) in Thailand.

Lost And Found

Once, my wife, Deepa, was at Puttaparthi with our son for an event with ISSSE (Institute of Sathya Sai Education) students from Brazil and the USA. I did not travel with them. A play was being staged at the Poornachandra Auditorium. My son was older now and wasn't allowed by the *Seva Dal* to enter the hall from the ladies' entrance. Swami was expected to arrive anytime soon. So, my wife

left our son with an acquaintance, an American gentleman, who lived in Thailand.

After the program ended, my wife and daughter waited for the American devotee to return with our son. But he came rushing in panic and told her the boy was missing. They had searched everywhere in vain. My wife was sad, but she kept her calm. In fact, she began consoling everyone, telling them not to worry. She said, "My son is Swami's gift, and He will surely look after him!"

A few minutes later, my son walked out of the hall, rubbing his eyes. When the *Seva Dals* were about to close the shutters of the auditorium, they found him sleeping near the entrance below the TV screen! My son could not bear the heat inside, so he sat down near the TV screen in a cooler area to watch the program.

After returning to Bangkok, my wife did not tell me about this incident. I learned about it a few months later from other devotees who attended the event. I reflected on the incident and felt that I would have panicked in her situation. So, how could she maintain her calm? I got the answer from reading Swami's book that day, where He said, "***Faith and surrender give the strength to face difficult situations boldly.***"

I realized, just like the incident with my son, my faith in God was not lost but was asleep. Swami was giving me multiple wake-up calls.

Faith Exists; Fear Exits

I seriously began to read Swami's books regularly. All my doubts started getting

slowly resolved. About this time, my mother-in-law gifted me a ring with Swami's picture, and I always felt Swami's presence in it. I worked as a marine engineer on a ship and always wore the ring during my assignment. I began noticing that whenever there was an issue or problem, it would get miraculously and promptly resolved. These personal experiences further bolstered my faith in Swami.

We were once transporting 35,000 tons of explosive chemicals on the ship. Suddenly, there was a fire on the deck. All the crew members panicked. They put on their life jackets and got ready to abandon the ship. I, too, probably would have done the same if it were not for Swami's ring on my finger! I felt compelled to rush down to the engine room, start the fire pump to cool the decks, and keep the main engines ready. I dashed down ten floors to the bottom of the ship and started the pump. As a result, a major explosion was avoided, and a major disaster was averted. While everyone congratulated me for the timely action, in my heart, I expressed deep gratitude to Swami for triggering my action. **At that critical moment, I did not have any fear of death because I felt Swami was there to protect me.**

Faith in Swami has made me confident to face many challenging situations with courage. I was a bit short-tempered in my early years and often landed up in fights. However, my anger and anxiety have diminished today due to Swami's presence in my life. My journey with Swami continues, and I am sure that everything I am today is because of His grace.

Mr. Manoj Kumar Singh
THAILAND



Mr. Manoj Singh is a professional marine engineer and has 25 years of ship management experience. He served as Assistant Vice President of a large shipping company in Thailand before retirement. Mr. Manoj Singh has served in various positions in the SSSIO of Zone 4 (Southeast Asia) since 1998. He has addressed many public forums/conferences in India, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Laos, Myanmar, Peru, the UK, and the USA on human values and spiritual topics. He is the Chairman of SSSIO Zone 4, serving the countries of Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam since 2019.





My Divine Parent

IN 1968, ONE OF MY FATHER'S CLIENTS TOLD HIM THAT GOD HAD INCARNATED ON EARTH. My father, a Chartered Accountant in Kolkata, burst out laughing at first, but the client politely convinced him to visit a particular 'Madhuri Amma's' house where he could witness the miracles of this God. My father was convinced that some magic or trickery was involved, but to please the client, he went to the particular house with my mother.

Experiencing God

Entering the place, they saw a large photo of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, covered in a fine, fluffy, grey ash called *Vibhuti*. Right before their eyes, the *Vibhuti* kept falling from the picture. My skeptical father was taken aback. But the more profound experience was the peace and joy he felt. He found himself becoming reverential toward Baba. However, my mother was still having doubts. Suddenly, she felt two flames emerge from Baba's eyes and enter her own—she fainted from that experience!

She regained consciousness and also gained faith in Swami, fully convinced of His divinity. **That day, my parents returned home with a picture of Swami and announced, "He is Sai Baba, the Kalki Avatar."** I was just five years old and straightaway believed what my parents said. Swami instantly became my God. However, my elder brother, who was 15 years old, was not convinced.

While my brother's doubts still lingered for years, in 1970, my father sent him to Puttaparthi. Those days it took a long and arduous journey from Kolkata to reach Prasanthi Nilayam. But my father felt it would be worthwhile if it could help my brother's journey from doubt to faith. My skeptical brother had prepared a long list of questions to ask Baba and scrutinize Him. If Baba called him for an interview, he felt he would sort out things finally. That is precisely what happened, but not as my brother had assumed. **Swami came to him directly and, with a smile, asked about me, "Kaho Deepa Kaisi Hai?" (Tell me, how is Deepa?). That single act of omniscience convinced him of Swami's omnipresence, omnipotence, and divinity.** Tears rolled down his cheeks, and he realized his father's declaration was verily true. Baba spoke to him for a while, guiding him for further studies and winning his heart.

Accepting Me as His Daughter

In 1971, while praying and meditating, my mother felt Swami telling her, "*Come to Prasanthi Nilayam with Deepa.*" Upon enquiring, she discovered that a few devotees were traveling by train from Kolkata to Puttaparthi. But their tickets had already been booked. My father informed 'Madhuri Amma,' the trip organizer, about Swami's instructions to my mother. To his surprise, that very day, two devotees canceled their tickets—which were purchased for us!

The next day, during her meditation, my mother felt Swami instructing her, "*Bring your other two daughters also.*" Unbelievably, the same cycle repeated again, with my father informing 'Madhuri Amma' and two devotees canceling their tickets! Thus, the four of us traveled together in the same train compartment from Kolkata to Puttaparthi.

We reached Puttaparthi, rented a room outside, and enjoyed multiple *darshans* daily. We didn't realize how a week sped by. After a week, the group was about to return to Kolkata. My mother sought Swami's permission to return, but He said, "*Kuchho Amma*" (Sit, Lady). The group returned home, but we stayed on. Days turned into weeks; weeks turned into months. Though our finances were exhausted within a week, we enjoyed a beautiful golden period of our lives for another three months. We would stay under a tree inside the Ashram, sleeping on a bed sheet spread on the sand in the shade. We would go to the Chitravati River for our baths, ablutions, and also to play. Father would send money for our stay every week by money order. After some time, my mother began volunteering to clean the *Ashram*. As if a reward for her *seva*, we were allowed to sleep inside the Mandir itself!

My father fell sick in Kolkata during that time and had severe asthma attacks. We were not aware of it as he didn't tell us. One night when the suffering became unbearable, he sat up and cried, "Sai Maa, I cannot bear this pain anymore. Either give me relief or take away my life!" Within moments, Sai Maa appeared to him in a white saree, blessed him, and vanished. The very next day, my father recovered! He immediately traveled to Puttaparthi and joined us.

It was all part of Swami's master plan as He called my mother and us, the three daughters, for an interview. He told my mother that she worried a lot about her daughters' wedding, assuring her that He would look after us. Then He said, "*You wanted Deepak, but Baba gave you Deepa.*" (Both 'Deepak' and 'Deepa' mean light in Sanskrit. While

'Deepak' is a boy's name, 'Deepa' is a girl's name.)

Then, He called for me. My mother gestured to me to touch His feet. I fell at His feet and held on to them firmly. Finally, Swami had to bend down and lift me up. He asked me to take the *Vibhuti* packets He was giving. I stretched out my hands, but He said, "*Your hands are too small; hold up your frock.*" I held up my dress, and He filled it with *Vibhuti* packets.

Swami called my father in for an interview the next day and asked, "*Is Deepa your daughter?*"

I understood that Swami is my divine parent, and I am His daughter. It made

me feel that I had some connection with Swami in my previous births as well.

After three months of stay, we returned to Kolkata and started daily *bhajans* at home. We also held *Akhanda Bhajan* four times a year. **Our home became a heaven by Swami's blessings. Swami took care of every need.** In due course, I married Manoj, who, by Swami's grace, was transformed from an atheist to a theist! I pray to Swami that He keeps showering His blessings on all of us, always.

Mrs. Deepa Singh
THAILAND



Mrs. Deepa Singh grew up in Kolkata, India, and lives in Thailand. She comes from a family devoted to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for over five decades. Deepa holds a bachelor's degree in commerce and a diploma in Teachers Training from the Institute of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE) in Thailand. Mrs. Singh is committed to Sathya Sai Education and has organized many educational, environmental, and service projects over several decades in Thailand. In 2020, she was honored by the Indian Embassy for selfless service during the COVID-19 pandemic and by the Viswa Hindu Parishad—Thailand for providing free education to children. She is the National Council President of SSSIO of Thailand.

Anxiety is removed by faith in the Lord, the faith that tells you that whatever happens is for the best and that the Lord's Will be done. Quiet acceptance is the best armor against anxiety, not the acceptance of the heroic. Sorrow springs from egoism, the feeling that you do not deserve to be treated so badly that you are left helpless. When egoism goes, sorrow disappears.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
April 1957

Peace (Shanti)

Peace is the ornament of a realized person (*Paramahansa*). It is the peace that fills the hearts of the pure with rapture. This peace does not stay with the greedy. Nor does it even look at the selfish. It is a characteristic of the Self (*Atma*). The treasure of God is God itself. The world's riches, possessions, spouse, children, and relatives do not and cannot provide peace to a human being. Peace is a wonderful power. It is deep within, pure, and selfless.

The human mind changes from moment to moment; it runs away and slips away. It is impossible to catch and control such a mind. Even the air can be caught but the mind cannot be caught. The restless mind can be controlled by the practice of peace. It is the peace that helps one be steady and unshakable even in hopeless situations, and in difficult, and unpredictable situations. This peace is amazing and wonderful.

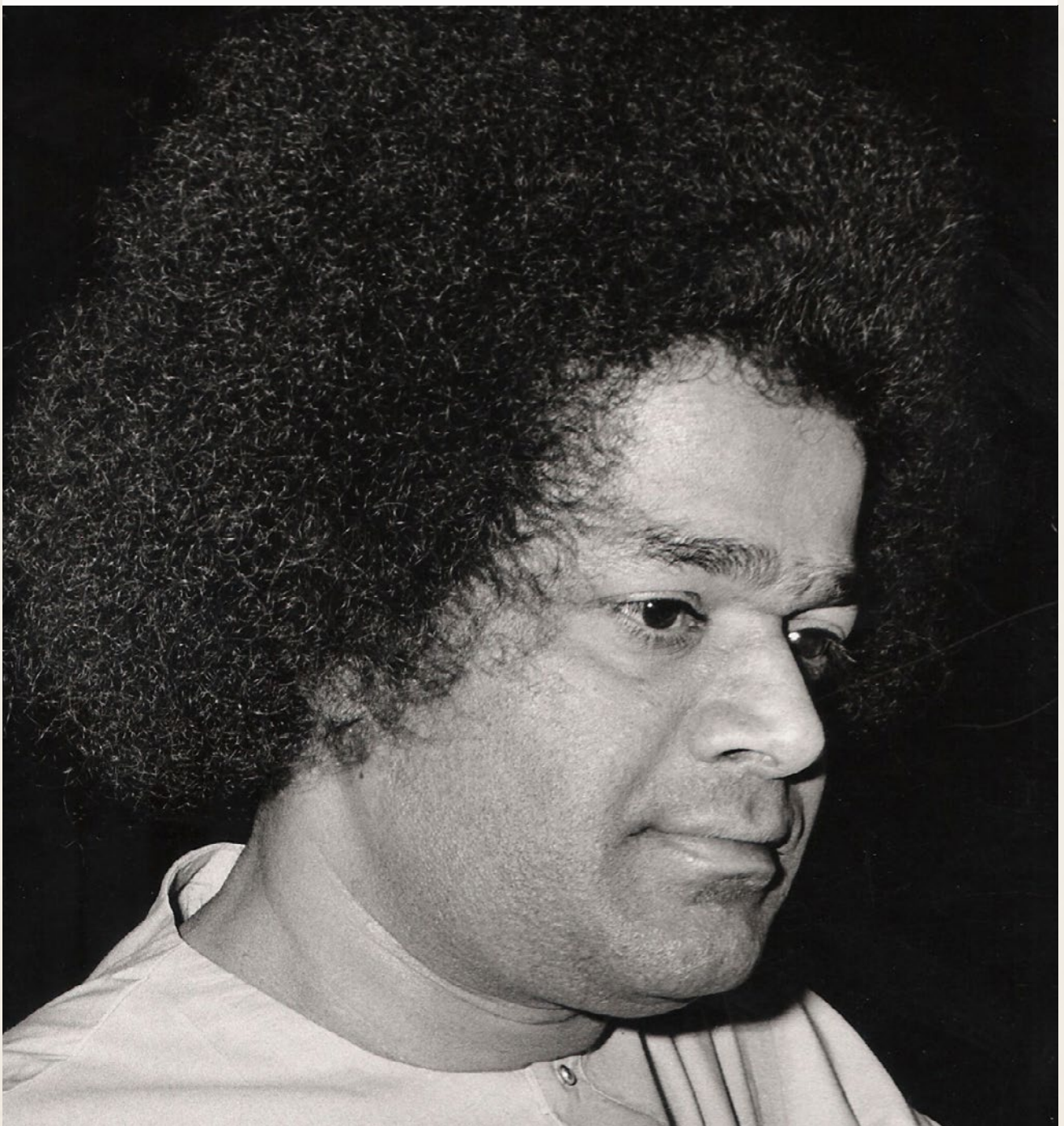
A supremely peaceful ideal life is verily the divine life. Pride, doubt, jealousy, anger, and selfishness can be conquered by peace.

Only in peace and silence the message of God can be received. Peace is the power of faith. Only then can one experience God's boundless compassion and love—that is living with God. Peace without pride and desires is your true form. Desires and pride deprive one of peace. Once free from them the natural effulgence of peace will shine forth. Peace cannot be found by searching outside. It is you and it is in you. You are truly the embodiment of peace, and your nature is peace. Forgetting yourself, you try to find peace in the outside world. In this way, no matter how long you search, you will not find it. Develop your inner view and you can become the immortal peace. Peace is God. Peace is Self (*Atma*). Peace is Supreme God (*Brahman*). Peace is everything.

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Who better than our Bhagawan Himself to summarize the essence of the five human values? Swami granted this gift to mankind when He inaugurated the first museum in Puttaparthi, the Sanathana Samskruti Museum, on November 19, 1990. Commonly known as the 'Eternal Heritage Museum', this museum is located on top of the hillock on the southern side of the ashram.

Swami had blessed the auspicious occasion by writing the essence of the five human values in His own hand for placement in the museum. A copy of the precious document was shared among a few of the senior devotees at that time. We are fortunate to have obtained a copy of Swami's gift to mankind and intend to share it, one value at a time, with devotees around the world.



Love Knows No Boundaries: Compassionate Service in the Midst of the Ukraine Conflict

As we reflect on the passing of nearly a year and a half since the conflict in Ukraine erupted on February 24, 2022, we may find ourselves grappling with a subtle fatigue, a numbing veil that time draws over distant calamities. Yet, amidst this far-off turmoil, we must not forget the harsh reality that impacts many lives. Daily, livelihoods are shattered, lives are lost, and the heart-wrenching struggle for survival persists. **This is no fleeting crisis; it demands not a fleeting response but a steadfast and unwavering commitment to assistance and solace.**

In the face of such unyielding hardships, witnessing the awe-inspiring dedication of the volunteers from the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO) truly touches the heart and ignites hope. Far from turning away, they have embraced this crisis as an opportunity to offer selfless service, unconditional love, and compassion. Driven by the profound belief that “service to humanity is service to God,” these remarkable SSSIO volunteers have united in a noble pursuit—to extend a helping hand, a compassionate heart, and a beacon of hope to many, including the innocent children caught in this conflict.



Assistance to Ukrainians in Ukraine

In the midst of this turmoil, the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation (SSSWF) and the European SSSIO immediately jumped into action. Their humanitarian relief program has since been a lifeline for the people of Ukraine, providing crucial aid, including medicines, food, sleeping bags, and other essential supplies. The first truckload of food from Poland reached Viennetsa, Ukraine, in April 2022, containing 16 pallets of food and other essential supplies. With the dedicated help of SSSIO members in Ukraine, food, water, hygiene articles, and medicines were distributed in Central and Western Ukraine, mainly in Horodenka, Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv, Kiev region, Poltava, Charkiev, Dnepr, Vinnytsia, Chernovtsy, Kramatorsk

and Sumy. Volunteers even traveled by car to assist aged and lonely people in their homes in the countryside.

Truckloads of food, necessities, and medical supplies continue to make their way into Ukraine weekly or monthly, especially from SSSIO members in Poland, Hungary, and Germany.

Extending a Helping Hand to Ukrainian Refugees

With Ukrainians seeking refuge in neighboring countries, SSSIO volunteers in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Hungary, and the Czech Republic started offering humanitarian relief to the fleeing refugees. But the service goes beyond material support; it extends to the hearts of those caught in



the war, bringing them comfort, hope, and care. **Amidst the chaos, the SSSIO's unwavering commitment to service stands as a beacon of love and support.**

The SSSIO members in these countries opened their hearts and homes to the refugees. The volunteers even accompanied them on their journey, assisting them with administrative tasks, medical appointments, and even finding jobs. They found schools and kindergartens for the children and enrolled them in dance and music classes! They understood that genuine support lies not only in providing a roof over the head but also in helping to rebuild lives with dignity and independence.

Empowering Ukrainian Orphanages

While caring for those who found refuge in Germany, the Ukrainian and German volunteers recognized the importance of supporting the people back in Ukraine. They focused on supporting three orphanages in Poltava, Kiev, and Sumy, which cared for orphaned or impacted children even before the war. The German Sai Organization took it upon itself to collect essential items needed by these orphanages, ranging from baby food, diapers, and clothes to toys, mobile phones, and laptops. In addition, each child and the orphanage caretakers received individual Easter presents—sweets, toys, and little surprises. The Volunteer's goal was to bring joy to their Lord by bringing joy and comfort to those in need.

The Joy of Giving

The SSSIO received heartwarming expressions of love and gratitude from the children in Ukraine, bringing tears of joy and satisfaction to those involved. Colorful and love-filled hand-made cards carry heartfelt messages, echoing the importance of sticking together and supporting each other during these challenging times. For the children in the orphanages, SSSIO's love and support give hope amid the horrors of war, allowing them to experience moments of joy and happiness.



This service during the Ukraine conflict embodies the essence of compassion and selflessness—as their actions speak louder than words. The gratitude expressed by the children in the orphanages of Poltava shows that love knows no boundaries and that service is indeed its own reward.

To participate in this service, please write to us at:
info@sathyasai.org



SSSIO ZONE 6



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA • CROATIA • FRANCE • GREECE • IRELAND • ISRAEL
ITALY • MACEDONIA • ROMANIA • SERBIA • SLOVENIA • SPAIN • **SWITZERLAND** • UK

SWITZERLAND

1970s

Devotees held bhajan sessions in Geneva. Following Swami's advice, Dr. Ali Hussein and wife, Zahra, started regular bhajans. Regular study circles and first Sai Spiritual Education classes for children were organized at the Geneva Sai Center. Sai Center of Geneva was registered in 1980.

1980s

First Sathya Sai Swiss Retreat held in Aarau in 1983. Switzerland held their first 24-hour Akhanda Bhajan in November 1984. In December 1988, Swami inaugurated and blessed the Sai Organization in Switzerland with a Coordinating Committee.

1990s

The Sathya Sai Association, Switzerland was legally registered under Swiss law in 1990.

Swami sends a personal message, "My Dears! Accept My Love and Blessings!" for the "Universal Peace through Human Values" conference organized by the Sathya Sai Organization at the UNO in 1995.

2000s

"Peace and Goodwill in our Troubled World" conference organized with Swami's permission and blessings in 2004.

Four public meetings held during 2005-2006, and a public conference organized in Geneva, with Swami's permission and blessings in 2008.



2010s

Pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam with 55 participants singing in the Zone 6 Choir in the divine presence of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Walks for Values held along the shores of Lake Geneva and in Randa (Zermatt), 2013-2014.

Sai HeArt Festival in 2017, included workshops in pottery, calligraphy, and photography. It also featured peace dances, puppet show, and values games for children.



Walk for Values

2020s

“Suitcase Exhibition” about human values held at the retreat in Schöpfheim, 2020.

Poetry festival organized in Charmey, 2022.

Theater festival organized in Bern on the life of young Sri Sathya Sai Baba, 2023.



Suitcase Exhibition





*Sincere Prayer
and Divine
Grace for a
Miraculous Cure*

IN 2017 I RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM MY BROTHER.

After the usual greetings and conversations, he said he had some bad news for me. He had a relapse of aplastic anemia, and his blood count was extremely low! Aplastic anemia is a rare and serious medical condition that affects the bone marrow and significantly impairs its ability to produce an adequate amount of red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. Apart from fatigue, weakness, pale skin, shortness of breath, recurrent infections, easy bruising or bleeding, and prolonged bleeding from minor cuts, aplastic anemia can result in a quick death! I was just dumbfounded hearing the sad news. Still, I did my best to comfort him, and we agreed that I would convey this news to our mother as he didn't know how to break it to her. I broke down in tears as memories from our childhood flooded my mind, and I remembered the pain our family had gone through with his illness back then. Now, it had resurfaced! I eventually told my mother. She, too, was speechless.

The Only Support

I consider myself very fortunate to have grown up in a family whose members are long-standing devotees of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. **While growing up, I had no doubt about Him being the Avatar, as I was mesmerized by His miracles and awe-struck by His unique, loving form.** When I watched Bhagawan, He seemed to be floating in the air and did not belong to the earth like us! His way of moving itself matched the quote, "Be in the world but do not let the world be in you."

We were brought up with Swami's teachings of human values through Bal Vikas classes (Sai Spiritual Education for children). So profound were these lessons that I endeavored to instill these values in my son too, from a very early age. I believe that these teachings have helped him immensely, especially when he entered his teenage years.

It is natural for all of us to turn to Swami during the challenging times of our lives. We all cried uncontrollably, praying to Swami and sharing our grief. All we could do was call my brother to give him the moral support and the love he very much needed.

A Rollercoaster Journey

My brother needed regular blood transfusions, and my mother flew to Florida to assist him and be by his side during this ordeal. My son was in college then, and I had work commitments, so I could not be there in person. However, along with the other family members, I kept in touch with him through video calls. We prayed

to Swami incessantly, asking for His grace and blessings for his relief.

There would be times when his blood would stabilize, and then came times when the count would go extremely low again! His condition fluctuated and carried us up and down the emotional rollercoaster. The news soon spread to his close friends and family in Trinidad & Tobago. They, too, joined in the prayers and kept sending love to him. Each one prayed in their own way to their chosen form of God, and their prayers were from different religious backgrounds too. My brother did his share of praying as well.

I sincerely prayed to Swami in our puja (prayer) room, talking to Him in my own way. I would break down weeping and pleading with Swami to be there and cure him just as He had done so lovingly in the past when my brother was young.

The Transplantation Option and a Miracle

My brother was told that he would need a bone marrow transplant, and the hospital requested to find a close family member to be a donor for the transplant. After the tests, it was determined that my sister was the best match to be the bone marrow donor. She immediately agreed, and now my brother needed to be prepared for the surgery.

Amazingly, after a couple more blood transfusions, days of a healthy diet, and being mentally strong, my brother started to see a gradual improvement. Soon, even without the transplant, he started to show signs of phenomenal progress! The doctors told him he did not need the bone marrow

“Prayer must emanate from the heart, where God resides, and not from the head where doctrines and doubts clash.”

transplant anymore! They also said he does not even have to go to the hospital often! This was unbelievably good news which uplifted everyone’s spirits. In fact, he could be on his own very soon, so my mother headed back to Trinidad & Tobago!

In 2019, we had a Thank You Satsang expressing our deepest gratitude to Swami for curing my brother. My parents also celebrated their wedding anniversary at our home. But we never stopped praying. My brother not only stopped having blood transfusions but was off some of the medications as well!

Power of Prayer

I firmly believe it all happened because of Swami’s Grace alone. **It is miraculous and proves that our Lord listens to our sincere and heartfelt prayers.** No one can predict when the Lord will shower His grace, but we know for sure that not even a blade of grass will move without His will.

The power of sincere prayer, healing vibhuti, silent sitting/meditation, and faith in our Lord can bring miraculous cures.

Believing in God and praying with all our heart makes the impossible possible.

“Prayer must emanate from the heart, where God resides, and not from the head where doctrines and doubts clash.”

Our thoughts and vibrations can travel thousands of miles to the person we are thinking about.

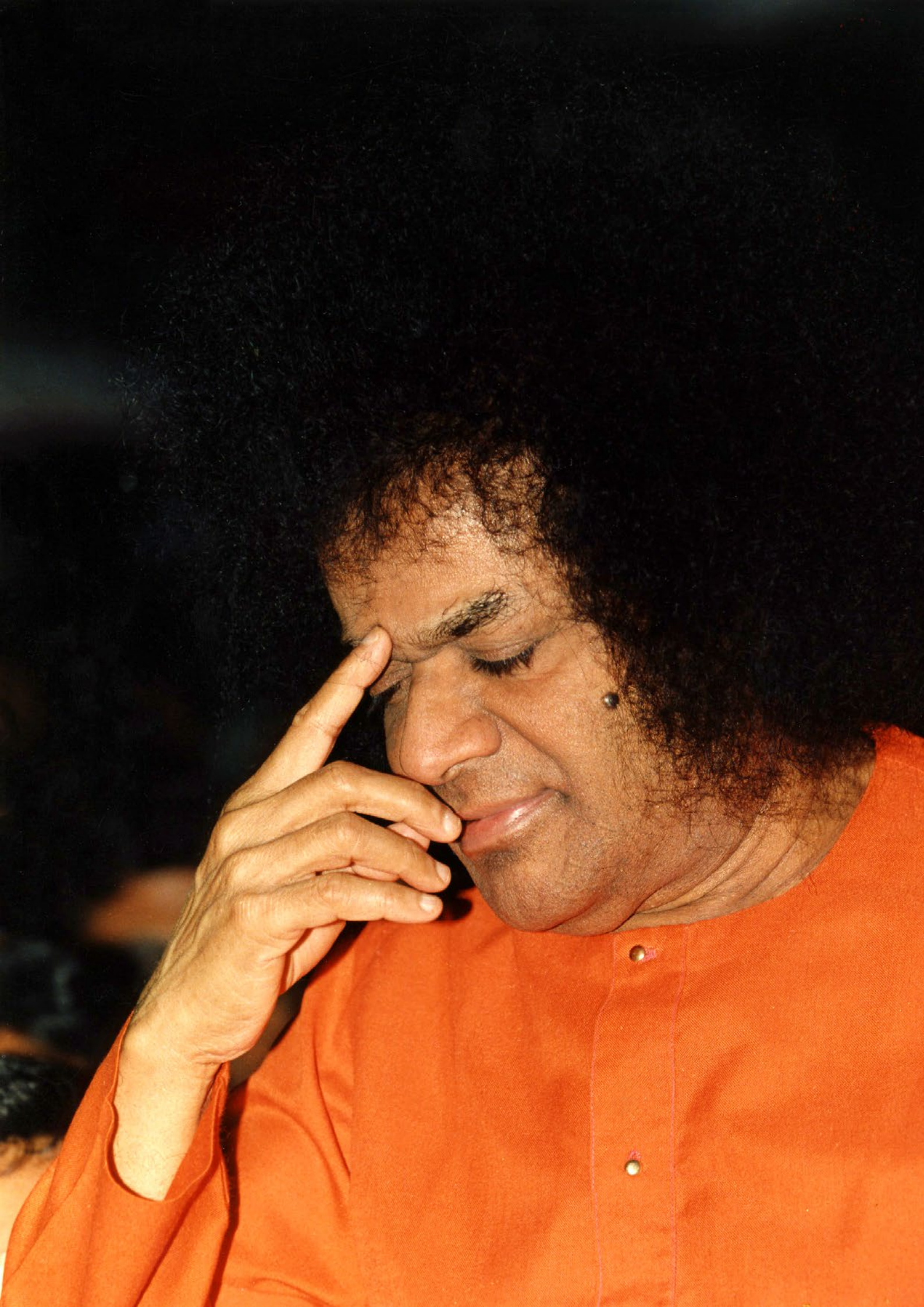
Swami has personally helped me throughout my life in many different ways. I have learned to have that faith, patience, ceiling on my desires, be positive and grateful for the smallest things in life, be humble, and work on my ego. In life, we must have such equanimity. Swami is my breath, my soul, my life. No one can understand the ways of the Lord. No one can explain or understand His divinity. We must leave everything to His will. **“Let Thy will be done.” We must explicitly trust in the Lord that whatever happens, it happens for our own good.**

Jai Sai Ram

Ms. Vedeya Deo 
TRINIDAD

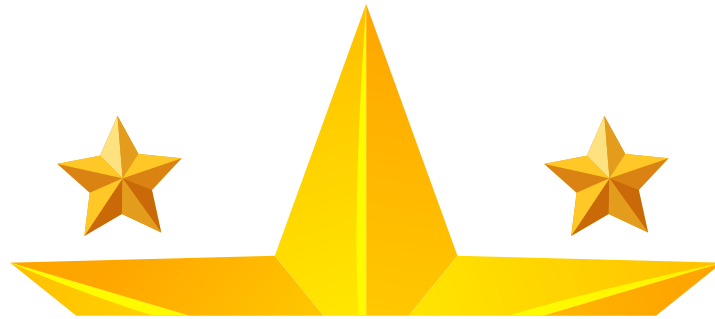


Ms. Vedeya Deo hails from San Fernando, Trinidad. She is the National Educational Coordinator for the SSSIO, Trinidad & Tobago. Vedeya is a member of the Sathya Sai Institute of Education, West Indies (SSIEWI). She also manages the bookshop at the Sai Nilayam in Trinidad and has taught SSE and SSEHV classes for many years.



from the International Sai Young Adults

This month, we are happy to welcome newly appointed Young Adult leaders from various zones, and we look forward to working with them. We have an exciting update for the Sri Sathya Sai International Leadership Program's (SSSILP) graduating class of 2023 and a glimpse into an inspiring YA camp that took place in Indonesia!



Sri Sathya Sai International Leadership Programme 2023 Graduation

With the divine grace of our dearest Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, we are delighted to announce the SSSILP virtual graduation ceremony for the Class of 2023 on September 23, 2023. The theme of the online event is "*Samarpayami* (An offering): Swami resides in the Lotus of our Hearts." Join us online for this Graduation Ceremony, which celebrates the class of 2023 and is dedicated to Swami! With an eminent guest speaker and an enchanting musical performance, it's a celebration you would not want to miss! The ceremony will be presented on sathyasai.org/ya/live. Please visit sathyasai.org/ya/sssilp for more information.

We invite everyone to attend an additional in-person SSSILP graduation ceremony for the class of 2020-2023 on September 28, 2023, at 5 pm at the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, held in conjunction with the SSSIO International Conference in the Pearl of the Indian Ocean—Sri Lanka. For further details, kindly contact the Young Adults coordinator of Zone 4.



AROUND THE WORLD

National Young Adults Camp, Indonesia

The Young Adults (YAs) of Indonesia organized a National Young Adults Camp in Bali, Indonesia. The camp was held from June 30 to July 2, 2023, attended by 215 YAs nationwide. Various programs were held, including two virtual guest speakers' sessions by Professor Dr. Suresh Govind, 'How to be Happy, Successful and Productive' and Mr. Satyajit Salian on the topic 'Heads in the Forest, Hands in the Society'—both relating to Bhagawan's teachings.

In addition, a panel session provided a platform for the YAs to ask questions about the challenges they face daily. The YAs from each region presented beautiful cultural performances to understand the cultures of other regions and learn more about Indonesia's diverse culture. The camp held in a forest setting concluded with a YA activity to cultivate teamwork and the ability to think out of the box when faced with challenges.

The camp empowered the YAs with the knowledge, skills, and necessary perspectives to progress in their life's journey, also providing them with essential tools to navigate personal and professional issues.



My Rediscovery

Sathya Sai Baba entered our home in the form of music when I was about eight years old. My brothers and I developed an appreciation for Sai Bhajans and enjoyed practicing our growing musical talent at the local Sai Center. But that was the extent of our involvement. Some questions remained. Is it appropriate to pray to “a man” and sing His name? How about the claim that He is God?

Growing up in a traditional Tamil Brahmin household in New Zealand, we were blessed to have a connection with God despite being surrounded by secular Western society. We always felt a need to be associated with temples and traditional religious practices. It was probably this need that led us to participate in Sai Bhajans. But now, the head and the heart were at loggerheads! **While the head asked questions, the heart enjoyed peace and rejoiced in the bhajans.**

Then came the Young Adult Camp in 2018.

An Invitation from Swami

After hearing about the upcoming New Zealand National Young Adult camp in Auckland, I had a strange urge to attend. The deal was sealed by a letter that arrived in the post one day from a Young Adult and the SSE joint project. It was on paper, with a light-colored pencil drawing of a beautiful nature background. On it were these stirring words:

My dear Child,

*I have been thinking about you.
I will be coming to the Young
Adult Camp in Piha, and I hope
to see you there.*

With Love,

Baba

Somehow, I could not say ‘No’ to that invitation. But even as my younger brother and I drove 8 hours to Auckland, my mind was on its own journey through a mountain of questions, doubts, and concerns.

“Is this wrong? Am I being blasphemous? Who is Baba anyway? Is He really God? Is this a cult? Am I getting into something dangerous?”

Questions! Tens, hundreds of questions. My head was full of questions and doubts with no inkling of an answer.

A Retreat in the Truest Sense

When we arrived at the campsite in Piha, West Auckland, we were greeted by a loving group of ‘Sai Young Adults,’ most of whom I had never met before. And yet, their warmth made us feel right at home. That settled my mind somewhat. I felt peaceful. When ignorance and doubt clash with observation and experience, should we not go with experience?

The next couple of days were an amazing, exhilarating experience, riding this wave of love. I received answers to all my questions though I asked nobody. It was a *retreat* in the truest sense where I got in touch with something deep within me, silencing all my mind’s chatter.

How could anyone think anything wrong about a large group of young people living in the Western, hedonistic society—coming together in their free time to sit down and discuss God and spiritual concepts? If it was wrong, why did it give me feelings of positivity, hope, love, contentment, peace, enthusiasm, and exhilaration?

What I found was not a cult, but an all-inclusive family! Yes, everyone considered Sathya Sai Baba as God. But the retreat also emphasized that even I, Nethran, was God! **God is not just in**

the temple but in everyone’s heart – in every atom, in every subatomic particle, in every vibration. Even in nothingness, there is divinity. That is what I have learned all my life. Here, I saw the attempt to practice it as well!

The Blessing of *Bhakti*

It was at that moment that I realized that this was the company I wanted. I wanted the company of the divine—the company of fellow spiritual seekers. *And I really wanted Swami in my life.*

To be able to utter the name of God, to think of God, just to know that God exists, is God’s grace and blessing!

In Tamil, “*Avan Arulale Avan Thal Vanangi* (With His grace, we pray to Him).”

This was a crucial realization for me, and it became apparent just three months after the camp. Back home, my brothers and I insisted that during our upcoming trip to visit sacred places in India, we include Puttaparthi, the very birthplace of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Also, we rigorously completed the severe austerities of 40 days of fasting and *sadhana* for Swami *Ayyappan* in preparation for the pilgrimage to Sabarimalai in South India.

When the day of departure came, a storm was forecast to pass over Wellington airport, which would likely cause the cancelation of flights. A voice in my head said, “Leave aside all concerns. He is calling you – so you will go.”

That is precisely what happened. Contrary to all forecasts, the storm just missed Wellington.

Avan Arulale Avan Thal Vanangi

This only heightened our devotion to the extent that we set up a little altar during our transit in Changi airport (in Singapore) and performed pooja as if it was in our home! Such was the blissful and intoxicating nature of the *bhakti* Swami had blessed us with. I had nothing but gratitude in my heart. What a gift!

My first trip to Puttaparthi was just an overnight stay. But it felt like a homecoming. As I left India the next day, I had an intense feeling of dissatisfaction - like something was started but left incomplete. For the next few weeks, I could only think about entering Sai Kulwant Hall in the ashram and seeing the peak of Mount Arunachala (a sacred mountain in Tamil Nadu, India, which is mentioned by Swami in His first *Bhajan*, '*Manasa Bhajare*').

As soon as I could, I booked another week of leave. Three months after we returned, I was back on a plane to India! Previously, I would have been convinced I was crazy to waste time and money like this. But now, I told myself, "This is Swami. It's not supposed to be logical. I am on this plane because I am being called. There is a reason. I will find it."

That 10-day journey to Puttaparthi and Thiruvannamalai (pilgrimage place in Tamil Nadu, where Mount Arunachala is

located) was an inward journey into the world of spirituality, getting closer to my God, the indweller. I discovered the secret to being content and happy despite the obstacles and challenges I faced.

A Work in Progress

Since then, the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization has been the tool through which He has revealed things about myself I had never even imagined. He put me into a coordinating role for a Zonal Young Adult festival, showing me what surrender, confidence, and pure intention mean. He gave me leadership positions to prove my ability to do things, but He also showed me that I am not the doer. I can be a very sharp and effective tool, but I need to know who is guiding me to get the work done.

He made me realize He is there every moment of my life, molding me lovingly.

He pulled me away from my familiar hometown, making me feel alone, and then gave me family in places I never imagined! He gave me the power to achieve anything to make me feel proud, then challenged me to remind me that everything is temporary.

I am a work in progress. But, without a doubt, I know I am on the right path in His loving hands.

Dr. Nethran Pathmanathan
NEW ZEALAND




Dr. Nethran Pathmanathan has been involved in the Sri Sathya Sai Organization of New Zealand since the age of 12. He is an integral part of the Young Adults Program and has been singing bhajans from an early age. He is currently one of the national Young Adult Coordinators in New Zealand. He is a physician at the Starship Children's Hospital in Auckland.



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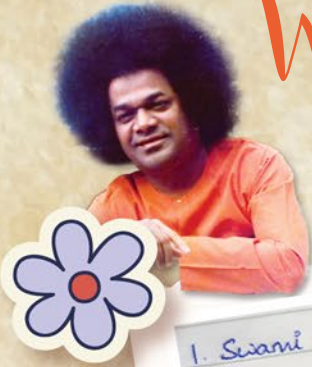


Sai Young Adults

<https://sathyasai.org/ya>

yacoordinator@sathyasai.org

What Swami Means to Me



1. Swami helps me to be a good boy
2. Swami helps me not to be scared
3. Swami gives me cool toys to play with
4. Swami stays with me all day
5. Swami helps me to run very fast
6. Swami takes care of us

NAVNEETH N. | GROUP 1 | IRELAND



Swami teaches me to be a good girl.
I love to hear Swami's stories.
I love play to Swami's games.
I love to be a doctor in Swami
hospital.

SRIYA R. | GROUP 1 | IRELAND

1. Swami shows me our dhrama
2. Swami helps me in everything
3. Swami does every thing for
my good.
4. Swami is my teacher.
5. Swami teaches me stories.

AADVIK | GROUP 1 | IRELAND



1. Swami is my best friend
2. Swami is my guru
3. Swami teaches me writing
4. Thank you Swami for teaching me everything
5. Thank you Swami for giving me my friends

ADISHRI | GROUP 1 | IRELAND



Guru Purnima Activity (Nivedhitha Narendran)

1. Swami has taught me to live life properly.
2. Swami loves us no matter what we do.
3. Swami helps me see the good in everyone.
4. Swami helps me be a good person.
5. Swami always does what is best for me.
6. Swami is in everyone and always helps us.

NIVEDHITHA N. | GROUP 1 | IRELAND



1. Swami is my best friend.
 2. Swami helps me concentrate in classes.
 3. Swami's stories teaches me good values.
 4. Swami teaches me good manners.
 5. Swami helps me control my monkey mind.
 6. Thank you swami for being so kind to me.
- I love you

DIYA D. | GROUP 1 | IRELAND



A Letter to Swami

1. Swami is my best friend.
2. Swami teaches me everything in the Balikas class.
3. He taught me shlokas and bhajans.
4. He taught me the values like Udana, Prana, Samana, Apana and Vyana.
5. Only because of Swami I am in this class otherwise I wouldn't know the breathing techniques, all the prayers, all the stories and I wouldn't have known how to stay calm.
6. Swami made me a lot more confident up on stage, when I play football and also when I participated on the day of the dialogues.
7. Also because of Swami I have been able to meet my friends in person.
8. When I grow up for Swami I will share it to my kids and then they can share it to the next generation.

ARJUN | GROUP 1 | IRELAND

1. Swami is like my mother.
2. Swami taught me His prayers.
3. Swami is like my father.
4. Swami loves me a lot.
5. Swami knows everything about me.
6. We couldn't hide anything from Swami.
7. Swami teaches me everything.

OVEE | GROUP 1 | IRELAND



Upcoming SSSIO Online Events

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

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

Date of Online Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
September 23, 2023	Saturday	Young Adults SSSILP Graduation 2023
October 21-22, 2023	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri
November 11-12, 2023	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Bhajans
November 23, 2023	Thursday	98th Birthday of Sri Sathya Sai Baba



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



Feel that you are the Lord's own. Then, the work will not be tiring, it will be done much better, and it will yield more satisfaction. The master will reward you by keeping you in bliss. What more can any one aspire for? Leave the rest to Him. He knows best; He is All. The joy of having Him is reward enough. This is the secret of human happiness. Live out your lives on these lines and you will never come to grief. Krishna says, "*Na me bhakta pranashyathi*" – "My devotee never perishes."

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

August 19, 1965



sathyasai.org

Love All • Serve All
Help Ever • Hurt Never