

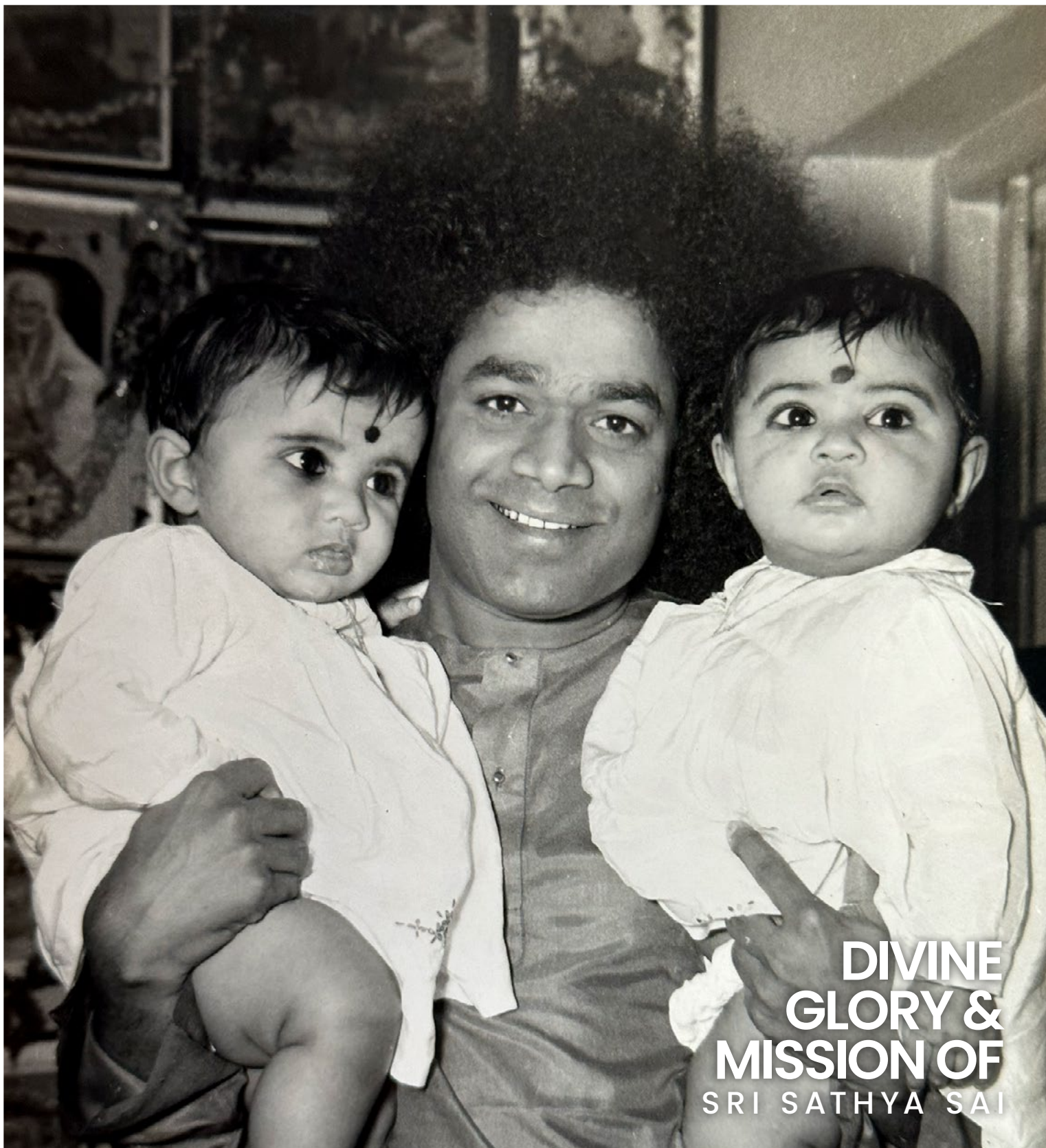
SATHYA SAI

# THE ETERNAL

COMPANION



VOLUME 3, ISSUE 5  
MAY 2024



DIVINE  
GLORY &  
MISSION OF  
SRI SATHYA SAI



If you throw a pebble into a well, ripples are created and these travel up to the edge of the well. In the same way, if you throw a pebble called good thought into the well called the heart, the ripples generated travel throughout the body. When the ripple reaches the eye, it stimulates pure vision. When the ripple reaches the ear, it tunes the latter to sacred sounds. When the ripple reaches the hands, it swings them into good action. In this manner, when the ripples spread around the entire body, there is a symphony of sacred activity all round. Thus, good and noble thoughts are fundamental to sacred activity. Such are the great teachings of Buddha.

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

May 21, 2000

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





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# GOD AS MOTHER



God comes down as an incarnation with a beautiful form and a sweet name to guide humanity on the path of divine love to reach the ultimate goal of Self-realization, which is to realize that one is the embodiment of divine love, *Atman* or *Brahman*. To nurture this divine love, many spiritual practices like *japa*, prayers, *bhajans*, meditation, self-enquiry, selfless service, and *satsang* are recommended. However, one important practice emphasized is to develop an intimate relationship with God, and not have God as an abstract entity in heaven or confined to a pilgrimage place like Kashi, Mecca, Jerusalem, Shirdi, or Puttaparthi. But to make Him one's very own. **We should feel that we belong to God, and God belongs to us.** Swami emphasizes that one must develop an endearing relationship with god, just like the Gopikas (simple innocent cowherd women) had with Lord Krishna.

## Two Steps to Develop a Relationship with God

To do this, we must first develop the conviction that God is the indweller of our heart.

**One's own heart is the address of God, who is the resident of all beings,** including humans, as Lord Krishna declares in the Bhagavad Gita (18.61):

*Ishvarah sarva-bhutanam hrid-deshe  
arjuna tishthati  
bhramayan sarva-bhutani yantrarud-  
hani mayaya*

*(The supreme Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, and by His maya (illusive power) causes all beings to revolve as if mounted on a machine.)*

**Then, one can develop a close relationship with God, worshiping God as mother, father, teacher, friend, beloved, or relative. Among these, the relationship with the mother is the first and foremost.** Swami says that the mother is also the first teacher. She shows the child the father. The father, in turn, points to the teacher (Guru), who, in turn, guides the individual to God. From conception, the mother bears the baby in her womb, making innumerable sacrifices.

Swami repeatedly says that a mother's love comes closest to divine love.

Thus, there are two aspects of spirituality: one where we worship our mother as God and the other where we worship God as our Mother.

### Treating The Mother As God

The Vedas declare, *"Mathru Devo Bhava"* (revere mother as God). All the great masters have shown that worshipping the Mother is essential, even for renunciants. In the Birthday discourse of 2003, Swami says,

*"The loving care of Jijabai, his mother, made Shivaji a great warrior. Rama's divinity blossomed because of the noble qualities of His mother, Kausalya. The twins, Lava and Kusha, could become valiant, powerful, and famous on account of their noble and virtuous mother, Sita. Gandhi became a Mahatma (a great soul) because of his pious mother, Putlibai."*

In addition, Swami also attributes many aspects of the Sathya Sai Avatar to His mother, aptly called Easwaramma, the mother of Easwara or God.

**The mother always sacrifices for the child. Her love is unconditional, selfless, and pure. Even when the child goes astray, the mother forgives and still continues to shower love on the child.** Pundarika was a great devotee whose chosen deity was Lord Panduranga. But even when the very Lord appeared before him, he continued to serve his parents and made the Lord wait. Lord Panduranga appreciated his devotee's devotion to the parents and waited patiently, standing on a brick offered by his loving devotee. That is the form that has been immortalized at the main shrine of Lord Vitthala in Pandharpur, a famous pilgrimage site in Maharashtra, India.

In other traditions, particularly in Catholicism in Christianity, the worship of Mother Mary is prominent. There are many Basilicas or churches built for Mother Mary throughout the world. The Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, the church of Black Madonna, Our Lady of Bistica in Croatia, the Black Madonna of Czestochowa in Poland, Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, Italy, the Black Madonna in the Basilica of Montserrat in Spain, and the Shrine of our Lady of

## Marian Apparitions



1531, Guadalupe, Mexico



1830, Paris, France



1846, La Salette, France



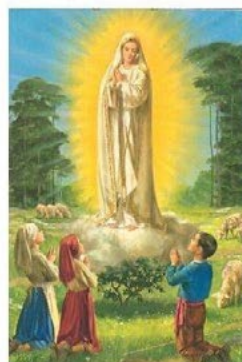
1858, Lourdes, France



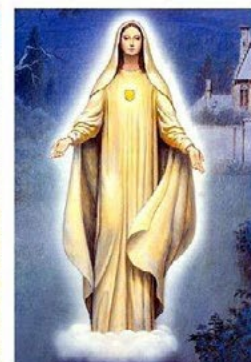
1871, Pontmain, France



1879, Knock, Ireland



1917, Fatima, Portugal



1932, Beauraing, Belgium



1933, Banneux, Belgium

*A selection of many appearances over the years of the Virgin Mary urging us to repent and follow Jesus.*

Lourdes in France are all dedicated to the worship of Mother Mary. **Even today, many people experience the amazing grace and blessings of Mother Mary through incredible miracles and healings, affirming their faith.**

### The Five Mothers

In His discourse on July 22, 1968, Swami emphatically says that there are five mothers for everyone.

The mother is the first of the five *matas* (mothers) that the child encounters:

- **Deha-mata:** the mother that gave birth to this body
- **Go-mata:** the cow that gives sustaining milk
- **Bhu-mata:** the land that grows the crops to nourish the body
- **Desha-mata:** the native country that gives protection, care, love, rights, and opportunities to serve and elevate oneself to one's full potential
- **Veda-mata:** the Vedas, the treasure of spiritual wisdom and heritage that reveals the aim and purpose of human life and takes one step-by-step toward the goal of Self-realization

Swami then adds that the *Deha-mata* must reveal to the child the glories of all the other four mothers, and so, her responsibility is the greatest and the most crucial. He states this as the reason why He established a women's college as the first of His educational institutions.

Giving examples of the impact of good mothers, Swami often gives the example of the great leader and philanthropist of West Bengal (India), Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and how he established social welfare projects in fulfillment of his mother's endearing wishes. Swami also adds that similarly, He too undertook massive social welfare projects—the University, the Super Specialty Hospitals, and the Drinking Water Project—in response to the prayers of the mother of His body, Easwaramma, who was full of compassion. **All these projects started on a modest scale, such as a primary school, a general hospital, and a village well. But since it was the mother of the divine who prayed sincerely, they all grew in epic proportions to giant humanitarian projects, serving millions!**

Inspired by Swami's example, today, the Sri Sathya International Organization







Mother Durga



Mother Lakshmi



Mother Saraswati

(SSSIO), founded by Him, undertakes many educational, humanitarian, and environmental service projects around the world.

Sathya Sai Schools and Institutes have been started in many countries around the world to provide values-based education. Many healthcare initiatives like medical camps and health clinics are serving humanity worldwide, the most recent example being an 8-day medical camp held in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya in East Africa to serve over 5,500 needy patients. Free drinking water projects, providing rations, serving food, offering housing, and other humanitarian projects are also regularly undertaken by the SSSIO. A glimpse of such activities organized throughout the year is presented in the four Service Snippets in this issue.

### Treating God as the Mother

God, the Supreme Being, is equally worshiped as the Divine Mother as He is adored as the Divine Father. God's love is comparable to the love of a thousand mothers, nay infinite mothers! An example of God being worshiped as the mother is described in the sacred Hindu epic, Ramayana. Prince Lakshmana, a hero who is the brother of Lord Rama, gave up the kingdom and his wife and even left his mother in order to worship and serve Rama, who is the *Parabrahman* or the Lord Supreme.

In the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism, there is also the concept of worshiping the divine as the mother with various forms of Goddesses, like Tara and Mayadevi. And let us remember that this is also the holy month when Buddhists around the world celebrate Buddha Poonima. So, we have included excerpts from Bhagawan's discourse on the significance of this major festival in this issue.

In the Vedas, the most ancient scriptures, the Divine is extolled as the Mother. Swami, our Lord Sai, emphasizes the sacred Vedic chants of Durga Suktam, Medha Suktam, and Sri Suktam, all of which glorify the Divine as the Mother.

The Durga Suktam is from the ancient Rig Veda, where the 'divine power' aspect of the Mother is worshiped. God is supreme Brahman, beyond attributes, names, forms, time, and causation. **But, just as the positive and negative terminals are essential to manifest electricity, the 'spark' of creation needs the supreme Brahman to divide into two 'terminals' or aspects—*Purusha* and *Prakriti* or *Shakti*.** *Shakti* embodies feminine energy and is often depicted as the consort of Lord Shiva. The Divine Mother is synonymous with *Shakti*, the divine power that manifests, sustains, and transforms the universe as the unifying force of existence. The Divine Mother exists in all beings as intelligence, mercy, and beauty. She is the embodiment

of the all-existential power, the mother aspect.

The Medha Suktam, also from the Rig Veda, worships the Divine as the Mother who endows 'supreme wisdom,' knowledge, and good intellect so that one thinks good, speaks good, and does good. The Sri Suktam worships God as the Divine Mother, who is the source of 'all prosperity and glory,' including physical prowess, courage, wealth, properties, and progeny.

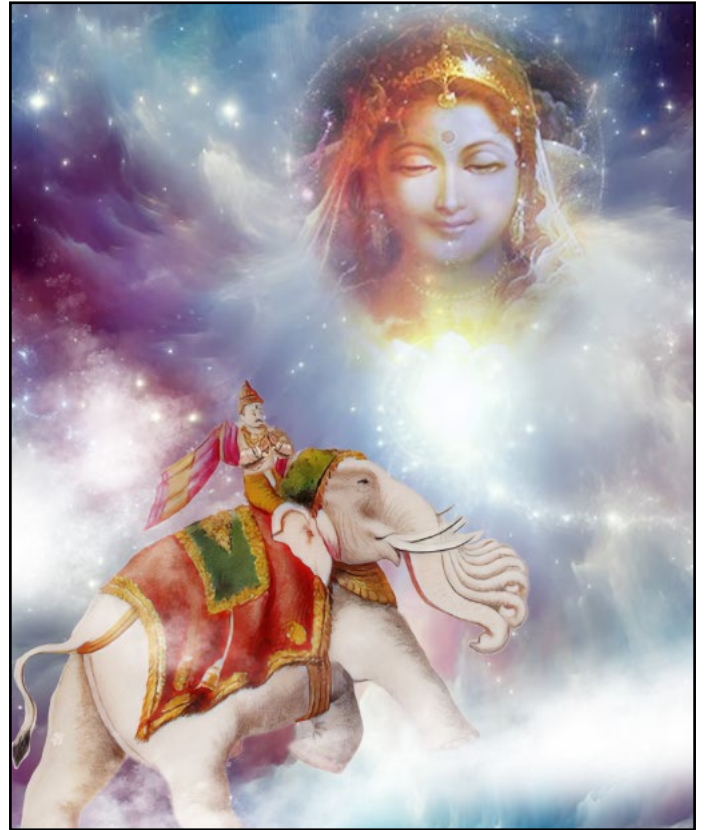
These are the three aspects by which the Divine Mother is propitiated: Durga, the protector; Saraswati (Medha Devi), the fountainhead of knowledge; and Lakshmi (Sri Devi), the bestower of prosperity. This worship is done especially during *Navarathri*, the festival of nine nights of worship, twice a year, during spring and fall.

### The Vedantic View of the Divine Mother—A Story

Even in the Vedanta and the Upanishads, mother worship exists despite the central philosophy of Vedanta being *Advaita* (non-dualism). **The story below of Uma Hymavathi from the Kenopanishad is a beautiful narrative that symbolizes the essence of spiritual understanding and humility.**

Once, the Devas (celestial beings) defeated the demons through the power of the supreme *Parabrahman*. However, they were filled with pride about their victory and began to boast, saying, "This victory is ours! Through our mighty power, we have conquered the demons!"

The Lord, wanting to humble the Devas and remind them of their true source of power, appeared before them in the form of a Yaksha (a natural spirit). The Devas were curi-



ous about this strange form and sent Agni (the god of fire) to inquire about its identity.

When Agni approached the Yaksha, the Yaksha asked him, "Who are you?" Agni proudly replied, "I am Agni, the god of fire! I can burn everything in this world!" To test Agni's power, the Yaksha placed a blade of grass in front of him and asked him to burn it. Despite his best efforts, Agni failed to burn the blade of grass. Next, Vayu (the god of wind) was sent by the Devas to confront the Yaksha. Vayu boasted, too, about his power, but like Agni, he also failed to move the blade of grass. Similarly, Varuna (the god of water), who approached the Yaksha, could not wet the blade of grass!

Finally, Indra, the king of gods himself, arrived on the scene. At that time, the form of Yaksha disappeared, and in its place appeared the blissful, universal mother, Uma Hymavathi. She told Indra that the Yaksha form was assumed by Brahman, the

supreme being, to teach the gods a lesson. All powers of the gods (*Shakti*) were derived from Brahman, and therefore, they had no grounds to be conceited and arrogant. The Divine's consciousness and power is the source of all powers in the universe. Even the devas and demigods are endowed with power because they, using their merits, have acquired a small fraction of the power (*Shakti*) of Brahman. And Uma Hymavathi, the ultimate *Shakti*, the eternal feminine, is that same power. It is she who controls the whole universe as the Divine Mother.

**The great scripture, called Durga Saptashati or Chandi, beautifully describes how the Mother is even responsible for our day-to-day experiences. She is the source of our hunger, thirst, sleep, courage, peace, faith, patience, fortitude, memory, compassion, forgiveness, delusion, intelligence, and energy.**

### **Sri Ramakrishna and Mother Kali**

The great saint Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who worshiped Mother Kali, practiced the worship of the Divine as Mother. He set an example for worshiping God as Mother, loving her with intensity and one-pointedness. He used to pine and agonize, praying intensely, "Oh, Mother! Another day is gone without having your vision. Pray grant me your vision so that my life isn't wasted."

People made fun of him as a madman to worship an 'image' or 'idol.' So, he promptly went to his Mother and cried, "Mother! Are you just an image or idol?" To his great joy and reassurance, he could see that the mother was very much alive. **When he placed the palm of his hand near the nostrils of the Mother and felt she was actually breathing, he knew it was not a mere idol but an**

**embodiment of living consciousness!** He thus had a vivid vision of the Divine Mother!

What is more, in his perfect communion with the Divine Mother, he has given us, in the most simple and picturesque words, the complete philosophy of mother-worship, the quintessence of all scriptures! What does Sri Ramakrishna say about the Divine Mother?

*"My mother. Who is my mother? Ah! She is the mother of the Universe. It is She who creates and preserves the world, who always protects Her children, and who grants whatever they desire – dharma, artha, kama, moksha. A true son cannot live away from his mother. The mother knows everything. The child only eats, drinks, and makes merry; he doesn't worry himself about the things of the world. Everyone is under the authority of the*



*divine mother. Even the incarnations of God accept the help of their mothers to fulfill their mission on earth. Therefore, they worship the Divine Mother.”*

Many great spiritual aspirants and leaders like Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda, renowned disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, were also inspired by this and adopted the worship of the divine Mother.

### **Sai is Brahman and Shakti**

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa gives a lucid explanation of the relationship between the Supreme Brahman and *Shakti*:

*“Brahman and Shakti are identical. If we accept one, we accept the other. It is like fire and its power to burn. One cannot think of Brahman without Shakti and Shakti without Brahman.”*

That is why we consider Swami, the Supreme Parabrahman, as ‘*Shiva-Shakti Swarupa*,’ the embodiment of both Lord Shiva and Goddess Shakti. In the term ‘Sai Baba,’

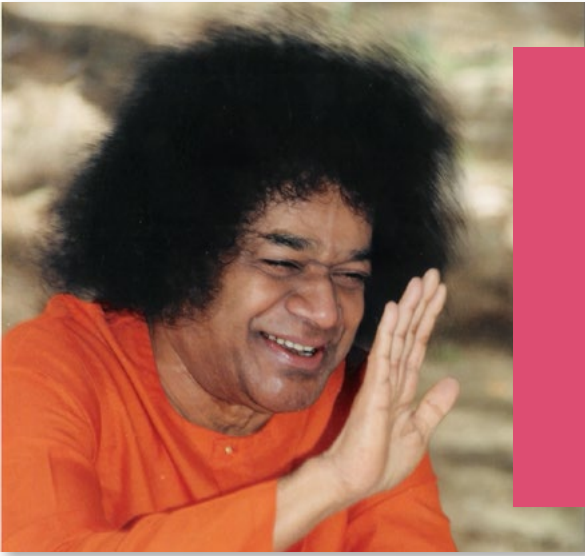
the term ‘Sa’ denotes ‘Divine,’ ‘Ai’ denotes ‘Mother’ or ‘Shakti,’ and ‘Baba’ denotes ‘Father’ or ‘Shiva’. We have dealt with this in detail in the past issues of Sathya Sai—The Eternal Companion. As the divine Mother, the aspect of ‘power’ is worshiped—responding to our prayers, she clears all obstacles and gets rid of our negativities, blessing us with success.

**Swami Himself has been worshiped as the Divine Mother, ‘Sai Ma,’ and many sincere devotees have witnessed Him in all three aspects as Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati.**

In keeping with this facet of Bhagawan, we have included the second part of a divine discourse titled “Who is Sai Baba” in this issue. As part of that discourse, Swami Himself shares two astounding and mind-boggling miracles in which He rushed to the aid of devotees in the USA and the UK.

**Bhagawan most touchingly says that He is the mother and father for all, theists and atheists alike!**





*People worship Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as their mother, father, friend, teacher, and God. Whatever way He is worshiped, He always responds and never disappoints.*

### Different Levels of Divine Mother

People naturally worship God as the Mother because, as children, whenever one is in fear or distress, one runs instinctively to the mother for solace. There is peace only in the lap of the mother. Similarly, we are all children of the divine Mother, and when we call out to her in times of distress, she promptly responds.

**According to the scriptures, the Divine Mother has three forms—the gross, the subtle, and the transcendental.** The gross form is one that we address as Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati. The Divine Mother is also represented by the mystic syllables (*mantras*)—*Hreem*, *Sreem*, *Kleem*, *Aim*—which is the ‘power’ aspect and the subtle aspect. But ultimately, the Divine Mother is transcendental and beyond all these. She cannot be comprehended by the mind or expressed in words. She can only be experienced in the deepest meditation or when doing penance. That is the ultimate experience of the supreme Brahman.

Lalita Sahasranama is a sacred text that consists of a thousand names of the goddess Lalita Tripurasundari. It is a part of the ancient scripture called the Brahmanda Purana. It is considered one of the most

revered texts in the *Shakta* tradition, which worships the divine feminine energy, Shakti. There, it is mentioned that the Divine Mother is *Antharmukha Samaradhya Bahirmukha Sudurlabha*, meaning that **She is easy to attain for those who worship her with their mind turned inward, but She is difficult to attain for those whose vision is turned outward to the materialistic world.** She is more pleased with the offerings of flowers and water of pure consciousness than physical water and flowers.

At the gross level, the Mother is worshiped through various *mantras* (chants and syllables), *yantras* (literally ‘machines’ but contraptions or diagrams that represent divinity), and *tantras* (techniques and rituals). As Sri Ramakrishna puts it, all the various forms of the Mother are real, and She responds to the yearning of the devotee and grants communion with Her.

### Sai Ma or Sai Mata (Mother Sai)

People worship Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as their mother, father, friend, teacher, and God. **Whatever way He is worshiped, He always responds and never disappoints.** The personal experience of Mr. Howard Levin included in this issue highlights this aspect of our dear Swami in that He never disappoints His devotees. That is because once

we belong to Him, we are His forever. Similarly, once we belong to His organization, we always belong to His organization, as beautifully narrated by Ms. Jorja Kelley in this issue. It is evident that Swami has a special fondness for those who consider Him as the Divine Mother. In His discourse on January 14, 2000, Swami narrates how those who worship Him as 'Sai Mata' (Mother Sai) have had their lives sanctified and attained liberation:

*Thirumalacharya, the author of Sri Sathya Sai Suprabhatam, used to live here. He had served in the royal court of Venkatagiri. He was a great scholar in Sanskrit and Sastras. He accompanied Bhagawan to Badrinath at the advanced age of ninety. Bhagawan asked him whether he was fit enough to undertake such an arduous journey. He affirmed that with Swami by his side, he would travel any length of the journey without any discomfort.*

*He said, "Sai Mata (Mother Sai), if You forsake me, my entire existence is a waste. If you accept me as Yours, it is as if I have everything at my command." This was the state of bhakti and surrender in which Thirumalacharya spent his life. He was constantly meditating on Sai Mata. He spent all his time in Swami's proximity, whether it was here or in Brindavan. His Bhakti was beyond measure. Consequently, his end was peaceful.*

*He very well knew that his end was approaching and one day expressed his feelings. On being questioned as to how he knew about it, he replied, "Swami is telling me from within." He went for his bath, brought some water, washed Swami's feet, sipped a few drops of the sanctified water, and said, "Swami, my life has found fulfillment. Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornat Poornamudachyate*

*Poornasya Poornamadaya Poornameva Avashishyate (That is Whole, this is Whole; from the Whole, Whole is born; taking away Whole from the Whole, the Whole remains.) **Physically, mentally, and spiritually, I have attained this wholesomeness. Now the time has come for me to merge in You.** Thereafter, he cast off his mortal coil and merged into Swami.*



Dhooapati Thirumalacharya with Swami

Swami also relates how our earthly mother relates to us only when we cry for her and demand her. But the divine mother is more considerate and loving. He says:

*There are some mothers who feed the baby only when it starts crying. The more considerate and loving type of mother knows when the baby is hungry; she need not be called to its side by a loud wail. This Sai Mata is that type of mother. I have come because I felt I had to come; I resolved*

upon this. There is no need now for tears or despair, either among the repositories of the Vedic wisdom or among the good who suffer from the cruel winds of adharma. This campaign will succeed; it will not fail. The welfare of the world will be ensured through the fostering of the godly everywhere and, more particularly, of these reservoirs of ancient wisdom of this land.

### To Whom Much Is Given...

In the divine discourse of September 27, 2009, Swami says,

*Many people write letters to Me addressing Me as "Mother Sai." They refer to Me as their revered mother. I also address all of you as "children."*

For a large number of devotees, Swami is Sai Ma or Sai Mata. And the Divine Mother showers immense love. But what does Sai Mata or Mother Sai expect from Her children? Swami makes it clear in the discourse of November 24, 1974:

*"Remember, all are the sons and daughters of Sai Mata (Mother SAI). How can I tolerate when the sons and daughters quarrel among themselves and divide themselves into rival groups? Unless you sing bhajans for your own joy, you cannot bring joy to others. The Sathya Sai Organisation has been established to provide sacred tasks for every moment of wakeful life, to make people conscious of the vaga-*

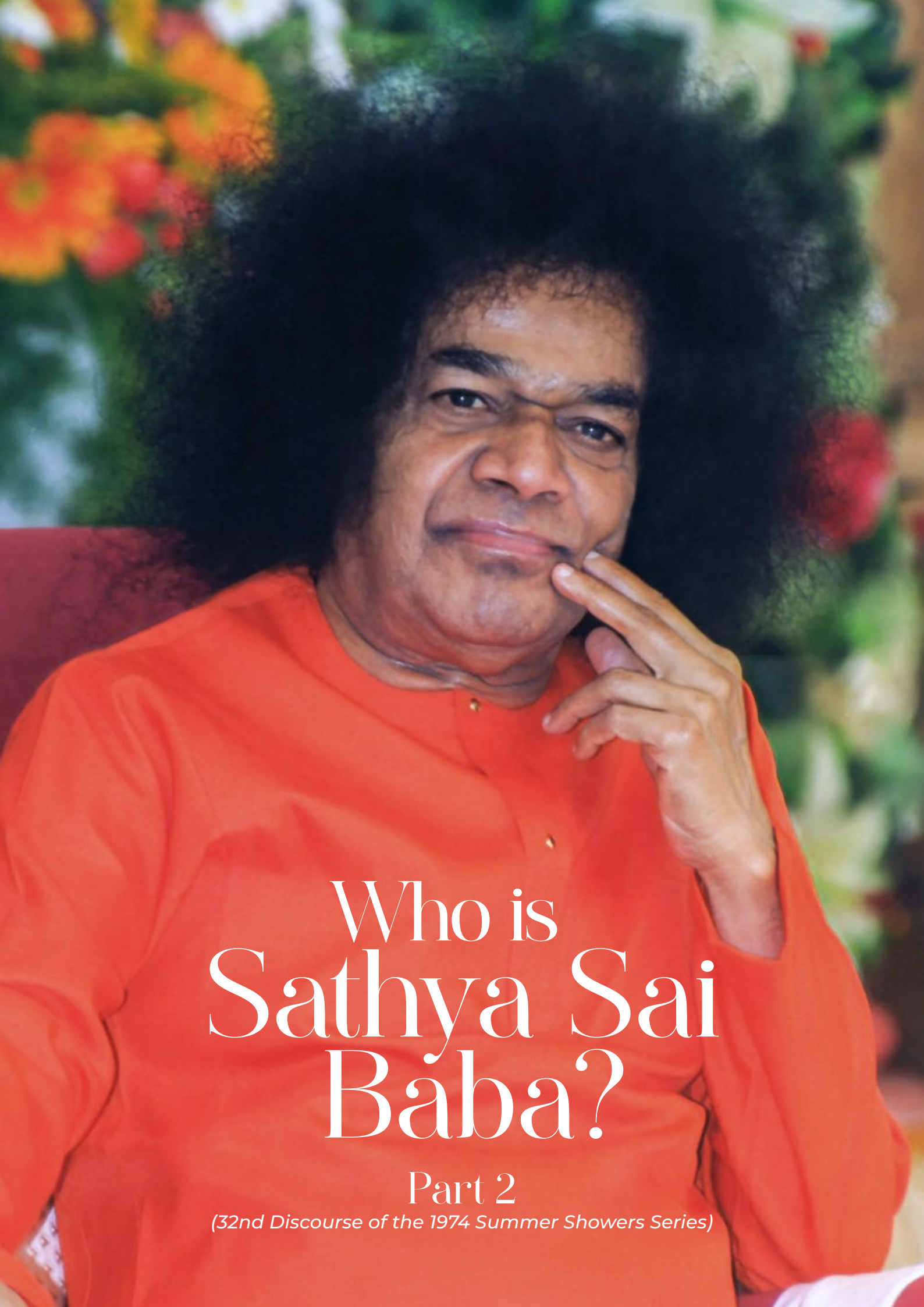


*ries and vanities of the mind, and to teach them the processes of disintegrating the mind and establishing the reign of the pure intellect, by which alone the One behind all this multiplicity can be realized as the only Reality."*

**Swami wants us all to love and serve each other the way He loves and serves us. He emphasizes that He is pleased only when love is the keynote and the feeling of unity prevails.** So, let us love our divine Mother Sai with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and be the deserving recipients of Her grace and unconditional, pristine, selfless, and eternal love. Let our Mother Sai be our eternal companion, guiding us, guarding us, and leading us to the ultimate goal.

Jai Sai Ram.





Who is  
Sathya Sai  
Baba?

Part 2

*(32nd Discourse of the 1974 Summer Showers Series)*



**CONTINUED FROM THE PREVIOUS ISSUE...**

*In the first part of this discourse, Swami states that the answer to the question of who He is lies in the answer to each individual's question, "Who am I?" Assisting in the quest of that answer, He indicates that a true human being is one who enjoys true bliss. Such bliss is attained only by using the body to go beyond the body. Then only we can begin to recognize God who is attributeless and defined only by Love, which is the essence of all religions. He also provides a peek into the glory and mission of the Sai Avatar.*

*This concluding portion of this discourse focuses on the royal path of love.*

**Follow the Royal Path of Love**

My Dear Students! Resolve that the only sacred, royal path to reach God is the path of *prema* (love). You will be able to taste this sweet nectar of love only at the lotus feet of the Lord. This nectar is available in the lotus flower. When we refer to the lotus, we need to understand another significance of the word. A lotus is born in mud and floats on top of the water but does not let the mud or water stick to it. If there is no water, the lotus cannot survive even for a moment. Even though it cannot survive without water, it does not allow water to stay on it.

Following this analogy, we are born in the mud of *vasanas* (tendencies accumulated over lifetimes) and live in the waters of worldly life. We should be like the lotus, unaffected by the mud or the water. Human life is born into an environment comparable to mud, and living in the material world is like being in water. God is like the lotus, not affected by attachment and impurities. So, all limbs of God are compared to the lotus – hands, heart, eyes, feet, and head. The actions God undertakes and the path God walks are pure and not contaminated by the impurities of the world. Thus, whatever path God takes is without attachment, and He is not affected by impurities. He is always clean and pure. His vision is always pure, and His mind is never tainted by worldly matters. A vision that is blemishless and a mind that is unwavering are the characteristics of the Lord.

It is a common experience that holding anything greasy makes the hand greasy, and to clean one needs to wash it with soap or cleaner. But the tongue never becomes greasy, even when one eats greasy food. That is why the tongue is considered pure.

**O tongue! You utter sweet words, speak the truth, and utter only the sacred names of the Lord, like Govinda, Damodara, and Madhava.** The tongue alone is entitled to utter these sacred names of the Lord because it remains uncontaminated. Supreme

“*Only those who can use the eye of jnana (wisdom) can recognize My true form, which is sathya (sathyaswarupa).*”

devotees have proclaimed, “since you are pure and unaffected, oh’ tongue, you must chant the pure name of the Lord incessantly”.

### **Acquire the Eye of Wisdom (*jnana nethra*)**

It is customary for women in India to apply mascara to their eyelids to beautify themselves. When applying mascara, if it touches the eyeball inadvertently, the mascara will not stick to the eyeball. Our scriptures (Puras) have told us that our vision should always be sacred without being affected by the darkness of ignorance (just as the eyeball is not tainted by the mascara). The *Sruthis* (Vedas) have taught us, *Advaita darshanam jnanam*, the realization of non-duality is spiritual wisdom (*jnanam*). Here, what does vision (*darshanam*) refer to? When we use the word vision (*darshanam*), it implies that only the eyes can see because no other organ in the body can see. Therefore, we must believe that our vision itself embodies spiritual wisdom (*jnana drishti*).

In addition, our vision teaches us another lesson. If an individual stands in front of us, their form is reflected in our eyes and, our form is reflected in their eyes. In this process, when we want to see the person in front of us, the eye enables us to do this, like a reflecting mirror. **In the same manner, if we want to have the vision of the omnipresent Lord, we must acquire the “Eye of Wisdom” (*jnana nethra*).** When we want to see the world, we open our eyes to see


clearly, and we use even eyeglasses to see things more clearly if our vision is not clear.

However, when we go to a temple to have a vision of the Lord, we close our eyes and offer salutations (*namaskar*). What is the inner significance of this? What is the point of closing your eyes when you went to see the Lord in the temple? You pray, “The physical eyes are of no use to get Your vision, O’ Lord, and it is possible to have Your vision only through the eye of wisdom or the *jnana chakshu*.” That is why you close your eyes. It follows that all that one sees with physical eyes is unreal.

**Only those who can use the eye of jnana (wisdom) can recognize My true form, which is sathya (*sathyaswarupa*).**

I am happy to give you another example for this. In the royal court of King Janaka, there was a tradition where great scholars were invited for discussions and debates. There were three kinds of exchanges in these debates. The first type is the *Vadamu*, involving argument. The second type is *Jalpa* or debate, and the third is *Tarka* or logic.

In the first kind, the individual pays attention only to what he learned and his understanding, ignores the rest of the explanations on the subject, and argues that his view alone is true. To prove his point and succeed, he will resort to all kinds of means. The second method, *Jalpa*, consists of using a *Sastra* (based on rules and methods) or quoting from the scriptures to establish one’s viewpoint. The third method, *Tarka*, consists of using logic by

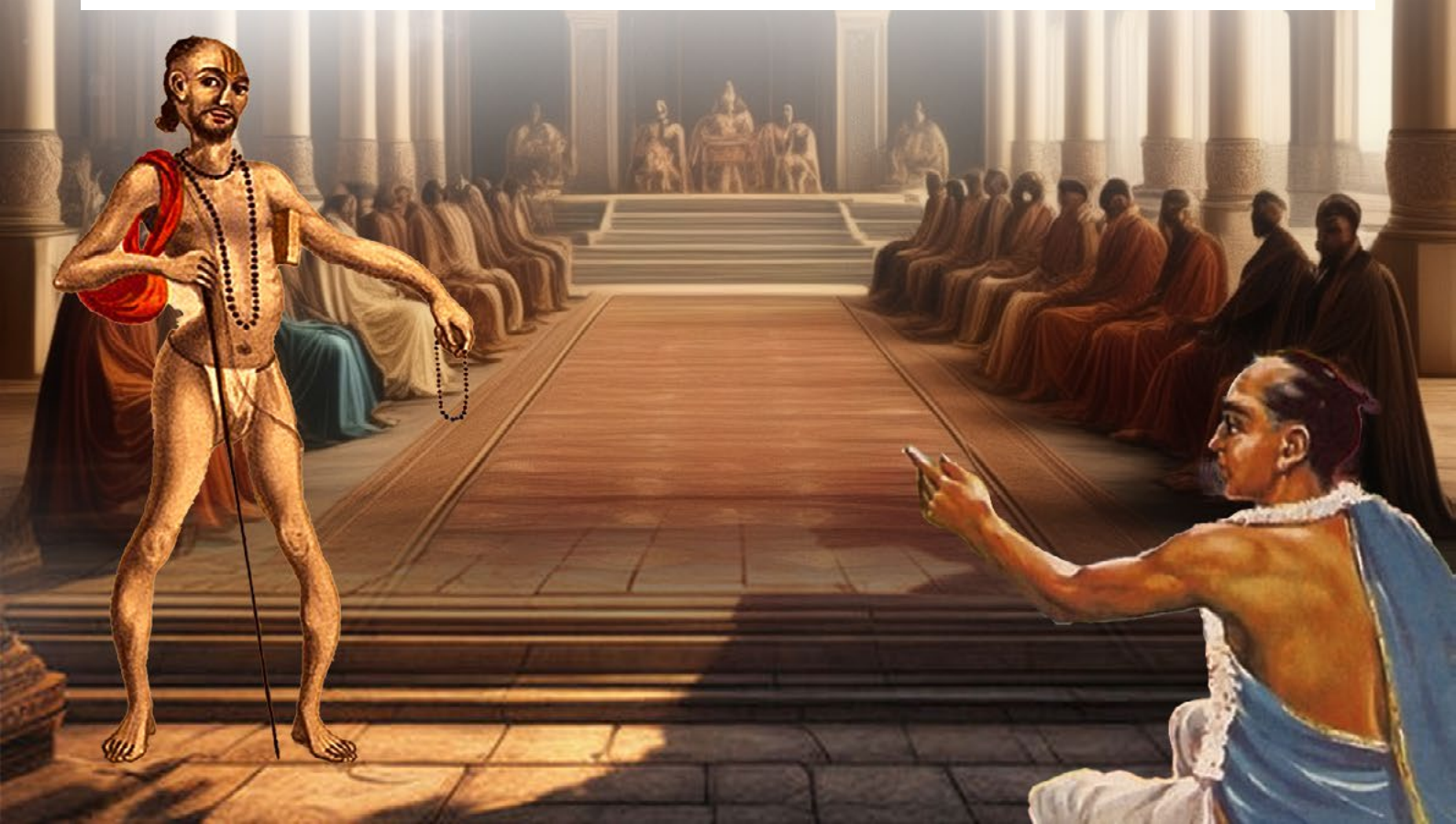


quoting from the Vedas and other scriptures to confirm one's ideas. This method involves deep analysis and research of the scriptures to come to a decision.

Thus, arrangements were made for the three kinds of presentations in King Janaka's royal court. Many reputable scholars with numerous titles to their credit entered the court. To display their great achievements, they came wearing gold bangles, with gemstones hanging from their ears and Rudraksha garlands around their necks. Even heroes who were adept in logic attended. One scholar by the name of Ashtavakra, who was very young, was eager to participate in these discussions. When he was trying to enter the court to participate in the deliberations, the elderly scholars thought that it was not befitting of them to argue with this young Ashtavakra. Such an attitude indicates intellectual arrogance and pride in scholarship. They tried to prevent his participation in many ways.

But Ashtavakra, after praying to King Janaka and pleasing him, was allowed to enter the court. As soon as Ashtavakra entered the court, all the pundits (scholars) gathered in the court laughed loudly at his strange appearance. In return, Ashtavakra, too, laughed twice as loudly. The pundits were perplexed because they thought that there was a valid reason for their laughter. They wanted to know the reason for Ashtavakra's laughter, so one of the pundits asked Ashtavakra why he was laughing.

Ashtavakra asked them, "Sir, can you tell me the reason for your laughter?" One of the pundits said, "O foolish child, how can anyone refrain from laughing when looking at your crooked body?" Then, Ashtavakra said, "Now, please listen to the reason why I am laughing. I wanted to participate in this great discussion King Janaka organized. But, when I entered, I saw all these cobblers or traders of skin (*chamakaras*) whom King Janaka mistook for great scholars. So, I laughed at his ignorance."



Ashtavakra used the word *charmakaras*, and hearing this, the pundits were outraged. Ashtavakra said that he addressed them as cobblers because only cobblers can appreciate the value of leather used for making footwear, and these pundits behaved like cobblers since they attached a lot of importance to the skin covering his body.

Pundits are not those who only see the outer covering of the body. **True pundits must view the heart through inner vision—that is divine vision.** If people value only the outward exhibition of power, dealings, and behaviors, then they undoubtedly belong to the community of cobblers, Ashtavakra declared.

To merely talk about the *vibhuti* I give, the things that I materialize, and the different medications I give—to focus on these external manifestations and objects as your main goal is like being in the darkness of ignorance. I want to emphasize this point. Even eminent intellectuals and great scholars are not trying to perceive the sanctity, the holiness, or even a little of the sacredness that exists in Me. Is this education? Are these the characteristics of educated people? One can emphatically say that it is not so.

### Follow My Teachings

Students, you must not enter such a path; instead, look only at My heart and follow My teachings. **Experience My omniscience and bliss.** Do not keep on saying, “Swami gave me a talisman, a locket,

or a watch.” Do not focus on these trivial, physical aspects as your goal. Instead, realize that these things are insignificant, and if you can earn Swami’s grace, the entire world will be in your possession; the entire world will come to you. Therefore, from today onward, do not pay attention to these miracles; instead, make an appropriate effort to recognize the love in My heart. Only then can you enter the spiritual path that is real and true. But, if you focus on such external objects and miracles, there is a chance that you might lose your devotion and faith and possibly become an atheist.

**You must make efforts to get this invaluable and unattainable diamond, which is Myself.** Then, you will also get the opportunity to attain these trivial, insignificant things and also develop in many ways. But,



*A special diamond materialized by Bhagawan Baba during a private session with the staff and students in Trayee Brindavan, Whitefield, Bangalore on May 14, 2006.*



if you distance yourself from this diamond, Me, and go after or approach trivial, insignificant things, then you are not on the right path.

Things Swami gives you as a sign of His grace are also necessary. You may wonder what is the need for this. Let me inform you of the reasons from the divine perspective. Whenever I give a protective talisman to anyone, that individual wears it either around his neck or somewhere on his body. Do not think that My love, My grace, and My blessing will be conferred on you only because of these things, these talismans. **My grace is there, even if you do not have such a protective talisman on your body.** But when you are in danger, that talisman comes to Me in a flash, within a moment. Seeing it for what it is, that talisman will again return directly to you. Then, there will be an opportunity for Swami's vision and grace to fall upon you. **These are the kinds of secrets that are in Me—these are valuable insights.**

### **His Grace is Always Protecting Us**

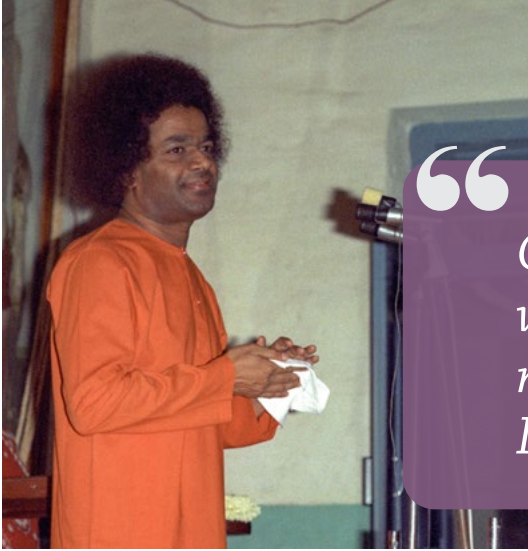
This creates a connection between you and Me so that My vision (My grace) may flow to you. This kind of protection is also saving many *lakhs* (10 *lakhs* = 1 million) of people. Let me illustrate this fact with the example of Mr. Bhagavantam. In April, Bhagavantam came with Me to Bombay (Mumbai today). There, he participated fully in the program arranged for Me. Then on the last day, around midnight, between 12 AM and 1 AM, he left for America as he was invited to attend a program.

There, he completed his work and took care of everything that needed attention. But when it was time to return, he was not himself and not feeling well. In addition, he had no acquaintances or friends with him at that time.

Swami's nature concerns the heart and not external objects. But, when given with love, even a material object provides a heart-to-heart connection.

When he reached the airport, he noticed that his ticket and passport were missing. Without a ticket, it is impossible to return from America to India. He was so ill that he was not aware of his own body. He did not even know where he was. No matter where he searched, he could not find his passport or ticket. At that time, the ring he was wearing (given by Swami) came to Me in a flash. Within a moment, an airport officer came to him and said that it did not matter if Mr. Bhagavantam did not have a ticket; he would take care of it. The officer seated Mr. Bhagavantam on the flight. Mr. Bhagavantam himself did not even remember how he returned to India.

Another small example to illustrate this is the case of Mr. S.N. Singh, a devotee from London. Recently, he visited Me to attend the summer classes. When I gave him a ring, he said, "Swami, forgive me, I have never put on a ring in my life. But I firmly entreated him, saying that he should wear the ring I had given him. He said, "It is all Swami's grace, and from this day, I will certainly wear it," and he wore it. He then



“

*Our heart-to-heart connection, which is the intimate divine relationship, can never end. It is inseparable.*

returned to London. At the time of placing the ring on his finger, I told him, “If any trouble befalls you, it will befall Me but not you.”

People drive cars very fast in London. One day he had a major car accident in London, a big car crashed directly into his car. As this happened, the car that caused the accident, and the car he sat in, flipped over thrice and fell off the road. The engine fell in one place, the body of the car was thrown to another place, and the tires landed somewhere else. He does not remember how he was ejected from the car, but miraculously, he found himself comfortably seated on the road.

As he sat there waiting to see if he could get a ride in a car passing by, he saw that the picture in the ring I gave him was all shattered into small pieces. By the time he reached his home in London, My telegram had arrived at his home. It takes about seven to ten minutes for the telegram to even reach Whitefield from Brindavan [a distance of a few kilometers]. But by the time he reached his home, within five minutes after the accident, a telegram from India was already awaiting him at home. The telegram said, “**Be happy; I am with you.** Do not worry about the accident.” He looked at it incredulously. What-

ever his thoughts were, he immediately took a flight and arrived in India to see Me.

The reason why I am telling these things to you, young people, is that **Swami’s nature concerns the heart and not external objects. But, when given with love, even a material object provides a heart-to-heart connection.** Such experiences are happening around the world, not one or two, but countless, like the hairs on My head.

### **The Divine Father and Mother**

The purpose for which I have come is not to do trivial work. My future work will be of even greater magnitude. I have come to do such work and give it to you in order to bring you joy. I will not be subject to any control from anyone, nor will I be afraid of intimidation. So, remember this truth and participate with steadfastness in all these great works that will be done in the future. **You should take part in Sai work, redeem your lives, and make the whole of India an embodiment of *dharma* again.** I hope you strive to achieve this goal.

**Everything depends on truth—truth cannot be subjugated by anyone.** Anyone can subjugate a falsehood, but this form (of Mine) is the embodiment of truth. It is Sathya Sai because it verily rests on the truth. The word ‘Sai Baba’ is composed of the syllables ‘Sa,’ ‘Aa,’ and ‘Yi.’ The word

'Sa' stands for divine, and 'Aayi' denotes *Aaayi*, *Maayi*, and *Taayi*, all of which means mother. 'Baba' means father. Thus, the name Sai Baba means divine mother and father. **The words 'Sai Baba' and 'Sambashiva' both mean the same thing.** 'Sa', 'Amba', 'Shiva': 'Amba' means mother, 'Shiva' means father. 'Sa,' 'Amba,' 'Shiva,' and 'Sa,' 'Ai,' and 'Baba' are both one and the same. Because both aspects of mother and father exist in the name, it is referred to as the form of Shiva-Shakti. It is like a mother who caresses, listens, and nurtures the child and gives it happiness, providing many comforts. It is also like a father who helps the child to improve by chastising, condemning, and threatening him. In a worldly sense, the mother and the father may punish their children sometimes because of selfishness, but **this 'divine Mother and Father' who is selfless punishes solely with the intention of taking you to a higher level, sanctifying you, and enabling you to deserve divinity.** You should not think of it as punishment. You must believe and trust that it is a form of blessed protection.

If a mother has two sons, she will serve all kinds of food to the healthy son. But for the son who has a stomach problem or ailment like jaundice, she will refuse to give whatever food he asks for. And she will even give him bitter medicine to get better.

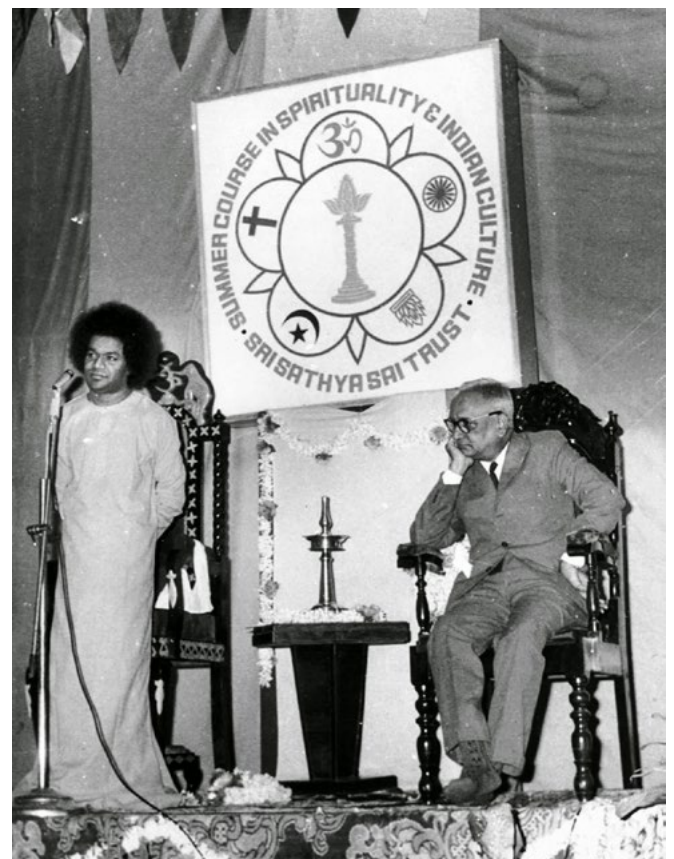
Giving sweets to one son and a bitter item to another does not mean the mother is showing partiality. It is not because the mother likes one more than the other. The mother's intention and aim is only to cure the child's disease by giving bitter medicine. It is not a punishment inflicted out of dislike or grudge.

I take those who have good virtues very close to Me and will speak to such people endearingly in many ways. For the ones

with vices, I will condemn, scold, shout, and give punishment in many ways. You may think that Swami likes the other person and doesn't like me, but I am only giving you medicines that will cure your disease(s).

### Every Atheist is A Theist

There are two types of people: theists and atheists. Theists readily accept divinity. But, if you say the name 'divinity' to atheists, they walk away. Regarding this behavior, we need to understand the reason why atheists distance themselves from and dislike hearing the name of God. They distance themselves from divinity not because they dislike the divine but because it is a kind of disease. For example, during weddings and other celebrations, as well as this summer course classes, we serve laddu (Indian sweet) to the guests. While serving, we find that one or two might refuse saying 'no' and do not accept it. The reason is not that they do not like sweet laddu, but because they are diabetic. The ones



who say 'no' to God are like the diabetic patients. That is why we should not say that they are atheists. We need to recognize that they have some kind of disease. It is also good to know that the patient will indeed accept the sweet after he is cured of the disease of diabetes.

Another example—when we are afflicted with malarial fever, even if we eat a sweet laddu, it tastes bitter. Is there something wrong with the sweet? No, no! It is the effect of the fever on our tongue. As soon as the fever subsides, the laddu tastes sweet again. So, we should avoid getting the disease and not refuse the sweet.

In my view, in this entire world, there is no such person as an atheist. He is not able to experience divinity, as I noted above, because he has selfish desires like establishing a new organization or hoping for a leadership position. However, he has a desire for the divine in his heart. It is correct to say that an atheist is someone who does not love himself. But there is no one in the world who does not love himself. "I don't believe in God, but I have Self-confidence," he claims. But who does he think the Self is? He says, "I am, I am," but who is he? He is God himself. He says, "This is my body, my mind, my intellect, my senses, and my intuition or inner being. But who am I?" So, you should realize, **"This is my body, but I am not the body."** Hence, the mind, intellect, senses, and intuition or inner being are all properties. And the 'I' is the owner. So, **Self-confidence is faith in God**—and so, all of them are theists, not atheists.

### ***Prajnanam* Brahma**

The divinity in the form of Atma shines in everyone. In the form of *prajnanam* (awareness or divine wisdom), it makes one see, hear, talk, and do all activities. It is in this context it is said *prajnanam* is Brahman. **As Brahman pervades all beings in the form of *prajnanam*, to say that one is an atheist is meaningless.**

Students, embodiments of divine Atma, today I spoke at length and caused you much strain. Even though my discourse ended today, **our heart-to-heart connection, which is the intimate divine relationship, can never end. It is inseparable.** From tomorrow, you return to your own places. That is why, today, I took more time to convey to you some aspects of Sai that many people wanted to know in more understandable terms. However, **no one can recognize or understand My divinity.** However, I thought it would be better to reveal some aspects of My divinity to you. So, I have shared these truths with you.

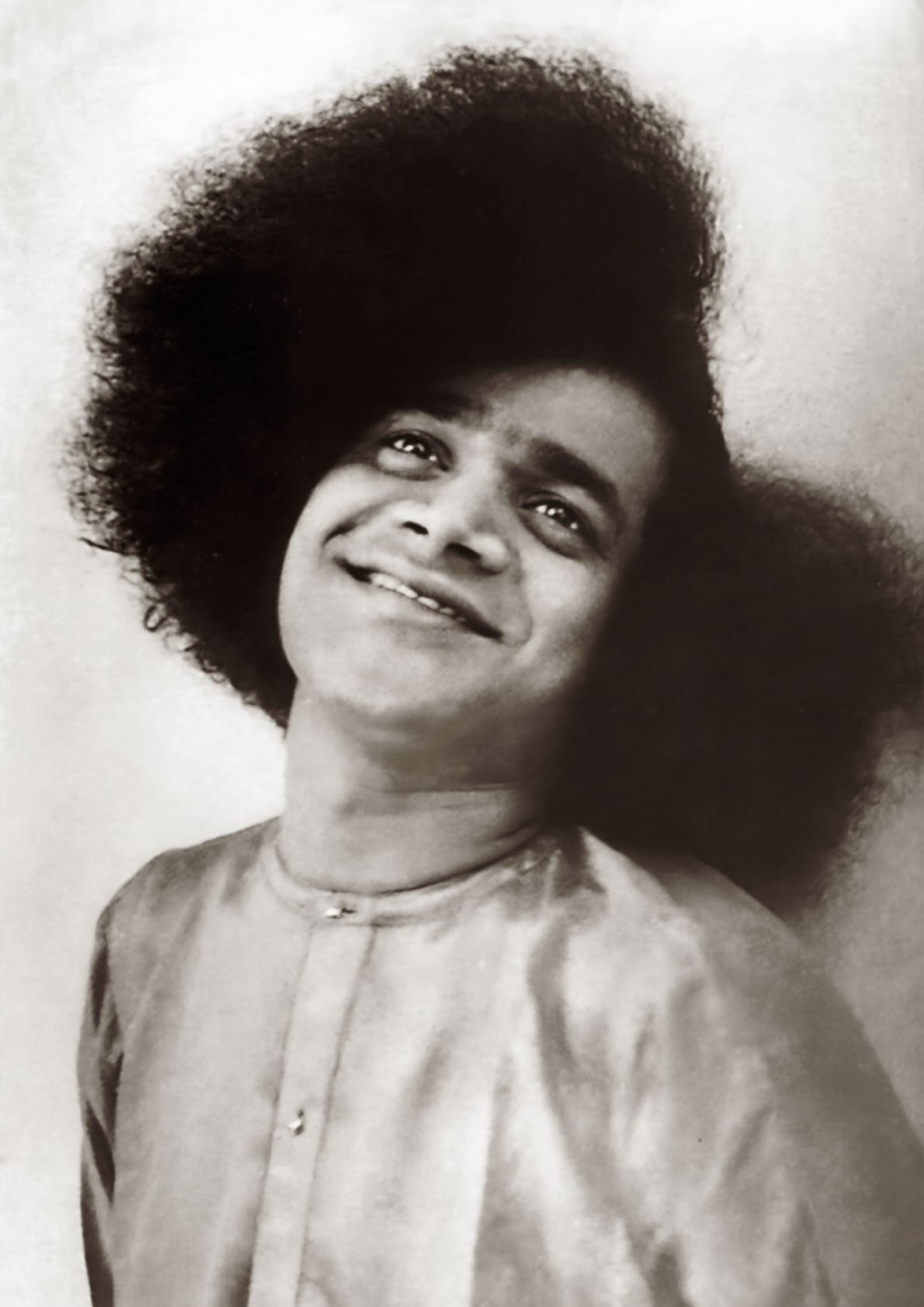
Therefore, recognize this truth and develop in your heart the sacredness of the divine principles. **Be happy and be one with the divine (*Paramatma*), experience the sweet bliss of the union with divinity, and sanctify your lives.**

Don't just fill your head with scholarship; instead, fill your heart with love. You should gradually fill your heart with the philosophy imparted by these sacred teachings. I hope that you will try to lead lives based on feelings of unity in your hearts.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba  
32nd Divine Discourse of Summer Showers,  
May 1974







# Significance of **BUDDHA POORNIMA**

Embodiments of love! Today, we are celebrating Buddha Poornima or Buddha Jayanthi. What does Poornima (full moon) signify? It signifies wholeness. **When the mind is filled with love, it achieves fullness.** As long as the mind is filled with darkness (evil thoughts), there is no meaning in celebrating Buddha Poornima. Get rid of this darkness. Without the light of love in the heart, what use is there in having illuminations outside? Light the lamp of the divine in your mind. Banish hatred and envy from your hearts. **Man is under the influence of two 'planets': attachment and hatred. To escape from their grip, the only way is to cultivate love.**

## Cultivate these Ideals

Buddha declared that everyone should cultivate **samyak-drishti** (pure vision) at the outset. It is only when man has a pure vision that he can get rid of impurities in

the body, speech, and mind. It is this purity that can protect man from the invasion of impurities through the eyes and the ears. Hence, the first requirement for every man is **samyak-drishti**.

The second quality that is needed is **samyak-sankalpa** (pure thoughts). Everyone should have pure thoughts. Only the person who has developed purity in vision can have purity in thoughts.

The third requirement for every man, along with purity in vision and thought, is **samyak-karma** (pure deeds). Everyone should do pure deeds. Through pure deeds, man can recognize his human essence. Man is not merely an embodied being. By his capacity for developing good vision, entertaining good thoughts, and performing good deeds, he has the power to transform humanness into divinity.

A fourth requirement for man is **samyak-shruthi** (listening to sacred words). When one listens to unsacred words, he can only have unsacred thoughts.

The fifth quality prescribed by Buddha is **samyak-jeevanam** (living a pure life). What is meant by “living?” It is not leading a worldly life attached to worldly pursuits. True living means making one’s life meaningful by ideal actions. Man’s life must be governed by idealism in action.

Next, Buddha declared that everyone should aim at **samyak-sadhana** (Achievement of the highest good). *Sadhana* means the elimination of evil tendencies in man and acquiring good and sacred qualities. True *sadhana* is the eradication of all evils in man. The study of sacred texts, meditation, and penance do not constitute the whole of *sadhana* (spiritual exercise). To remove all the impurities in the mind is real *sadhana*.

After this comes what Buddha called **samyak-samadhi** or Nirvana (true realization or liberation). What is meant by *samadhi*? It means treating pleasure

and pain, gain and loss alike; *sama-dhi* (equal-mindedness) is “*samadhi*.”

**To look upon light and darkness, pleasure and pain, profit and loss, fame and censure with an equal mind is *samadhi*.**

Buddha termed this equal-mindedness as Nirvana. It is the recognition of the sacredness of the qualities of all the senses in man that constitutes real humanness.

One must keep the tongue pure. This was referred to as **samyak-vak** (purity in speech). The tongue has to be sanctified by refraining from falsehood, slander, and abusive speech.

Buddha emphasized seeing good, thinking good, speaking good, and doing good. Seeing all sorts of things is not good for anyone. The eye should be used for seeing only what is pure, what is holy, and what is edifying.

### True Meaning of the Buddhist Prayer

The Buddhist prayer must be properly understood. When the Buddhists say:

*“Buddham sharanam gachchami,  
Dhammam sharanam gachchami,  
Sangham sharanam gachchami,”*

the real meaning of the prayer is:

One must divert the *buddhi* (mind) towards *dharma* (right conduct), and the right conduct should aim at serving society. When this is done, society gets purified.

It is not enough to read the lives of avatars and messiahs. Their teachings should be put into practice as much as possible. People must gradually outgrow their material attachments and develop divine love.

Excerpts from Divine Discourse given on Buddha Poonima, May 15, 1997

*Light the lamp of the divine in your mind. Banish hatred and envy from your hearts.*



# SATHYA SAI BABA

*Never*

# DISAPPOINTS

**IT WAS THE 25TH OF DECEMBER, 1971.**

The taxi lumbered along the streets of Madras (Chennai today). It was a quiet residential neighborhood with large houses surrounded by high compound walls. Occasionally, we would pass a cow or two grazing alongside the road. Inside the taxi, there was an electric air of excitement. We were going to see Sathya Sai Baba.

Michelle Kaplowitz, an ardent devotee of Swami from the USA, was prodding the driver along as she looked keenly out the window, trying to recognize the house Swami was visiting. She had been there the year before, so she was confident she could find it. I was anxious. I was to fly back to the USA at 6 PM, and this would be my last chance to get the coveted interview I desperately wanted.



# *He looked at all of us and then began to tell us about how He had just resurrected Walter Cowan from the dead that morning.*

Five years had passed since my first experience with LSD (a potent psychedelic drug) in San Francisco, and four of those years were spent in India, with visits to Nepal and Sri Lanka. **The last two years were spent with Sathya Sai Baba, who I now believe to be God incarnated on earth.**

## **Finding Sai Baba**

My mind raced along. I thought of the many wonderful experiences I had had with Sai Baba during the past two years. He was everything to me: my mother, father, Guru, guide, confidant, and friend. I was going back to the USA after nearly four years in India. I closed my eyes for a minute and prayed for Sai Baba to give me a talisman to “protect me in America.” Suddenly, Michelle cried out, “There it is! That’s the house.” Everyone in the taxi became excited. My heart started fluttering, and I took a deep breath. We got out of the taxi and went onto the verandah

of the house. Several Indian people were waiting there.

As if out of nowhere, without warning, Sai Baba appeared. He moved gracefully and swiftly across the verandah toward us. He greeted Michelle with a big, loving smile. “How are you, Sir?” He asked her as she melted away. Then He turned toward me with a more serious look and said, “I’m going to the hospital to see Walter Cowan. I’ll be back in one hour. You wait here.” He had told me the very same thing early in the morning and then disappeared, only to turn up at this house in the late afternoon. It took skilled detective work, a sixth sense, and a keen memory on the part of Michelle to find Him. In those days, she always found out where Sai Baba was going and when. Even if nobody else knew His whereabouts, she would find Him. **It was a gift He gave her because of her intense love and devotion toward Him.**



## The Divine Dance

It was a very long hour, to say the least, but this time He did return. After about twenty minutes, He called all the “foreigners” into a separate room. We gathered in a semicircle around Him. **He looked at all of us and then began to tell us about how He had just resurrected Walter Cowan from the dead that morning.** After He finished His narration, Leela, a dear friend and travel companion of mine, spoke up.

“Swami,” she said, her voice choking, “my mother had her leg amputated due to diabetes.” “Yes, Yes, I know,” was Sai Baba’s gentle, comforting reply. Then He looked at her arm. It had been injured due to an accident at her birth. “Now,” Sai Baba began in a mischievous tone, “*she has one leg, you have one arm, you can do a dance.*” Leela, not knowing whether to laugh or cry, said, “But Swami, I have you.”

“Yes,” He replied, “*you can use my arms and legs, I’m always ready.*” He waved his hand and materialized a small silver coin out of nowhere. “*Here, this is for your mother,*” He said as He handed it to Leela.

## Interview—Inner View

Then He turned and looked at me. I had watched Him make the coin for Leela’s mother with a tinge of jealousy. “*You have dirty thoughts and doubts,*” He said to me, with a look that combined disapproval, love, and compassion. He moved His hand in a circular motion, and in a flash, a small silver coin materialized. He walked over to me and put it in my shirt pocket. “*Carry this with you in America,*” He said lovingly as He patted my chest.

He made some remarks and responded to questions from others assembled in the room. Then, He called us individually to

a smaller room for the private interviews. Finally, it was my turn. I stood face to face, all alone with Him at last. “*You thought Swamiji was going to disappoint you,*” He said lovingly. “***But I never disappoint.***”

I discussed with Swami about my relationship with my parents. I asked Him if my parents would ever come to Him. His reply was, “*Your parents don’t know anything about Swamiji. You go tell them something and see. Between you and your father, no connection. Between mother and son, there is only some natural connection.*” He patted me lovingly on the head and added, “*Don’t do marriage; lead a free, unattached life.*” It was true I had never really connected with my father.



Then, I talked to Swami about my visa problem and my spiritual practices. He patted me on the head and said, “Don’t worry, I’m giving some help.” He told me regarding my visa, “When you come back, register in Anantapur. They’re all my devotees now. If you always give my address, you’ll never have any difficulties.”

“But Swami,” I said, “If I give your address, they’ll want a letter from You...”


“I’ll give.” was His reply.

“But last time I asked You, You said ‘No,’” I reminded Him. He held both my hands and reassuringly said, “I’ll give. I’ll give.”

I bent down to the floor and kissed His feet. He helped me get up and gently but swiftly

led me to the outer room where the others were waiting. It’s hard to describe how I felt. **It was as if I had been opened and filled with love from head to toe.**

In the taxi on the way back to the hotel, I took the small silver coin out of my pocket. On one side, it had an image of Shirdi Sai Baba. On the reverse side was a hand in the position of blessing or protection. Around the hand was inscribed the message, “**Why fear when I am here**” in Tamil. (Tamil and Telugu are two of the languages spoken in South India.) It was the talisman I had prayed for in the taxi on the way there!

Mr. Howard Levin   
USA

### *Excerpted from the book “Heart to Heart” (1997)*



*Mr. Howard Levin was an interior designer in New York and San Francisco who took on the life of a hippie, hitchhiking his way to India, where he met Sai Baba. He is one of the original “Sai Hippies,” a group of young people who visited the ashram and had the privilege of spending precious time with Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the 1970s. On the second day after meeting Him at Whitefield, Bangalore, Swami invited him to stay at His residence. He was also involved in setting up the planetarium at Puttaparthi. Mr. Levin is the author of two books on Sri Sathya Sai Baba: “Heart to Heart” and “Good Chances.” He has been the manager at the Feathered Pipe Ranch in Montana, USA, for more than 20 years.*

Once I say that you are Mine, I will never forsake you. You may forget Me, but I will never forget you. You may develop hatred toward Me, but I do not have any hatred toward you. In this world, I have no enemies, and I have no dislike toward anybody. I always uphold My promise. I always go forward to protect; never do I retract

–Sri Sathya Sai Baba  
September 29, 1998

## ONCE IN SAI ORGANIZATION, ALWAYS IN SAI ORGANIZATION

**FOR OVER 22 YEARS, TILL 2013, THERE WAS A SRI SATHYA SAI CENTER IN FORT WALTON BEACH, Florida,** and it was in my home for the last 15 years of that period. Over those years, I received valuable guidance from 3Bs of the Sai Organization—Ms. Bettina Biggart, Ms. Bea Flaig, and Ms. Berniece Mead, who trained me in Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) and the Center officers' roles, including how best to serve as a Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) teacher. The Center verily became my heart *chakra*—it was the vibrant hub from which I derived energy, spiritual growth, and love. **I felt Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba with us always, giving us tangible, miraculous, loving reminders of His presence.**

Over time, the children attending SSE grew up and left the Center. Our service program, 'Love for Lunch,' which delivered food to the elderly, ended when its last recipients either passed away or were cared for by other shelters. So, the Sai Center at our home could no longer continue there. To meet with other devo-

tees and stay involved with joint service projects, I migrated to the Pensacola Sai Center in Florida. Even as things seemed to stabilize there, COVID-19 pandemic broke out, and we stopped meeting at the Pensacola Sai Center. After that came the challenge of a newly created organization, the 'Global Council,' which distracted and divided the group. The new group leader left, our service projects ended, and the last of our members left. Sadly, our Sai Center was no more!

### **Sai's Center Has Sai's Love as its Center**

Then Baba revealed what He had already willed—**once a Sai Center, it is always Sai's Center.** When I thought that my home had ceased to be a Sai Center, it actually transformed into an 'assisted living facility' for my mother-in-law. We discovered her lifelong dependency on prescription painkillers and nursed her through detoxification for as long as possible. Finally, after a year and a half of loving care, we came to accept that she required care at a professional nursing home.



After fulfilling that responsibility, our home now became a refuge and safe house for our daughter and two grandsons. Our daughter had been traumatized through her divorce from an abusive, cocaine-addicted husband. Her recovery took four years. Then, just as our home grew very quiet, our financial difficulties began. We struggled for a couple of years, and finally, we lost the house to the bank, just like four of our neighbors. So, we finally moved on.

**Yet, Baba was with us. Through all the beginnings and endings, through the transitions and transformations, He has been there all along.** But still, once you had a Center in your home, how do you fill the void when it's gone? And how do you continue to serve your community without a Center, without a connection, when you seem to be isolated?

Faith is the key. We must remember we are not alone. **Baba is all that matters.** We start with small service projects, like helping a neighbor, donating blood, or making arts and crafts to drop off at a nursing home. We serve individually or work with other service providers. Sri Sathya Sai Baba will bring the opportunities to us, responding to our genuine efforts and faith in Him.

### Continued Opportunities, Continued Blessings

One day, my husband (who had been a Recreation Manager, teacher, and avid

golfer) came home and joyfully announced that he was being considered for a new golf program called 'First Tee,' which incorporated core values and character training in children's golf lessons.

"Guess what? This is the closest I can get to teaching Baba's universal human values in a mainstream curriculum! Plus, I get to teach kids golf!" he exclaimed. He would be teaching nine core values - honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, responsibility, perseverance, courtesy, and judgment – each one incorporated into a weekly lesson.

In the First Tee program, elitism was eliminated from playing golf. It would not be for rich kids alone anymore but open to all children, no matter if they could afford the lessons or not. The cost would be on a sliding scale. If the kids came from low-income households and qualified for a reduced rate or free lunches at school, then the lessons were offered at a reduced rate or for free! If the parents had more than one child in the class, the price was reduced. None of the parents would have to buy golf equipment because the kids would be playing with clubs, bags, and balls from the golf club. That way, if the kids didn't like the sport, they just returned the equipment to be used by the next kid who needed it.

This is how Swami brought a tailor-made job directly to my husband. It was an answer to





his prayers. Little did I know it would turn out to be a perfect fit for me as well, like an SSE class that had gone mainstream.

From 2013-2021, my husband served as the First Tee head-coach in our county in Florida, USA, recruiting three other coaches as the program expanded to seven golf courses. I worked by his side as a volunteer, helping teach kids between 5 and 16 years old. Over the last 10 years, 3,500 to 4,000 kids have completed the program in our county.

My husband always told the children, "In every other sport, you have a judge, a referee, an umpire, or an official to police your behavior. But in golf, you are your own judge. So it's imperative that you have good character and honesty. It is how you behave when you think no one else is watching that counts. You must count your strokes and tell the truth if you make an error."

"Your life skills are even more important than your golf skills because, face it, only a few talented kids will make it onto the pro tour (professional golf tournament). But the majority of you will go on to be successful citizens who enjoy playing golf. It enables you to play the game with your grandparents, your parents, or your bosses. What really matters is that you have fun."

### **Each One of Us is His Sai Center, and We Should Grow**

My husband suffered a stroke, developed Parkinson's disease, and dementia. Hence, he is unable to play or teach golf, and I have been promoted to be an Assistant Coach one day a week in order to help the program continue.

Remembering how Swami instructed Berniece Mead that all SSE children were her children, we believe this is Swami's program. We have treated the First Tee kids as our very own grandchildren. We've taught some children from when they were six years old until they graduated high school.



The most satisfying moments have been when parents have shared that playing golf brought their children focus, calmness, and good behavior at home, unlike some other sports, which seem to foster aggression or cause injury. We've had some special kids with Down Syndrome or Autism who came to us to learn how to behave so they could transition into the mainstream environment.

One boy, who initially could not bear to be touched, gradually allowed my husband to put his arm around his shoulder while shaking his hand for the group photo, and he received my hug with a smile. Once, a child who had lost an arm came to us. We played Zoo golf (imitating different animals). We acted like elephants, putting (golf stroke) with one hand, using it to imitate a trunk, like bats walking blindfolded, and like flamingoes limping on one leg. We all forgot the boy had only one arm. With a few coaching tips on balance and swing, he actually won a putting competition!

We've also had a few kids who became great golfers, going on to play at renowned Pebble Beach and John Deere tournaments, while some have received scholarships. Many joined their high school or college golf teams. The fulfillment is indescribable.

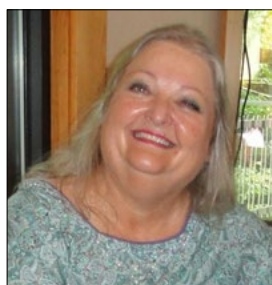
Last but not least, the entire process has made me let go of my personal and political prejudices. I realized that it was all Swami's work. Just like the Beatles' song, 'Hey, Jude'



says, "Take a sad song and make it better," can our involvement make the activity we are involved in better? That's what Swami did. He made golf better by removing its impurities: elitism, racism, expense, and waste. He made us better people, having coached the children in core values, just as He had taught me strictly as an SSE teacher.

So, if you find yourself without a nearby 'Sai Center,' don't worry, be happy. You can bloom where you are planted and grow into a Sai Center yourself. Life is full of beginnings, endings, transitions, and transformations, and you don't know sometimes how things will turn out. **Just have faith. Swami will show you the need, bring you the opportunity, and fulfill the desires of your heart, making it your true Sai's Center!**

Ms. Jorja Kelley   
USA



*Ms. Jorja Kelley worked at the Kansas State University, Physics Department and also as a defense contractor at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. She was on the Joint Electromagnetic Interference (JEMI) Joint Test Force, building classified databases. She is certified as an Industrial Defense Facility Security Officer. She met Ms. Somalatha Calnaido in 1987, who led her to Swami, by sharing with her the darshan video, "The Message of Love," by Cosby Powell. When she heard Cosby read Swami's quote, "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, and there is only one God, and He is omnipresent," she realized that Sri Sathya Sai Baba was her God, her Father, and her Godfather. Swami changed her career to that of a professional writer and also led her to write SSSIO service articles since 1992.*

# *Perfect Freedom*

Freedom is independence from externals. One who is in need of the help of another person, thing or condition is a slave there-of. Perfect freedom is not given to any man on earth, because the very meaning of mortal life is relationship with and dependence on another. The lesser the number of wants, the greater is the freedom. Hence, perfect freedom is absolute desirelessness.

*Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

20. 10. 79



## Kingdom of Sathya Sai

*Guardian: Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Freedom is independence from externals. One who is in need of the help of another person, thing or condition is a slave thereof. Perfect freedom is not given to any man on earth, because the very meaning of mortal life is relationship with and dependence on another. The lesser the number of wants, the greater is the freedom. Hence, perfect freedom is absolute desirelessness.

*Sri Sathya Sai Baba  
20.10.79*

# LOVE IN ACTION



## MALAYSIA

### The Gift of Fresh Food and Hope

The Pudu Central Market and the Samaritan Hope Home in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, transform into centers of selfless service every second Thursday of the month. A set of volunteers from the SSSIO make the day special for themselves and dozens of homeless people by distributing fresh, nourishing, and tasty vegetarian meals. On Thursday, which Swami Himself set aside as His special day, the volunteers cook, deliver, and serve the food to at least a hundred people. **The joy and gratitude of these homeless and underprivileged people fill the volunteers with profound happiness and gratitude.**



As one volunteer put it, “If there is one thing homeless people need, it is hope. Food to feed their stomach can give them both hope and strength. Let us use our hands to serve with compassion and use our hearts to love.”



## NEW ZEALAND

### A New Zeal to Create Memories for Children with Special Needs

It takes a village to raise a child and a special village to raise a special child! It was indeed a special day of community bonding and harmony in February 2024 as 35 SSSIO members and 20 other volunteers from the Kaipatiki Community Trust and the local Sikh and Muslim communities came together to create a ‘Fun Day’ for children with special needs at Marlborough Park, Glenfield, New Zealand.

The event aimed to create a memorable experience for the children and promote a sense of connection and support. Participants enjoyed interactive games, arts and crafts activities, musical performances, face painting, and a talent show. **The program’s interactive nature allowed the children to socialize, express**



**themselves creatively, and build confidence in a supportive environment.** The event had a positive impact on the children, providing a day of fun, friendship, and empowerment.

Around 350 people attended the event, including 58 children with special needs, caretakers, volunteers, and community members. The overwhelming response of love for the event has inspired the SSSIO to view this as Swami’s message to continue organizing similar events to further serve and uplift the communities with individuals having special challenges.



## SURINAME

### Catching Them Young with Values

On December 17, 2023, SSE students from the Sri Sathya Sai Center Sonjastraat in Suriname gifted Sai Christmas Hampers to families in Magenta, a rural area, to wish them Merry Christmas. **The joy and happiness of the kids, parents, and elders were a testament to Sathya Sai's love.** Food hampers were also distributed, and the SSE students expressed gratitude to Swami for teaching them and allowing them to share the happiness acquired through SSE classes.



## USA

### Service to Nature is Service to God

When Clarke Beach Park in Mercer Island, Washington, USA, was overrun by invasive plant species like ivy, native trees were getting choked due to the destruction of their natural habitat. Led by SSE teachers, the Sri Sathya Sai Center of Lake Washington partnered with the local Parks Department to remove the weeds and restore the park. Since June 2023, 40 volunteers, adults, and children have been gathering every month to remove thorny ivy from shrubs and trees.

Going forward, the children plan to grow native tree saplings at home and plant them in the restored areas of the park over the year. With a hands-on approach, the project teaches children about the intricate connection between *vyashti* (individual), *samashti* (society), *srishti*



(nature), and *parameshti* (God). The children have also taken up ecological responsibility, reducing single-use plastics, trash, and pollution.

**The Mercer Island Parks Department ranger is impressed with the project, stating that it is building a deep love for nature, which is crucial for the long-term health of the planet.**

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

# SSSIO ZONE 9



ANGOLA • BENIN • BOTSWANA • CAMEROON • CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE • CONGO DR • ETHIOPIA • GABON  
GHANA • IRAN • IVORY COAST • **KENYA** • MADAGASCAR • MALAWI • MAURITIUS • NIGERIA • RWANDA  
SOUTH AFRICA • TANZANIA • TOGO • UGANDA • ZAMBIA • ZIMBABWE

## KENYA

## 1968



Bhagawan's 1968 Visit to East Africa

In June and July, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba made His first and only visit out of India to East Africa, where He visited Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. He delivered divine discourses, including a landmark discourse on July 4th in Nairobi.

Sathya Sai Center in Nairobi was established at Patel Prarthana Mandir at Park Road. Regular weekly bhajans and various service activities—food distribution, medical camps, hospital visits, adoption of children's homes, etc. were initiated.

## 1989

Members of the Sai Center, along with family members, visited Prasanthi Nilayam and invited Swami to inaugurate the EHV Conference scheduled for August 1989. Swami blessed the delegates, saying that He was always in their hearts, and added, *"A beautiful Center will be built in Kenya. Make the Center big, and I shall come."*

Sathya Sai African EHV Conference was held at Kenyatta International Conference Centre, Nairobi.

## 1992

Sathya Sai Center building was constructed at the Waiyaki Way–Musa Gitau Road junction in stages.

## 1997

A replica of the Sarva Dharma Sthupa was built at the Nairobi Center.

A makeshift shelter home was established to house destitute children and provide education, food, and shelter.



Sarva Dharma Sthupa at the Nairobi Center



**1998**

Members of the Study Circle Group from Nairobi Sai Centre were granted an interview by Swami, where He materialized a lingam for the Center. He advised that there was no need for any mantra, tantra, or ritualistic worship. He advised that the lingam be bathed in a few spoonfuls of water and that the *teertham* (sanctified water) be given to the sick to improve their health.

Land was acquired to initiate a permanent structure for Sathya Sai School, Uthiru.

**1999**

A new building was constructed for the Sai Center in Nairobi after receiving Swami's blessings.

**2000**

Sathya Sai School at Uthiru started with the construction of a new school building. The curriculum included Sathya Sai Education in Human Values.

**2001**

Swami's 76th Birthday was celebrated in the newly completed Sai Centre building, with prayers to Bhagwan to visit Kenya and inaugurate the "Sundar Center."

The Sathya Sai School at Kisaju was founded with blessings from Swami. It started in January with 32 students in Grades 1 and 2.

**2004**

SSSIO Kenya organized a week-long medical camp at Mariakani District, 70 km from Mombasa, with the participation of healthcare professionals and volunteers from SSSIO UK. Over 6,500 patients received free consultations, eye examinations, and medicines.



Lingam materialized by Swami



Nairobi Sai Centre



Sathya Sai School at Kisaju

**2005**

As an offering of love for His 80th Birthday, devotees in Kenya initiated a preventive healthcare project—Sainet, for Malaria control on a national basis. Sai devotees distributed 50,000 insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets in Kenya, where Malaria was prevalent, thus reducing Malaria cases in highly prevalent areas.

## 2007

The Sathya Sai School at Kisaju became a full-fledged primary school with Grades 1 to 8, and the first batch of Grade 8 students appeared for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education national examinations.

Sathya Sai School (Uthiru) Trust was registered to take care of all matters pertaining to the school.



Sathya Sai School, Kisaju

## 2012

A new auditorium was inaugurated at the Sathya Sai School in Kisaju.



SSEHV Training, Kisaju

## 2013

An in-house SSEHV Induction Course for teachers was started at the Sathya Sai School in Kisaju.

## 2017

The SSSIO of Kenya embarked on an ambitious drive to plant 10,000 trees within a year.

The Sathya Sai School in Uthiru was accredited by the SSSWF Education Committee, a landmark achievement in complying with the SSSIO guidelines in education.



Planting of 10,000 trees

## 2018

Commemorating the golden jubilee of Swami's visit to Africa, a secondary school was started at Kisaju with Form 1 and Form 2. The school had state-of-the-art facilities such as smartboards in all classrooms, modern labs, music rooms, a multipurpose auditorium, and sports infrastructure.

The Golden Jubilee of Swami's visit to East Africa was celebrated in Nairobi with the participation of Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman of SSSIO, and other SSSIO senior officers.

Volunteers from the Sathya Sai Centre in Nairobi organized a medical camp for the needy to commemorate Sri Sathya Sai Baba's 93rd Birthday.

SSSIO Kenya completed the planting of 10,000 trees for the year, fulfilling the pledge of 2017.



93rd Birthday Medical Camp

## 2020

As part of the SSSIO Community Adoption initiative, Sai volunteers in Kenya adopted the Gichagi village, located in the Ngong region of Kajiado County. In addition, SSSIO Kenya provided secondary education and food to the children of the North Laikipia village. It also launched SSEHV classes in the Kangemi, Kawagware, and Kibera villages.

SSSIO Kenya, distributed food to help 200 women in Machakos County, Kenya for one month. These women had been facing hardships after losing their daily wages due to the effect of COVID-19. SSSIO also distributed 200 white canes to 200 visually impaired people in Machakos county, Near Nairobi.

25,000 kgs of food was distributed to 2,000 families in Mombasa, saving many of them from COVID-related difficulties.



Gichagi village



Food Distribution, Mombasa

## 2022

SSSIO of Kenya undertook massive tree planting as part of the SAI-100 initiative, planting more than 169,000 trees with love and dedication.

SSSIO volunteers and young adults distributed food hampers, hygiene kits, and health kits to needy women on the premises of the Sathya Sai School at Kisaju.

During November 2022, SSSIO volunteers, in collaboration with the Red Cross, distributed more than 12,500 kg of food and supplies in the Sosoma and Nuu regions of Mwingi, which were hit with the worst and longest drought in the last 40 years.



Sai-100 Medical Camp

## 2024

As part of the SAI-100 initiative, the SSSIO conducted a huge international medical camp in East Africa. For eight days, around 64 healthcare professionals and volunteers provided loving services in six locations across three countries: Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. A total of 5,593 patients benefited from over 12,000 consultations.





Swami holding Shivamala close on stage.

## In Swami, I Trust

*“Take one step towards me, I shall take a hundred towards you.”*

–Sri Sathya Sai Baba

### **I WAS BLESSED TO BE NAMED BY SWAMI.**

In Puttaparthi, during a *darshan*, my mother requested Swami to name me.

*“What did I name your other daughter?”* Swami asked.

*“Swami, Premamala...”*

*“She is Shivamala,”* Swami responded.

The name means ‘garland adorning Shiva’s neck,’ which is a snake! Neelamma, a good friend of my mother who was with her when Swami blessed me with the name, could not contain herself. When she got another opportunity later, she asked Swami, *“What is the meaning of this name, O Lord? What does Shivamala mean?”*

Swami quickly replied, *“Shiva stands for auspiciousness. Mala stands for modernity. Shivamala is one who is auspicious in the modern world.”*

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**“When I needed Him the most and was torn between life’s choices, He was always there to guide me to the right path.”**

### **Beginnings in Balvikas**

At home, Premamala got shortened to ‘Prema’ and ‘Shivamala’ to ‘Shi-ma’ and eventually evolved to ‘Seema,’ the name by which everyone addresses me. I was very young then and readily accepted being called Seema, though all my official documents showed the legal name Shivamala, as blessed by our beloved Swami.

We were living in Chennai when my sister and I got the chance to participate in a *Balvikas* (Sai Spiritual Education) play on the Ramayana, which would be offered to Swami in Brindavan during the Summer Course. Since I was very young, I was given the role of Sita’s companion, where I had no lines, and all I had to do was walk with her. After the play, Swami came up on stage. We had been instructed to return to the stage at the end of the play. I heard the *Arati* begin and ran onto the stage. To my horror, I found myself standing right in front of Swami, facing Him with my back toward the audience.

Swami lovingly took my right wrist and pulled me close toward Him. He put His arm around me and made me stay by His side for the rest of the *Arati*. I felt so comforted and calmed by the divine

mother. With Swami on the stage that day, I was beaming with joy, all smiles! Today, **I know that even on life’s stage, He is always by my ‘s(a)ide.’ He is my eternal companion.**

### **Every ‘Mistake’ is a Lesson**

By the time I grew up to be a teenager, we were living in Delhi, and my Hindi had vastly improved. I understood that ‘Seema’ meant ‘border’ or ‘limit.’ I wasn’t particularly inspired. I went to my mother and asked her about the meaning of my official name. When she revealed Swami’s explanation—‘one who is auspicious in the modern world’- I was miffed! I felt that Swami had given me a lofty and aspirational name, but my mother had reduced it to a limited, commonplace name.

But nothing in life happens as a ‘mistake.’ In Delhi, my sister and I had the privilege of attending *Balvikas* with Mrs. Nimmi Kanwar, who was also the National President of *Balvikas*. She was an ardent devotee of Swami and was a second mother to all of us, her students. Along with intense love for Swami, she instilled in us a sense of strict discipline. **Whether it was the weekend *Narayan Seva* or *Grama Seva* (service in a village), the regular bhajans,**

## **or the trips to Puttaparthi, devotion and discipline always went hand in hand.**

It was much later in life that I had an epiphany. Being prone to extremes in everything, I learned that if I had to be 'auspicious in the modern world,' I must live within the 'boundaries' of my *dharma*. Thus, both my names, 'Shivamala' and 'Seema,' hold significance and are truly meaningful to me.

### **If You Need Him, You Deserve Him**

Later, my father's job took him to Africa, my sister left for college, and I went to boarding school. Overnight, I found myself all alone, in a tiny little boat of my own, drifting in the vast blue ocean of illusion and life, with only memories of Swami to anchor me.

I was finishing a post-graduate course in communication. It was a seminal moment, one that would set the course for the rest of my adult life. My friend, who had family in the USA, was studying for the GRE (Graduate Record Examinations). I studied along with her and decided to take the GRE, too. I was also doing an internship at an advertising agency in Delhi, where I met a young man who proposed that we get married! Just then, I received my acceptance letter for attending graduate school.

I was conflicted between the options of leaving for the USA to pursue higher studies and the opportunity to get married and settle down in India. I did have a strong desire to pursue graduate studies. When my suitor visited our home, my parents made it abundantly clear to me that he was not suitable for me and that they were vehemently opposed to the marriage. They

urged me to pursue my passion for attending graduate school in the USA. They knew I was too young, and if I left and lived in new surroundings with new experiences, I would find the right life partner when the time was right. I was booked to fly to Chicago a day before my 22nd birthday. But I had to see Swami before I left India. He was in Brindavan.

I still wanted to ask Swami if I should have accepted the marriage proposal. When Swami walked down the aisle for the first time, I mustered the courage to talk to him. Looking at Him, I ventured to say, "Swami...." He immediately stopped me, saying, "*Wait, wait.*" Then He looked at my mother and asked her, "*What?*" She told Him in Telugu that I was leaving for the USA for a master's degree program. Swami looked at me lovingly and blessed me by materializing *Vibuthi* for me. The divine parent blessed what my earthly parents had approved!

He had answered me without me asking Him. **When I needed Him the most and was torn between life's choices, He was always there to guide me to the right path.**

### **God's Timing Is Always Perfect**

Graduate school was an eye-opening and life-changing experience. I learned so much about communication, marketing, and advertising. Most importantly, I discovered my life partner. Just like my parents had suspected, I realized that the person I wanted to marry earlier would not have been right for me. **There is much benefit in waiting and paying heed to the wisdom and love of parents and the guidance of Swami.**

It was in graduate school that I met my best friend, Geoff, who I knew would be my fellow traveler and a loving husband for life. After I went back to India, Geoff applied for a passport and flew to Delhi to meet my parents. Unlike the last time, my parents instantly liked him. But he passed the real test only after he met my *Balvikas* teacher, Nimmi Aunty, and won her approval.


The wheels were now set in motion. Wedding preparations were in full swing. But I had to get Swami's blessings. The World Youth Conference had just ended. Puttaparthi was packed with devotees from around the world. With the wedding invitation, *mangalsutra* (auspicious ornament that is ceremoniously knotted around the bride's neck and symbolizes the union of two souls), a little *Akshata* (sanctified rice) for blessing, and a silver plate with a tiny chair and *padam* (replica of Swami's feet), my mother and I sat in the front row for His *darshan*.

Swami went to the other side to give *darshan* and did not come anywhere close to us. Though people left after the scheduled *darshan*, we stayed, glued to our seats with hope. Soon, the *bhajans* started.

Swami was on the veranda, but there was no indication that He was coming toward us. As *Arati* began, I was filled with a dreadful sense of doubt and disillusionment: "What if Swami doesn't come to bless me? He had told me to wait. I did. Now the wedding date is set. What if He doesn't approve? What am I going to do?"

I was barely finished with this thought when, lo and behold! He came straight up to me, picked up the sanctified rice (*Akshata*), and blessed me! What a blissful moment!

That was also the last physical, one-on-one interaction I had with Swami, a lifetime memorable experience that I recount with joy. **He is my guide and navigator who set me on my course. I have felt His constant vivid presence and steering hand as I sailed through the ups and downs of life.** My journey might still feel like a step forward and two steps backward. There are times when I still get distracted and drift without making spiritual progress. **But the one thing I never do is doubt Him and His eternal presence.**

Ms. Shivamala M.   
USA



Named **Shivamala** by Swami and nicknamed *Seema* by her parents, she is a third-generation Sai devotee. With Swami's blessings, she came to the University of Illinois for her Masters in Advertising, where she met her husband. Shivamala has been an advertising professional in various cities for over 25 years. She was an active member of Sai centers in Chicago, Singapore, Portland (Oregon), Dallas, and now Los Angeles. She is the devotional coordinator of the Los Angeles center and Vice President of Region 8, SSSIO-USA.

*from the*  
International Sai Young Adults



*“Prevention of disease should be the goal. We should strive for a society free from ailments.”*

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**  
February 6, 1993

The YAs from SSSIO UK launched a series of online workshops on Mental Well-Being on February 25, 2024, as part of the SAI-100 initiative. The first session focused on what participants regard as mental wellbeing. There was an interactive discussion on how one feels when not mentally well and what makes one feel more mentally well. **There was a lively discussion on how we can support each other’s mental wellbeing. Ideas that came forth included maintaining social connections with peers, mindfulness practices, journaling, meditation, and more.**

The second session focused on the Phyllis Krystal techniques of Maypole Meditation and visualization, which was attended by 8 YAs. Mr. Neil Bisarya, who worked closely with Phyllis Krystal during her life, facilitated the session for the YAs and led them through Maypole Meditation. The YAs aim to run the workshops every six weeks to provide a platform for YAs in the UK to come together and develop strategies to improve their mental wellbeing and resilience.

The primary objective of the sessions was to address the findings highlighted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and recognized by medical experts worldwide, indicating the prevalence of mental health issues, which are escalating each year and affecting a significant portion of the population.



# AROUND THE WORLD

## European Sai Young Adults Meeting, Czech Republic

A special meeting of YAs took place in Prague, Northern Europe, between February 2 and 4. Twenty-five YAs from eleven countries across Europe gathered at a hostel in Tulcův dvůr, set within a nature reserve under environmental and historical protection. The theme for this year's meeting was "Don't stop the flow." The event kicked off with an introductory round and bhajans led by Mr. Pavel Marčík, fostering a joyful atmosphere.

The event began with a workshop titled "Art of allowing-free yourself from yourself," led by Ms. Estera Daniel. Participants engaged in self-reflection and meditation to explore the barriers to happiness, culminating in a dance meditation aimed at releasing self-imposed restrictions. Dr. Michael Blažej then guided a sightseeing tour of Prague, highlighting historical landmarks such as the astrological town hall clock and the castle complex.

One of the main discussions during the meeting centered around the theme of "Dating and Marriage," inspired by a 1991 discourse by Swami. Following this, participants were divided into groups by gender for more intense study circle discussions, exploring the essence and structure of relationships. Key reflections highlighted the importance of heartfelt connections, detachment, and the recognition of genuine love. **Central to these discussions was the notion that a healthy and fulfilling relationship is grounded in virtuous character, tolerance, forbearance, love, and service rather than other attributes like physical appearance or financial status.** Emphasizing inner values over external features was seen as pivotal for fostering enduring, spiritually fulfilling relationships, echoing the teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Mr. Pavel's loving hospitality ensured snacks were provided for the tour, enhancing the sense of camaraderie during a warm dinner and bhajan session. On Sunday, a workshop on relationships and partnership was led by Prof. Tomáš Bureš, Co-Chair of the SSSIIO Archive Committee and member of the SSSIIO IT Committee, emphasizing heart-to-heart connections and inner values. The retreat concluded with reflections on the shared experience, emphasizing the opportunity for spiritual growth and lasting friendships among YAs across Europe.



# “Living With Sai”

## National Young Adults Retreat, New Zealand

In preparation for the 2023 National Ladies retreat, a few YAs had the opportunity to cook lunch, and the idea of cooking again for YAs began to emerge. During a program meeting call, **the idea of preparing Swami’s food was raised, resonating deeply with the theme of “Living with Sai.”** The decision was inspired by how Swami always relished simple meals similar to those children in the village living amidst poverty during His childhood.

Recipes for ragi sangati (made of coarse grain, typically finger millet), peanut chutney, spinach dahl, and watermelon juice were chosen, with watermelon juice being particularly fitting due to its abundance during the New Zealand summer. As the weeks passed, a newfound appreciation for the efforts of ‘Sai Mothers’ in the organization grew, recognizing the meticulous preparation required for cooking for devotees, including dietary considerations and efficient resource management.

The concept of eating in silence was introduced to emulate mealtimes with Swami. Despite initial doubts and uncertainties, the cooking process unfolded smoothly, guided by the belief that if Swami willed it, obstacles could be overcome. The day of cooking was filled with joy and camaraderie as devotees gathered together to prepare and serve the meals.

During the retreat, devotees entered the dining hall in silence, fostering a sense of appreciation for each individual’s presence and the gift of sound and silence. **Profound moments, such as gestures of gratitude and the shared experience of silence, deepened the spiritual impact of the meal.** Reflecting on the journey, participants became more mindful of their food habits and embraced the opportunity to change and grow.



The highlight of the experience was the heartfelt feedback from devotees, expressing that the meal had led them closer to Swami.

- “The lunch with Sai was incredibly inspiring, and we should incorporate more of these practices or ‘Sailence’ sittings.”
- “The most inspiring aspect of the Retreat was the Lunch with Sai. Such meals and moments of ‘Sailence’ should be the focal point of future retreats.”
- **“Dining with Sai felt like a surreal dream. I had never imagined dining at Swami’s abode, but this experience was a dream come true.”**
- “The profound silence during the meal made me feel His presence deeply. The food seemed imbued with divine grace, reminiscent of Krishna’s sacred ‘makhan,’ (butter) melting in my mouth. Tears welled up as I savored each bite, and I found myself reluctant to leave the hall.”

Furthermore, reflections from Young Adults (YAs) involved in meal preparation were equally illuminating:

- “It was a truly beautiful activity to be part of, and it highlighted the transformative power of invoking the Lord’s presence in everyday activities such as cooking. We approached the task with mindfulness, attuning ourselves to subtle vibrations and allowing His guidance to shape the quantity and process of meal preparation. **It was awe-inspiring to witness how flavorful the food turned out, especially considering many of us had never attempted such dishes, let alone in bulk!**”
- “I found the experience of both preparing and serving the food immensely powerful. Even when uncertain about how much mint to add to the watermelon juice, I relied on my intuition and uttered ‘Om Sai Ram’ as I moved from the blending station to the fridge with the jugs. Hearing that the adults thoroughly enjoyed the food filled me with joy, and some even remarked about tasting Vibhuti in the watermelon juice despite it not being added intentionally. **This reaffirmed to me that Baba’s presence was truly infused in every aspect of the meal—from preparation and service to consumption.**”





**Ms. Milica Djuric**  
Serbia



## Intoxicated With Love for Swami

My memory dates back to 2019 when I arrived at Sai Prema, a beautiful venue in Greece, with a friend who was not a devotee of Swami and had never attended any Sai events. We arrived on the last day of the Sadhana camp, where each event concludes with a celebration. During these celebrations, we sing *bhajans* and national songs and perform national dances, including the Greek national dance. It was a colorful event that showcased a mixture of languages, cultures, and joyous unity. Despite being new to this experience, my friend remarked that everyone seemed so joyful even though they were only drinking water. It was the first time I realized that when we are together as a group, we are intoxicated with love, joy, and happiness. I cannot wait to meet you all in July to share in this love, joy, and happiness and to be intoxicated together with love for Swami and the Swami within us.

Follow the @saiyoungadults accounts on social media

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**Sai Young Adults**

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# InSAIde Scoop Podcast Series

Series 2022, Episode 6:  
*“How Do I Stop Comparing/Competing with Others?” featuring Ms. Asini and Ms. Lovelin Topandasani*

The discussion delves into the roots of comparison, highlighting low self-confidence as a key factor. Ms. Asini recalls feeling pressure to excel academically, leading to jealousy and misunderstandings with friends. Ms. Lovelin reflects on societal expectations and the pressure to conform, especially as a woman. Both agree that lack of self-confidence drives these tendencies, making individuals feel inadequate or defensive when compared to others.

However, they emphasize the importance of self-awareness and self-love in overcoming these challenges. Lovelin suggests practicing daily self-audits, sadhana (spiri-

tual practice), and meditation to gain clarity on one’s goals and values. Asini shares her experience of overcoming academic setbacks through self-reflection and parental support, emphasizing the role of self-competition in personal growth.

Ultimately, building self-confidence requires accepting oneself as Swami’s perfect creation, complete and worthy. By cultivating self-love and understanding, individuals can navigate external pressures with resilience and inner peace.

You can listen to the full episode here:

[InSAIde Scoop Episode 6–YouTube](#)





SWAMI IS THE BEST

Dear Swami,

You are a shoulder I can lean on, you are someone I can ask for help, you are my best friend. I'm ever so grateful for you, words cannot describe. You guide me through anything I need help with, with nothing but love and affection. I have learned how to be patient, how to be a helping hand to others, and so much more from you. I feel your presence throughout the day whenever there is a tough decision to make. You only want the best for me and I gain so much wisdom from you.

With lots of love,  
Saanvi | Group 3 | Online SSE



Avyukt RR | Group 1 | Canada



Tribute to mother Easwaramma, the chosen  
mother of our Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba  
As swami says, "Mothers are responsible for the  
well-being of their children. They also show spiritual  
path to their children. So, never forget your mother..."  
Therefore we sing Glory to you dear mother.

'O sai maa O sai maa ....  
Hum bachon ki, pyaari maa  
Pyari maa, Sai maa, Pyari maa, Sai maa ....

Mehvish (Group 1) | Vaishavi (Group 2) | Mauritius

Dear Swami

I am really grateful for you to be my friend up till this day!

You have done so much for me and to everyone on earth. You have always been there for me when I needed you and when my world turns upside down. You always listen to me whenever I talk to you about my day. I have learned so much about all of your teachings and I will always remember to use your teachings frequently in my daily life. You have given me a good family, friends, education, food, water, and shelter. I couldn't have a better friend like you to be with me and walk with me in my journey of life. Swami you are my world that makes me smile everyday.

With lots of love  
Shriya P | Group 3 | Online SSE

Swami is standing by,  
All the way,  
Here to help you through your day

He holds you up,  
When you're weak,  
helping you find what it is you seek

He catches your tears,  
When you cry,  
Pulls you through when  
troubles are high

He stays there,  
right beside you,  
So remember all the things God does for us,  
And don't forget to say, "Thank you"

Swami is my friend,  
He cares so much about me  
Swami is the best

Rithvik D | Group 2 | Canada





### Birthday Poem

The mother of mothers, a haven for souls  
From whom we seek refuge when troubled and torn  
When we offer an apple, he gives hundreds in return  
The joy from his prasada, lasting eternities to come  
His darshan is the dream of every devotee,  
Though in our hearts he lives, happy and merry  
We are his children, who survive under his loving care  
But who is this being, who is never-ending bliss?  
His love flows through us like a rapid stream,  
He is Sathya Sai Baba; The All Almighty Supreme

Shivam D | Group 3 | Canada

Dear Swami,

Thank you for always being my friend. I know I will never be alone when I'm feeling sad, anxious, and troubled. You have always been a guiding light to me by offering me practicable life lessons to constantly improve myself everyday. You are there to support me when I have accomplished something important to me with your grace. You have taught me to be kind, selfless, and to let go of materialistic desires. You will always be in my heart.

Srija T | Group 4 | Online SSE



Sairam,  
Srija



Bhoomi K | Group 2 | USA

# Upcoming SSSIO Events

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

Date of Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
June 15-16, 2024	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri 
June 28, 2024-July 1, 2024	Friday-Monday	International Conference, Kenya
July 21, 2024	Sunday	Guru Pournima 
August 17-18, 2024	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri 



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



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



It is the foremost duty of children to secure the blessings of their mothers for their worldly well-being. However, spiritually man's obligation is different, according to Vedanta. Here, there is room in the heart only for the love of God. Affection for the mother and reverence for the father are necessary. But parents and preceptors are transient. Even friends are impermanent. God alone is permanent and unchanging, and God alone should have the permanent place in the heart.

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

May 6, 1997

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**sathyasai.org**

Love All • Serve All  
Help Ever • Hurt Never