

SATHYA SAI THE ETERNAL COMPANION



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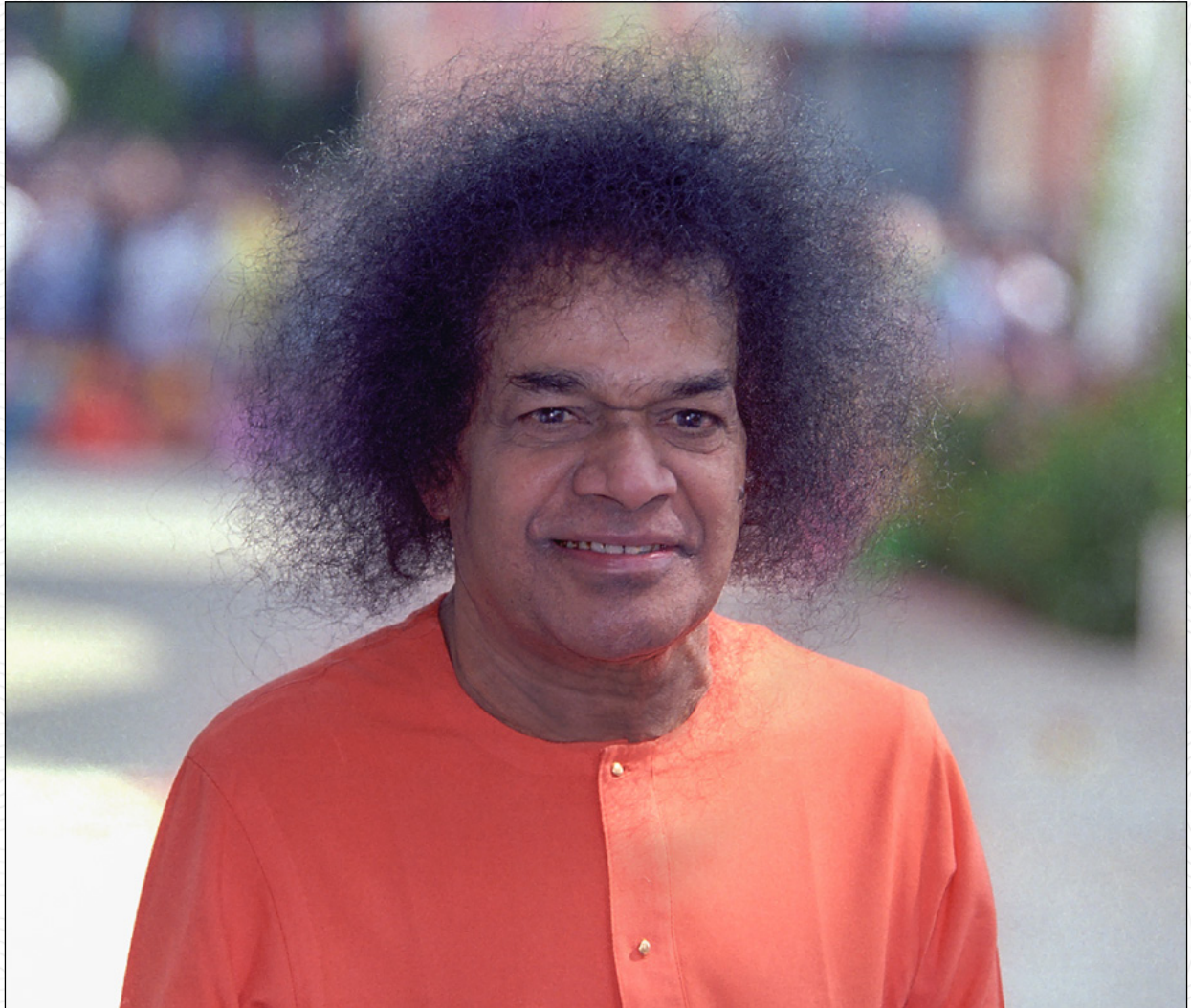
**DIVINE
GLORY &
MISSION OF
SRI SATHYA SAI**



Treat Me not as one afar but as very close to you. Insist, demand, claim grace from Me; do not praise, extol, and cringe. Bring your hearts to Me and win My Heart. Not one of you is a stranger to Me. Bring your promises to me and I shall give you My promise. But first see that your promise is genuine, sincere; see that your heart is pure; that is enough.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

October 10, 1961



DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO
BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA





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publisher at info@sathyasai.org

Editor: Dr. Narendranath Reddy
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SADHANA CHATUSHTAYA

Four-fold Qualifications for a Spiritual Seeker

Part 1

Guru Poornima is a sacred festival day celebrated by spiritual seekers around the world each year. With love and gratitude, the disciples or students pay homage to their guru for guiding them on the spiritual path and showing them the way to God. **The devotees of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba are especially blessed and fortunate that, for them, *sadguru* and God are one and the same—the Kali Yuga Avatar.** He is the supreme *Parabrahman* who, in His infinite compassion, came down in human form for the redemption of humanity by teaching it the purpose and goal of life.

He is the universal teacher (*jagadguru*) whose message is eternal and beneficial to people of all cultures, races, countries, ethnicities, and faiths. He is the teacher of teachers (*gurunaam guru*). He is the teacher of truth and the true teacher (*sadguru*) who bears the name—Truth (*sathya*). He is the divine teacher (*divya guru*), the Lord who has come in the form of a teacher. That is why He is the teacher par excellence (*parama guru*), for He is *Satchidananda* (knowledge, awareness, and bliss).

The guru shows us the *guri* (aim or goal) of life, which is to manifest our true nature as embodiments of divine love, bliss, Atman, and Brahman. The term ‘guru’ consists of two parts—‘*Gu*’ and ‘*Ru*.’ ‘*Gu*’ stands for *gunatheetha* (beyond attributes), and ‘*Ru*’ stands for *rupavarjita* (beyond form). **Thus, a true guru is Brahman alone who comes to teach the *Brahma vidya* or *Atma vidya* (ultimate knowledge of the Self).**

Understanding the Four-fold Qualifications for a Spiritual Seeker

Swami has guided people through personal interviews, thousands of divine discourses, and many writings. For instance, He has written the deeply insightful *Sutra Vahini*, which is a commentary on the *Brahma Sutras* (aphorisms on the knowledge of Brahman). There, He emphasizes the credentials needed to attain the supreme knowledge. Even to earn a secular degree in engineering, medicine, or law, one has to work hard for many years. Here, we are aspiring for the highest knowledge having attained which there is nothing else left to attain. **That is why in the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says (BG 10.32), “*adhyatma vidya vidyanam*” (amongst knowledge, I am the spir-**



itual knowledge). This knowledge leads to the complete cessation of grief and sorrow, bestowing unending bliss (BG 6.22):

*yam labdhva chaparam labham
manyate nadhikam tatah
yasmin sthito na duhkkena
gurunapi vichalyate*

Regarding knowledge, Swami says that in the *Mundaka Upanishad*, Sage Angirasa teaches his disciple, Sage Shaunaka about two types of knowledge. *Para Vidya* (higher knowledge) is the supreme, eternal knowledge that is never-changing and grants illumination and the highest bliss. The second is *Apara Vidya* (lower knowledge) which is the worldly knowledge, dogmas, rituals, and practices. The lower knowledge consists of textual knowledge, including the four Vedas, the science of pronunciation, the code of rituals, grammar, etymology, meter, and astrology. **The higher knowledge is that by which the immutable and imperishable Atman is realized, and this Self-knowledge brings about the direct realization of the supreme reality, the source of all.**

Regarding the importance of *Brahma Vidya* or the higher knowledge, Lord Krishna declares (BG 2.45):

*traigunya-vishaya veda nist-
rai-gunyo bhavarjuna
nirdvandvo nitya-sattva-stho
niryoga-kshema atmavan*

(The Vedas expound on the three modes of material nature. O Arjuna! Rise above the three modes to attain a state of pure spiritual consciousness. By freeing yourself from dualities, remain eternally fixed in the truth, and without concern for material gain and safety, be established in the Self.)

The *Brahma Sutras* are also known as the *Vedanta Sutras*. They are the foundational text of Vedanta philosophy, which is one of the six classical schools of Indian philosophy. Attributed to Badarayana (also called Veda Vyasa), the *Brahma Sutras* systematize and interpret the teachings of the Upanishads, which are the essence of the Vedas. These *Brahma Sutras* serve as the philosophical foundation of Vedanta and have inspired extensive commentaries by great thinkers like Sri Adi Shankaracharya (*advaita*–non-dualism), Sri Ramanujacharya (*vishishtadvaita*–qualified non-dualism), and Sri Madhvacharya (*dvaita*–dualism).



“I do not want wealth, I do not want power, I do not want family, I do not want anything. I want only that which will take me to Self-realization.”

- Nachiketa

Our dear Swami, the Avatar of this age, wrote a commentary on the Brahma Sutras, called Sutra Vahini. **It opens with the statement, *Athato Brahma Jijnasa*, meaning, “After achieving this, you will be qualified to seek the knowledge of Brahman.”** If one wants to achieve Self-realization, knowledge of Atman or Brahman, one needs to possess **basic qualifications or credentials**. The *Sadhana Chatushtaya* refers to the four-fold qualifications that a spiritual seeker must develop to be eligible for Self-knowledge or Self-realization. These four are:

1. *Viveka* (discrimination)
2. *Vairagya* (detachment or dispassion)
3. *Shat Sampatti* (six treasures)
4. *Mumukshatwam* (intense longing for liberation)

Let us dive deep into these four tenets, one by one, starting with the first two in Part 1 of this editorial. The final two tenets will be published in the next issue of this magazine.

***Viveka* (Discrimination)**

Every spiritual seeker needs *viveka* or discrimination, the ability to discern. The question arises, discrimination between what? **Swami emphasizes that there are two kinds of discrimination. The first is individual discrimination and the second is fundamental discrimination.**

All of us exercise discrimination—what is good for me, what is good for my family

and friends, etc. This is called individual discrimination. While it is beneficial, it is more self-centered. Fundamental discrimination is about what is best for the overall good of society and the universe at large. **Fundamental discrimination is selfless and steeped in truth, considering the universe as one totality.** That is why spiritual seekers should always aim to develop fundamental discrimination.

Shreyo Marga Versus Preyo Marga

Next comes the discrimination between *shreyo marga* (beneficial path) and *preyo marga* (pleasant path). These are two distinct paths discussed in the *kathopani-shad*, representing two kinds of choices we constantly face in life.

***Shreyo Marga* is the path that is beneficial to spiritual aspirants, helping us achieve the supreme goal. It is the path that leads to lasting happiness, wisdom, and liberation.** It may seem difficult or unattractive at first, but ultimately it brings deep fulfillment and spiritual growth. Examples of choosing the *Shreyo Marga* includes choosing self-discipline over indulgence, the study of scriptures over entertainment, truthfulness over flattery, and seeking Brahman over temporary pleasures.

On the other hand, *Preyo Marga* is the worldly path that provides immediate gratification but often leads to bondage, suffering, regret, and spiritual stagnation.

It is tempting and easy, but its benefit is short-lived. Examples of choosing the *Preyo Marga* include giving in to sense cravings, prioritizing comfort over growth, and choosing distraction over introspection.

Nachiketa's Focus

There is a beautiful story illustrating these two paths in the *kathopanishad*. A young boy called Nachiketa had to face the God of Death, Yama. He is in the quest of the supreme Truth, and nothing less will satisfy him. So, he asks Lord Yama, "What lies beyond death? Some say the soul exists; others say it does not. Please tell me the truth." Then, Lord Yama tempts him with all the best pleasures of the world, saying that instead of this knowledge, he can give the boy all the wealth in the world, many sensual pleasures, many children, and power over all the people.

But Nachiketa remains firm in his resolve and says, "These pleasures are short-lived. They cannot satisfy the eternal soul. I want only the truth about the Self." And so, he rejects all of these offers and temptations, saying **"I do not want wealth, I do not want power, I do not want family, I do not want anything. I want only that which will take me to Self-realization."**

Lord Yama, being greatly impressed, then reveals the secret, profound spiritual wisdom. He says, "You have to always choose *Shreyo Marga* over *Preyo Marga*. Choose the right path, which is based on values like truth (*sathya*), right conduct (*dharma*), peace (*shanti*), love (*prema*), and nonviolence (*ahimsa*)."

Today, there are over 8 billion people on this planet. Most of them are interested in eating, having fun, sleeping, and procreating before ultimately dying. By divine grace, only a chosen few can focus on and pursue the purpose of human life, which is Self-

realization. To achieve this goal, we need to choose the *Shreyo Marga* like Nachiketa did.

Temporary Versus Permanent

We should discriminate between the temporary and the permanent. Lord Buddha's life provides a great example. As Prince Siddhartha, he was sheltered and pampered within the confines of the palace. However, when he went on an outing in the city, four sights prompted him to think deeply. The first was the sight of an old man, the second of a sick person, and the third of a dead body. The fourth sight was that of a monk, a renunciant who was serene and blissful, radiating peace and joy to people around him. So, he realized that life is full of sorrow and impermanence (*sarvam dukham, sarvam kshan-ikam*), but one can transcend them like the monk, by seeking truth through discrimination and renunciation.

We all go through old age, sickness, and death. **However, Prince Siddhartha sought to understand that which is eternal and unchanging.** He embarked on a quest for Truth and finally, after intense inquiry and austerities, he attained Nirvana and became the Buddha. **To achieve this goal, he had to give up that which is temporary and pursue that which is permanent.**

Real Versus Unreal

Next, we have to discriminate between the real and the unreal. In the truest sense, only that which is permanent is real, while anything that changes is unreal. **For instance, our body, mind, and intellect change over time; they are different today from what they were a few years ago and subject to further change in the future. The One that does not change is the inner divine principle, the Atma, the Self.** That is what we should focus on, for that is who we really are.

Swami shares the story of King Janaka to highlight this type of discrimination. King

Janaka is a great *jnani*, a man of great wisdom. Although he had the highest responsibility of ruling a kingdom, he was always focused on the ultimate purpose of human life, *Atma Jnana*. One night, while sleeping, he dreamed that he had lost his kingdom. He was captured by enemies and found himself in a forest, deprived of food and water. He was extremely hungry and thirsty when someone came along and offered him food. He became very happy. But before he could put a morsel in his mouth, some birds came out of nowhere and snatched it away. Once again, he was in so much misery that he screamed with pain and agony in his dream.

Suddenly, he woke up from this nightmare and found himself in his grand palace, lying in a comfortable bed like a king. Being wise, he began to ponder whether what he was experiencing now was real or what he had experienced before was real. He began to ask, **“Is this real, or is that real?” seeking the truth earnestly and intensely.**

King Janaka began asking these questions to the entire royal court, including the queens, the servants, and the ministers. Whomever he met, he asked whether this was real or that was real. Everyone was perplexed. They were worried that the king had gone mad and was out of his mind. The royal physician was summoned, but he could not help either.

Finally, they brought the royal preceptor, sage Ashtavakra. **When he saw the king, the sage said, “Your majesty! That is unreal, this is unreal. Both are unreal. Only the One who witnesses both is real.”**

In November 1996, during Bhagawan’s 71st Birthday celebrations, Greek devotees enacted this story as a drama in the divine presence in the Poornachandra Auditorium. The drama was titled *‘The Tales of Janaka.’*

Swami loved it and referred to the group as ‘drama boys’, showering them with special blessings during the rehearsals. He would visit them daily at Poornachandra Auditorium to supervise the rehearsals, give advice, and guide them on every detail. While this shows Swami’s love for His devotees, it also highlights the importance He places on the message conveyed by this story.

The ‘Night Dream’ and the ‘Day Dream’

The only reality is the “I” principle, which exists in both the dream state and the waking state. That is why Swami says, *“Life is a dream. Realize it.”*

We all know about the dreams we have at night while we are sleeping. Those are ‘night dreams.’ We realize they are unreal once we wake up. **Similarly, we need to wake up from this ‘day dream’ that we experience in our daily lives and understand it is unreal because it is constantly changing.**



Swami with Greek devotees during the *‘Tales of Janaka’* drama in 1996.

On one occasion, Swami emphatically told me that this waking ‘dream’ during the daytime is just as much a dream as the one we experience at night. Only through the path of *jnana*, the path of Self-enquiry and knowledge, can we wake up from this dream. **Having this discrimination is the first step toward Self-realization.**

An Important Question

There is another important aspect of discrimination. A question one must always ask is, “Will this bind me or liberate me?” This can be achieved through the process of Self-enquiry which Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, a great sage and a beacon of Advaita Vedanta, emphasized greatly. **Anything we come across should be examined in this light to see whether it will bind us in misery or liberate us, giving us eternal bliss.**

In Vedanta, there is a beautiful example of the rope and the snake. At dusk or dawn, one might confuse a rope for a snake. This, in turn, causes fear, including increased palpitations of the heart and one might even collapse. However, the moment there is light, the darkness disappears, and one sees the rope as nothing but a rope. The ‘snake’ seen in the darkness vanishes because the snake was never there in the first place. Similarly, we project many unreal things as real and confuse one for the other. Thus, we become agitated and restless. If we see the whole world in the light of Truth as Brahman, we can be blissful. But when we experience it in the darkness of ignorance, the unreal, ever-changing world causes attachment, leading to grief.

Thus, when we see the Truth, we realize, *tat twam asi* (That Thou Art), a great Vedic proclamation that we are not the body or mind but we are THAT—Brahman or Atman.

Therefore, *viveka* must be based on the foundation of conviction that Brahman alone is real and the world is illusory.

Vairagya (Dispassion or Detachment)

With regards to dispassion, Swami often affirms Sankara’s *advaitic* philosophy but infused it with *prema*, divine love, which is pure, unsullied, and unconditional. While Adi Sankaracharya focused on non-dualistic philosophy or *advaita*, Sai declares love as the royal road because love is Brahman experiencing Brahman. He states that the Lord separated Himself from Himself to love Himself.

In this process, dispassion or detachment is essential for attaining *Brahma Vidya* or Self-realization. Lord Krishna defines *sanyasa* (renunciation) in the Bhagavad Gita (BG 18.2) as:

*kamyanam karmanam nayasam
sannyasam kavayo viduh
sarva-karma-phala-tyagam
prahus tyagam vichakshanah*

(Giving up actions motivated by desire is what the wise understand as sanyasa. Relinquishing the fruits of all actions is what the wise declare to be thyaga.)

Understanding the True Meaning of Sacrifice

Swami often quotes the scriptural declaration for attaining immortality:

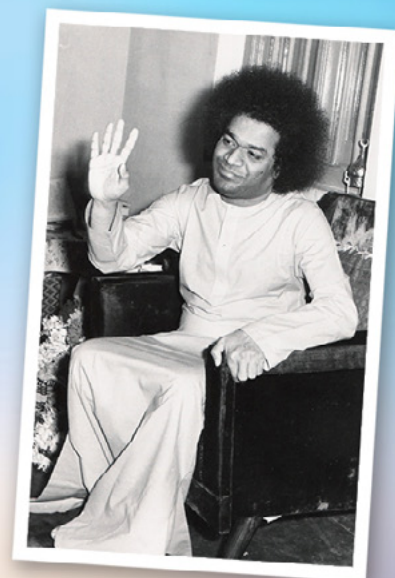
*Na karmana na prajaya dhanena
Thyagenaike amrutatwa manashuh.*

(Immortality can be obtained neither through actions, progeny, or wealth nor by any other means. It can be achieved only by sacrifice or renunciation.)

He also says that love demands great sacrifice. **Here, sacrifice refers to relinquishing the craving or longing for the results of one’s actions. This is emphasized as *Nishkama Karma Yoga* by Lord Krishna in the Gita.**

This is one of the most important insights into *thyaga*. People often think of renunci-

Man Minus Desire is Equal to God



ation as giving up family, home, and possessions. But Swami says that one should give up attachment to the fruits of one's actions. When we say, 'I want liberation,' Swami advises that when we give up 'I,' the ego, and 'want,' the desire, we will automatically have liberation.

Lord Krishna (BG 13.10) exemplifies the qualities of an enlightened person:

*asaktir anabhisvngah
putra-dara-grihadishu
nityam cha sama-chittatvam
ishtanishtopapattishu*

*(Absence of attachment to spouse,
children, home, and so on; main-
taining equanimity in both favor-
able and unfavorable life situations.)*

Giving up 'I' (*ahamkara*) and 'mine' (*mama-kara*), along with the sense of doership and attachment to the results of actions, is the essence of *vairagya*.

Practical Tips from Swami to Achieve *Vairagya*

A practical approach to renunciation involves avoiding attachment to sense objects and sense pleasures. **Swami says that the best way to do this is to sublimate the senses rather than suppress them.** The eyes should see only good and divine sights. The ears must hear only divine glories—not gossip and rumors. Speech should be used to talk about

God and saints—not to criticize others. Legs should carry us to places of worship and not to places of sense indulgence. Hands should offer worship to the Lord or serve others, not grab whatever one desires, for sense pleasures or to amass wealth through selfish means.

Another practical way to achieve dispassion is to avoid bad company and seek good company. Swami asks us to run away from bad company. Bad company is not just about people with negative thoughts, speech, and actions, but also includes places and things that produce bad vibrations which agitate the mind by provoking and stimulating the senses.

Swami gives us an arithmetic equation, "Man minus desire is equal to God." However, it is not practical to completely give up desire. So, Swami gives us a practical way to do this by sublimating all desires into the desire for God. To understand this, Swami provides an analogy. When we have money in the form of many coins and notes of lower denominations, they can be burdensome to carry. However, they can be converted into higher denomination currency notes with the same value, which can be carried easily. Similarly, one should sublimate all petty desires into the desire for God. Then, one will feel lighter and more peaceful. The company of holy people who

love and serve God will also help us achieve greater dispassion for the world and attachment to God. **This is the 'Ceiling on Desires' program that Swami introduced to us for giving up petty desires and aiming for the highest desire, the desire for liberation.**

The practice of detachment from the body, pleasures, senses, and sensory objects, brings one closer to the knowledge of Atman or Brahman. **For this, Baba teaches us the path of selfless service as a spiritual practice to get rid of negative qualities like pomp, ostentatiousness, hatred, anger, greed, pride, and jealousy. This path also purifies the heart and facilitates detachment or dispassion.** The other is the devotional path where one also develops dispassion toward objects other than godly ones. The more our attachment to God, the more our detachment from the world!

Deep Attachment to God Leads to Detachment

The best way to achieve detachment is through deep attachment to God. **The more we turn toward God, the farther we distance ourselves from worldly attachments and sensual pleasures.** That is why the great masters, sages, and saints in the olden days gave up the world and went into caves or forests for contemplation of

the divine. Lord Buddha gave up his loving family, his royal comforts, his rights over the kingdom, and worldly pleasures in search of the truth and attained Nirvana.

Such a sacrifice to seek the truth is possible only if one possesses staunch dispassion or detachment. But our Swami is very kind and compassionate. He says that we do not need to leave everything and take refuge in a forest or a cave. ***"Hands in the society, head in the forest,"*** He clarifies. **All we need is to be detached inside. We should tell ourselves, "This is all a dream; so let me focus on my real nature, which is the Atman."**

The great saint, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, says that the more one moves toward God, the more one moves away from the world and his life exemplified this message. This is just like saying that the more you go toward the North Pole, the more you move away from the South Pole.

We discussed the first two of the four-fold qualifications mentioned earlier in this editorial. Next month, in Part 2, we will explore *Shat Sampatti* (the six noble virtues) and *Mumukshatwam* (intense longing for Liberation), the next two qualifications for Self-Realization.

Jai Sai Ram.



Always be a Yogi Sathatham Yoginah

Part 1 of 2

There is no illness worse than desire; no foe fiercer than attachment; no fire as ravenous as anger; and no ally as reliable as wisdom. In the ancient *ashrams* of India, the master took the pupil by the hand and, by precept and example, he removed the wild weeds of vices and planted the seeds of virtue and equanimity, which grew into love and wisdom. There, man became aware of his fundamental divinity and drew unfailing *ananda* from that awareness. But now, taking delight in dubious designs and tortuous trials, man is fast shaping himself

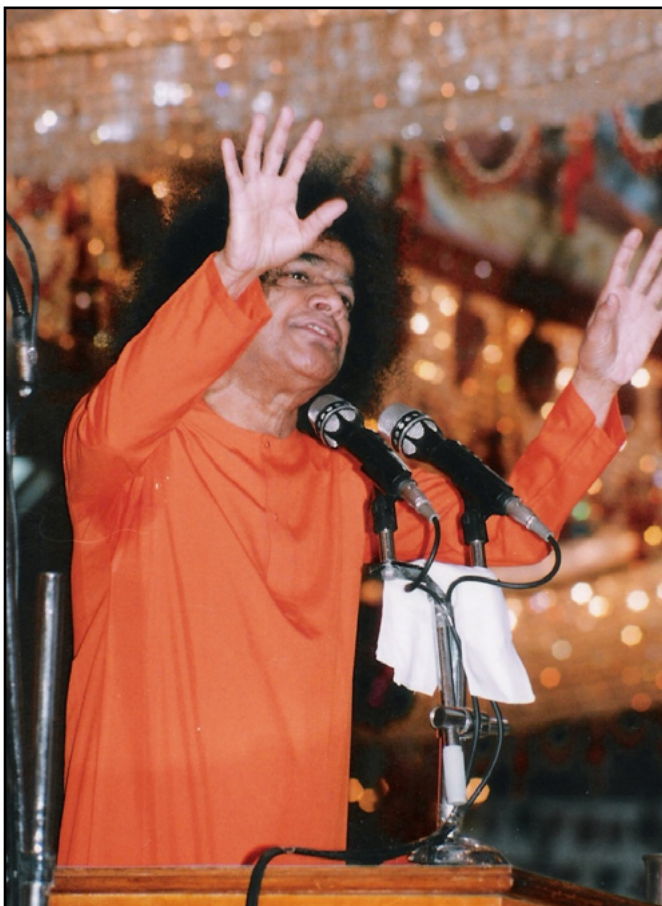
into a demon! The mind is the conspirator which has brought about this calamity. If man yields to the mind and its vagaries, and the mind is enslaved to the senses and their fancies, man cannot escape calamity.

Mind and its Vagaries

The mind prompts man to seek happiness (*sukha*) and avoid sorrow (*dukha*). It creates differences and deludes one's activity. It pushes forward and pulls back, tossing man back and forth throughout his life. The idea of happiness, which is often only another form of comfort, arises in

“The path of love knows no ups and downs.
It is smooth and level, straight and safe.
It leads you to the throne of the King of kings,
installed in your heart!

the mind and gets concretized as objects shaped by the hands and brains of man, like the airplane, the radio, and even the bomb that devastates and delights the mind saturated with hate. Ideas, desires, cravings, yearnings—these get concretized, and so, the world is only the product of the mind. In fact, **the universe is itself the manifestation of the Divine Mind, which willed, *ekoham bahusyam* (I am one, let Me become many)!** The universe arose in the mind of God; it sprouted and expanded there, and since then, the mind has become very potent and permeating. For each of you, it is the mind that colors the world. If it is pure, the *jagat*, or world, is congenial; if it is impure, the *jagat* is replete

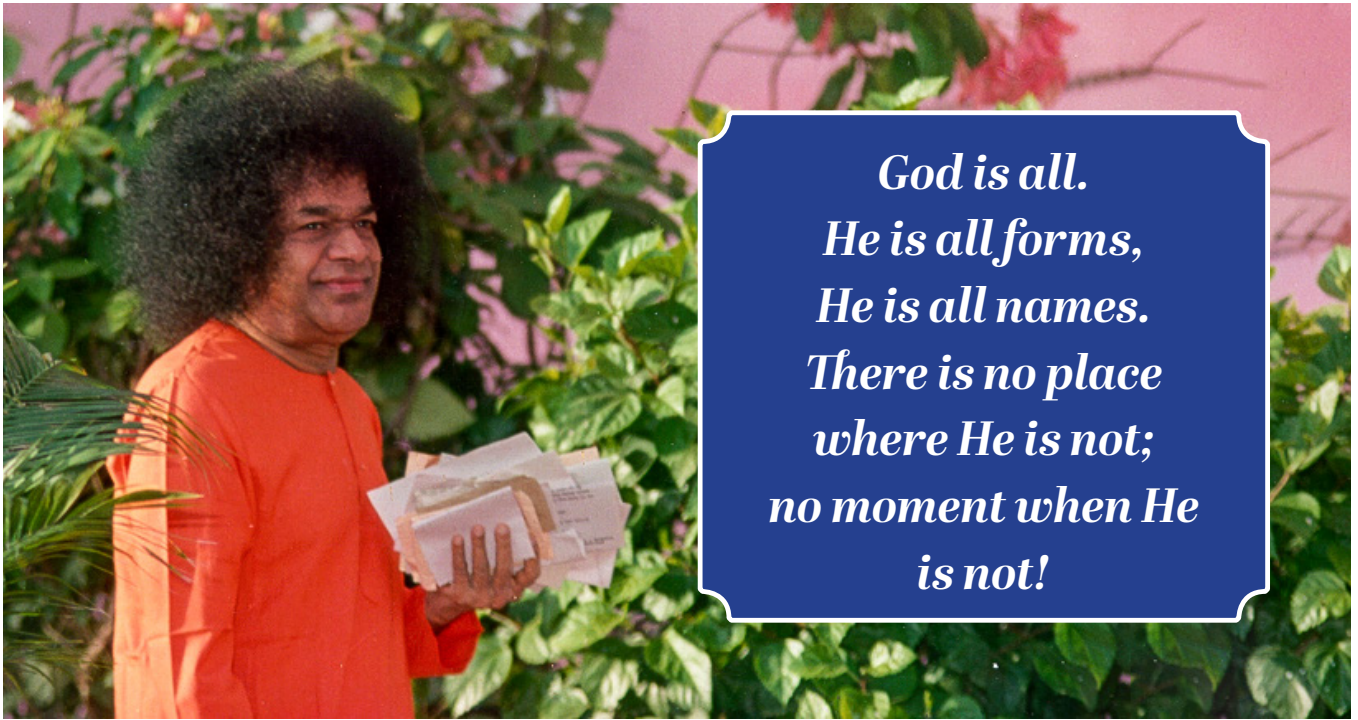


with jeopardy. The sages of Bharat (India) laid down a series of exercises and disciplines to decontaminate the mind so that it may turn away from the senses toward the intellect, *buddhi*. These are included in the comprehensive path, *dhyana* (meditation).

***Dhyana* and its Purpose**

Dhyana is, according to many exponents, what one performs for a few minutes when one assumes a certain posture, tries to control the incoming and outgoing of breath. It endeavors to focus attention on an image or ideal, to the exclusion of everything else. During that period, people feel elated, have an exaltation of some kind, and experience joy and peace; but when the period is over, they lapse into their regular routine of scandal, envy, faction, and fear. So, *dhyana* has become a fad, a routine, a pastime or habit, a drug or tonic, instead of the very sustenance of the spirit.

It should not be taken up and stopped at stated hours of the day. It must be a continuous process, filling the personality with divine sweetness. **The mind must be rid of bitterness and be charged with the nectar of universal love. That love must reveal to you that the individual, or *Jiva*, is only God, *Deva*, clothed in that vesture.** You too are not this temporary vesture that you have worn, but the ancient ‘formless’ divine! The limits of time and space that make you declare that you were born in one particular year, and that your native place is some dot on the map of the world, are also artificial, temporary, and incidental. They are not fundamental.



*God is all.
He is all forms,
He is all names.
There is no place
where He is not;
no moment when He
is not!*

Love Seeks No Reward

The wants that the mind spins out endlessly can never be over. They are like the digits, which can be added *ad infinitum* (to infinity), and with each addition, the total load increases! **When you are in the coils of *kama* (desire), you cannot reach Rama (God).** The study of sacred books, the counsel of sages, the company of the wise—these are barren when you do not transmute them into awareness and *ananda*! Pour the mind into the mold of God: His glory, His majesty, His beauty. Then the ‘mind stuff’ is rendered an instrument of liberation, from being a shackle that binds.

When you come to me weighed down with wants, prayers for boons, and materialistic wishes, you stand the risk of losing faith and losing your moorings; for, that faith is frail. Develop the love that asks for no reward; build faith on that basis. Thereby, you can rescue yourselves from the duality of exaltation and despair. **The path of love knows no ups and downs. It is smooth and level, straight and safe. It leads you to the throne of the King of kings, installed**

in your heart! Nothing can delay your journey or pose obstacles to stop you.

Go Beyond Likes and Dislikes

Desires? What is their nature? When a cat kills your pet parrot, you are enraged. When it kills a mouse, you are pleased. Though the behavior of the cat is the same, you liked one outcome and disliked the other, as a result of your attachment! Desires are according to personal prejudices and fancies. They also fade away when fulfilled and are often momentary urges, clamoring for immediate satisfaction. After a full meal, food becomes unappetizing, if not positively repulsive! Once satiated, the thing so desired becomes verily disgusting!

There are two attitudes of the mind: the community attitude and the unity attitude! In the grip of the community idea, you cling to some as friends and keep away from others. This attitude cannot win the grace of the One. He who sees unity wins the grace of the One. A single spark of that grace creates a conflagration that destroys fame and blame, and joy and grief that the world heaps on one’s head. Do not worry about temporary trifles and tribulations.

Do not exaggerate the inconveniences they cause. Bear them with courage and a smile. Aim for the highest goal. Go after the royal tiger, not the cunning fox! Even if you fail to catch the tiger, there is grandeur in failing. What glory is there in going after the fox and finally catching it? Why become overly considerate about the body, unduly concerned about the state of health, and too worried about material possessions? **Be concerned to become the embodiment of Truth! Be anxious to win the status of immortality! Struggle for eternal Truth, though victory may be distant and difficult.**

To realize that principle, you have the opportunity, and the invitation, everywhere. The gateway to that glory lies open everywhere. Open your eyes, and witness His compassion, His majesty, and His beauty, spread out before you. Sitting in meditation for three hours, you are not able to concentrate on these attributes of God for even three seconds! You get pain in the back, your legs ache, and you have to change posture a dozen times an hour! **But, before you, above your head in the sky, and under your feet, the handiwork of the Almighty calls on you to adore His artistry.**

See the Divine All Around

Why spend all that time trying to achieve control of the mind? Practice another *sadhana*—the *sadhana* of seeing the divine all around you! Believe that the Atma in you is the same Atma that activates everyone else, and makes them live and love, wail, and hail. *Dhyana* is not a limited liability concern! There are no bounds for your share in it. It is a full-time endeavor; invest yourself fully in it. Then you get a plentiful harvest in return. **You become aware that you are a Hari-mandir (a temple of God), that your limbs are the holy vessels that**

are consecrated for service therein, that your deeds are the fruits, your thoughts are the flowers, and your words are the music, with which the worship is consummated every moment. Offer yourself as the heart of faith. Then, whomever you contact will shine before you as God Himself.

The words social, cultural, spiritual, and moral, all indicate only facets of this vision. Social service, or consciousness, is but the expression of this ever-present divine in all members of the human community. What is culture, except the culture of the mind to reap this harvest? The spirit, when it blossoms, finds kindred spirits everywhere. And, as for morality, its highest expression is truth, and the truth is unity!

When you speak with the tongue, or see with the eye, or plan with the brain, who is it that speaks, sees, judges, and decides?

It is the one intelligence, the One that, like a current, works in and through all men and materials: God. When you are immersed in *bhajan*, note how the One is activating you! Your tongue pronounces the words in the tune designed for them. Your palms keep the beat, slow or fast. Your head sways in unison with the sentiments that the words express. Your mind is gushing *ananda* at the magnificence of the pictures that the song evokes! So too, a dancer is articulating harmony and melody through every gesture and movement of muscle and limb. But all the activity originates from a common source, god, who resides in the heart. When He is ignored, neglected, or denied, there is no joy for you, or through you for others. You are either *tamasic*—dull or inert, or *rajasic*—passionate or fanatic, but not *sathwic*—pure, balanced, or serene!

God is all. He is all forms, He is all names. There is no place where He is not; no moment when He is not! (Even the devil has the syllable *dev* which means God, to

*Do not get tied up with symbols in stone or metal.
Raise yourself to the higher stages of Self-realization.
Do not get entangled in rituals and ceremonies.*



indicate His eternal presence.) Thunder is God's message; the rain is His grace. **Let no second pass without awareness of God. Let no event lapse without reminding you that He is the organizer!** You have an image or picture in the room you have set apart for worshipping God. You light a lamp before it! You say, 'I have lit the lamp,' but is it you, really? Who provided the oil, the wick, and the lamp, or the ingredients for producing a flame? Who motivated you to revere the picture in this form? Who was it that placed the lamp, lit it, and bowed before the picture? It is all God, God, God. There is no one and nothing else for the man who knows and feels.

Paste God's Poster on Your Heart

This morning, someone asked Me when I called him in and gave him the opportunity to speak to Me, "Baba! The world is fast forgetting the potency of the name of God. People do not have it on their lips. They do not sustain themselves by its sweetness and sanctity. Bless me, and bless my plan, to make them ever conscious of the

precious treasure that they are missing. I propose to print posters, blazing in color, with the name 'Rama' and paste them on all available walls, pillars, and vantage points, so that the eye may see and awaken the mind of man." I told him that his posters would be smothered by the loud, lascivious announcements and advertisements of filmmakers and exhibitors, and they would soon give place to the scrawls and scribbles of hate. "Nor is your plan worthwhile," *I told him.*

"Paste the poster on your heart," I advised him. "Reform yourself and live in the consciousness of Rama and the message of dharma which He lived out in His earthly career. That is enough publicity, enough prompting. That is the best you can do to promote loyalty to the name," I said. **"For people will know how it has changed you into a more joyous, peaceful individual, and wonder how it was possible. Realizing the way, they will start to revere the name, like you.** Do not get tied up with symbols in stone or metal. Raise yourself to the higher

stages of Self-realization. Do not get entangled in rituals and ceremonies.”

Darshan and Sparshan are Spiritual Gifts

Whenever I move out of Prasanthi Nilayam, you break coconuts in front of the car and wave *Arathi*; some place flowers at My feet, or fall prostrate, or beat themselves on their cheeks. Some bow with both hands, pulling their ears, in an attitude of repentance or self-inflicted punishment. These are mostly formalities of hypocrisy and hollow gestures. Be sincere. Have genuine repentance in the heart and resolve not to repeat the mistakes. **Of course, *darshan* (sight of the divine) and *sparshan* (touch of the divine) are spiritual gifts, but they must be granted by Me, not grabbed by you when I do not welcome them.** Now, you rush forward and secure the chance of falling at My feet, more for the satisfaction of the ego, that you got it while others did not!

Ego plays all kinds of tricks to get unholy pleasure. During the construction of the bridge to Lanka to take the army across, Hanuman heaved a boulder on the raging waves of the sea, as part of the bridge! It floated! Rama heaved another, but it sank! Hanuman’s ego was tickled, naturally. He

laughed in derision; at that very moment, his boulder sank! And the boulder that Rama had thrown rose from the bottom of the sea and floated! Hanuman’s ego was pricked into nothingness. That was the purpose for which Rama had willed that His boulder should sink!

Yearn to fill your heart with Him, not with ‘you.’ Your yearning must be warm, so warm that it can be called *thapas* (heat). Become intensely earnest! Now it is only a lukewarm longing, a superficial activity. **Examine yourselves how far you have filled your heart with Him. Measure the heights you have reached with the yardstick of virtue, serenity, fortitude, and equanimity.** You have now become easy victims of lust, anger, malice, envy, and the rest of that evil brood, for the atmosphere of the heart is polluted by ego fumes. The knowledge derived through the mind utilizing the senses is always incomplete and incoherent; but the knowledge that is earned through the *buddhi* or intellect illumined by the Atma is full, grants freedom, and reveals the Truth. The first is termed *manojnana*, and the second, *Atmajnana*.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
July 23, 1971

This is the first of two parts of the divine discourse.
The concluding part will follow in the next issue.





The Uniqueness of **SATHYA SAI AVATAR** *and His Teachings*

I HAVE HAD A RELIGIOUS BENT OF MIND SINCE MY CHILDHOOD DAYS.

Around the age of ten or twelve, when I was in middle school, I was exposed to Christianity through the influence of my Christian neighbors. I used to read the New Testament (of the Holy Bible) and sing Christian songs and hymns in Telugu. As a result, I developed a sort of aversion to idol worship, which is a common tradition in many Hindu families. This aversion was short-lived; for, when I was in High School (between ages fourteen to sixteen), I read books on Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, and they left a lasting impression on my mind.

Preparing the Ground

Ever since, and also during my higher studies in the USA in later years, I was drawn to and

visited the Ramakrishna Math and Mission Centres and Vedanta Societies. I also continued to read voraciously literature on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. I was blessed to receive spiritual initiation (*mantra diksha*) from an illustrious Swami, the late Sri Yatiswarananda of the Ramakrishna Order, in 1964.

My wife, Smt. A. Chellamma, was an ardent devotee of Sri Rama but also became a devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba at the time of our marriage (1944). Though devoted to Sri Ramakrishna, I sang Shirdi Sai *bhajans* and accompanied my wife and children to Shirdi on a pilgrimage. My wife was also equally enthusiastic to read literature on Ramakrishna and his consort, Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and joined me in visiting Ramakrishna Maths. My two sons too, were

Baba says the order of preference for a *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) should be God first, others next, and myself last. In short, prioritize ‘S,’ Swami first; ‘a,’ others next; and ‘i,’ the individual last.

therefore devoted to both Sri Ramakrishna and Shirdi Baba. In passing, I may mention that we were blessed to be at the Ramana Ashram on the day of Bhagavan Ramana’s *Mahasamadhi* (leaving the physical body).

My first *darshan* of Sri Sathya Sai Baba was during the Dasara celebrations in 1951, when, along with my wife and young sons, I saw Him being taken in procession by His devotees through the streets of Puttaparthi. At that time, neither my wife nor I thought of Sri Sathya Sai Baba as an Avatar. Our feeling was that we were face to face with a *Siddha Purusha* or a holy man with supernatural spiritual powers.

Subsequently, I attended a discourse given by Sri Sathya Sai Baba during His visit to Hyderabad and also had his *darshan* at Puttaparthi in 1980, shortly before my retirement the same year. However, there was no change in my attitude; there was neither special love for Sri Sathya Sai nor faith in the divinity of Him as an incarnation of God. On introspection, I realized that this was because, like some followers of Sri Ramakrishna, I had an aversion to miracles as they are considered to be obstacles in the spiritual path. Also, being entrenched in the Vedanta tradition of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, I had neither the opportunity nor the inclination to study Sathya Sai literature.

Following my retirement in December 1980, I applied for American immigrant visas for my wife and myself, to be near our children, and to lead a quiet life, devoting most of our

time to spiritual *sadhana*. Accordingly, we immigrated to California in May 1981.

As we lived near Hollywood during the first year of our stay there, we regularly visited the Vedanta Society of Hollywood (Ramakrishna Temple) and occasionally attended *bhajans* at the Sri Sathya Sai Center and the Hare Krishna Temple, which were also in Hollywood.

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s Divine Pull

In the latter half of 1982, the second year of our stay in the USA, the frequency of our visits to Sri Sathya Sai Center in Hollywood increased with increasing exposure to Sai *bhajans*, Sai films, Sai literature, and last, but not the least, wonderful Sai devotees. Although each of the aforementioned four items is interesting, what impressed and intrigued me most was the Sai literature, consisting of the two main components, Swami’s astounding miracles and the universality of His teachings. **Any student of hagiography who has an open mind cannot help but wonder at the unprecedented nature of both Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s miracles and His teachings.** Indeed, Swami’s miracles are impactful and unique in every respect, in number, variety, range, and coverage of people and places all over the globe. Some of the miracles appear to be completely unbelievable to the skeptical reader. However, since most of the people who had experienced miracles were still alive, one could easily verify their veracity and satisfy oneself. I have personally verified several cases in the USA and India, as did many authors of books on Baba.



Death-Knell to Prejudice

The study of Swami's miracles and teachings, along with observations of the conduct of many Sai devotees, not only sounded the death knell to my long-standing prejudice against such miracles but also convinced me of Baba's Avatarhood. My eyes opened to the 'so-called miracles' (to use Baba's own phrase) being a common feature of all Avatars of all times, as well as of various prophets, saints, and seers of all religions, including Sri Ramakrishna and his direct disciples. The differences are only in the range and extent of such miracles. Sri Ramakrishna is often misquoted or misunderstood regarding his views on miracles. Sri Ramakrishna's caution against the use of miracles was directed at *sadhakas* (spiritual aspirants) and not at *Siddhas*, much less at *Avatars*. *Siddhis* (supernatural 'miraculous' powers) are natural and inherent to *Avatars*; they are not acquired as in the case of *Siddhas*. Even the latter are not prohibited from using their *siddhis*, selflessly and for the

good of mankind. In fact, Swami discourages people from giving undue importance to His so-called 'miracles' and avoids all mention of miracles in his discourses. He once remarked that the place of miracles, in the totality of his divine mission, may be compared to that of a mosquito sitting on an elephant's back. If so, what is the role of these miracles, since they do occur?

Convinced Of His Divinity

Sai Baba has clearly indicated the role of His miracles in a crisp formula (*sutra*): *chamatkar-samskar-paropakar-sakshatkar*, meaning that exposure to miracles (*chamatkar*) should lead an individual from human (*manava*) to god (*madhava*) and then to his transformation (*samskar*), through selfless service (*paropakar*) and ultimately Self-realization or self-identification with God (*sakshatkar*). To me, the key word in the above formula is *samskar*, which essentially means giving up demoniac (*asuric*) traits and acquiring divine (*daivic*) qualities.

Even two thousand years ago, Jesus said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Swami says, "Besides being spontaneous tokens of My love, My so-called miracles are to plant the seed of faith in the minds of unbelievers and to foster humility and veneration toward a higher power." **Baba's influence not only drastically changed my attitude toward His miracles, but it also convinced me of His divinity.**

Unity of Religions, Faiths, and Life

Regarding Baba's teachings through His discourses and writings, they stress a message that is truly universal. Sai Baba has declared that His divine descent as an Avatar is to repair the ancient path back to the divine, termed *Sanathana Dharma* (the eternal philosophy). Traditionally, *Sanathana Dharma* has been interpreted to specifically denote the Vedic religion, but Swami's unique contribution is to expand its scope to encompass the common or basic essence of all religions and faiths. **Search as you may, you will not find the slightest trace of dogmatism or sectarianism, much less fanaticism, in any of His teachings.** The divine Lord in His incarnations, including the most recent ones of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Shirdi Sai Baba, emphasized the harmony of all religions, addressing the needs of the times. The same Lord, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, has gone a step further to meet the needs of a changing society, in which, thanks to the rapid strides of science and technology, the world has shrunk so much that the human race must perforce learn to live together or else perish. Thus, Swami stresses not merely harmony, but the unity of all religions and also all aspects of life. This is stated succinctly in His famous declaration,

*There is only one religion,
the religion of love;
There is only one caste,
the caste of humanity;*

*There is only one language,
the language of the heart;
There is only one law,
the law of karma;
There is only one God,
and He is omnipresent.*

Not merely this, but Sri Sathya Sai Baba perhaps surpasses even the staunchest *advaitin* (one who believes in 'non-duality') when He says that there is no *padartha* (matter) in the universe; everything is only *parartha* (spirit). **He wants us to apply the collyrium of *prema* (love) and *jnana* (wisdom) to our eyes to see the *parartha* behind every *padartha*. By declaring that work is worship and duty is God, He urges us not to make any distinction between the secular and the spiritual.** His specific instructions on how to deify or spiritualize even our daily routines, such as bathing, cooking, and eating, are simply marvelous and astounding in their simplicity!



Unity Is Divinity, Purity Is Enlightenment

Of course, it is very difficult to pinpoint the core of Swami's teachings, which appeal to one and all. But I personally feel that **the central message of His teachings is contained in the theme He gave for the International Symposium held in Rome in October 1983, 'Unity is Divinity, Purity is Enlightenment.'**

These two brief sentences constitute the core and crux of all religions. The ultimate goal of human life is to realize the oneness of all existence (both animate and inanimate) as the divine essence. One can reach this goal by the purity of one's whole being. Did not Jesus, too, declare, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God?"

One might argue that unity and purity are age-old concepts. It is, therefore, necessary to elucidate, though briefly, **the unique contribution of Sri Sathya Sai Baba in providing a new focus and a fresh approach to these twin concepts,** to make them more easily understandable, practicable, and apt in the present context.

As stated, the prophets and Avatars who preceded Baba endeavored to preach harmony among diverse philosophies. **But Swami is now preaching and practicing the unity of not only all religions but also all aspects of existence, through examples of new analogies and parables that are easy to understand.**

For instance, the most long-lived illustrations in Vedanta of **the concept of unity in diversity** have been like this: the forms and names

of gold ornaments are many, but the gold in them is the same. In this example, it is not difficult to perceive that the common but concrete basis is gold, but one cannot easily perceive the common substance pervading the apparently highly diverse phenomena in the universe. The analogy that Swami gives would satisfy even the skeptics. **He says that just as we do not perceive electricity functioning through devices but we do perceive and utilize its various manifestations through devices such as neon lights and bulbs of various colors, shapes,**



and sizes, as well as fans, refrigerators, heating and welding appliances, there is only one unseen higher power behind all the diverse phenomena in the universe.

With regard to the **second concept of purity**, the exponents of *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Raja Yoga*, or *Jnana Yoga* have claimed the superiority of one yoga over another. Prophets and Avatars who preceded Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba have, of course, tried to point out that just as all roads lead to Rome, all yogas lead to the same goal. **But Swami integrates these yogas by giving simple examples, such as the following: *Karma Yoga* is the lamp, *Bhakti Yoga* is the oil, *Raja Yoga* is the wick and *Jnana Yoga* is the light.** With a marvelous stroke of His

unequaled genius, Swami provides a practical code of conduct: *sathya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, and *prema*, which synthesize and symbolize the yogas of *jnana*, *karma*, *raja*, and *bhakti* respectively. Thus, we witness in Swami the greatest unifying force the world has ever witnessed.

New Light on Scriptures

Bhagawan Baba is also unparalleled in putting across His message. His captivating parables in the form of *chinna kathas* (small stories) or *oka chinna udaharanamu* (one small example) are well-known. Equally well-known are His unrivaled plays on words, whether in Sanskrit, English, or Telugu. Moreover, He gives new insights by explaining the inner significance of the Puranas (sacred Hindu scriptures) and rituals. **The meanings He gives to some of the traditionally used words throw a flood of light, revealing new facets of age-old concepts.** For example, ***samadhi*** = *sama* + *dhi* (equal-mindedness or serenity), as against the popular notion of this being a superconscious state with loss of body consciousness; ***moksha*** = *moha* + *kshaya* (destruction of attachment is liberation); ***bhakti*** = a state where there is no *vibhakti* (non-separation from God as against the popular concept of bhakti as devotion). **Needless to say, the new insights given by Baba have practical implications for sincere, spiritual aspirants.**

Divine Glory and Mission

As for Swami's divine mission, even in His early youth, He declares that His main purpose is to bring back to the righteous path all those who have strayed from it. To me, the real miracle of Bhagawan Baba is His enormous influence on the lives of people the world over, as proved by the varied Sai literature in a variety of languages as well as the daily stream of devotees flooding into Sathya Sai Centers around the world.

The number of Sathya Sai Centers and institutions that are increasing in all the continents, and the various activities undertaken by them, aim at helping people of all ages, religions, and races to get rid of bad habits and practice wholesome attitudes of self-help and selfless service to society. These are enough to indicate the influence exerted by the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the daily conduct of people at large. **Like Sai Baba, no previous Avatar, during His lifetime, has been recognized, acknowledged, worshipped, and followed by such a wide cross-section of humanity, representing all countries, races, religions, and all rungs of society, including Vedic scholars as well as illiterate masses.**

As for myself, I can vouch without being egoistic that Baba's teachings have definitely changed my life for the better. About six months before I came to Prasanthi Nilayam in July 1983, I gave up eating non-vegetarian food. Ever since then, I have been getting up at 3 a.m. daily to engage in spiritual *sadhana*. I gave up viewing television, as well as listening to the radio and watching movies (except devotional ones). Soon, my





wife, son, and daughter-in-law, along with other family members, also followed my example. Following Bhagawan's program of 'Ceiling on Desires,' all of us reduced non-essential expenditures and invested the savings in service activities.

When I made up my mind to leave the USA and settle at Prasanthi Nilayam for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be near the living Avatar, my wife too readily agreed to follow me.

It is by His grace, again, that I placed myself at His disposal for the utilization of my services. Baba was gracious enough to give me the assignment of Honorary Adviser to the Social Work Department of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning at Prasanthi Nilayam. He also asked me to participate in the rural improvement proposed for the villages of Sri Sathya Sai Taluk. Soon thereafter, Swami also blessed me to share His sacred teachings with the devotees visiting

the Ashram from around the world, in the form of one-hour talks followed by Q&As.

Transformation Of Heart

I would like to give an instance when my wife and I followed Swami's instructions to cultivate forbearance and adopt a policy of overlooking insults and loving everyone, regardless of their shortcomings, or circumstances.

Before we left for the USA, unfortunately, a misunderstanding arose between us and a close relative's family. Consequently, my wife felt offended; and as a result, we were not on talking terms with them. Therefore, we did not take leave of them before departing for the USA. When we returned to India, two years later, because of our exposure to Swami's teachings, we went straight to their house and restored our former cordial feelings. But for our determination to follow Swami's teachings, we would not have done this, and we would have stood our ground, however wrong that would have been. This so-called 'prestige' is indeed a ramification of the ego.

Baba says the order of preference for a *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) should be God first, others next, and myself last. In short, prioritize 'S,' Swami first; 'a,' others next; and 'i,' the individual last. In line with this advice, when we returned to India and also when our sons with their families visited India, we spent most of our time at Prasanthi Nilayam basking in Swami's glory and His teachings, and only a minimum time with our relatives. Swami says, that if we are performing *puja* (worship), *japa* (repetition of divine names), or meditation and at that very moment someone needs our help, **we should not hesitate to leave our spiritual practice and rush to help others, because hands that help are holier than lips that pray.** There was an instance when I put this into prac-

tice. It was 4.30 a.m. and I was meditating in my residence at Prasanthi Nilayam. A lady devotee from the flat next door came and knocked on our door. She told me that her husband had suddenly developed a high fever and stomachache and needed a doctor to examine him immediately. Had I not become a devotee of Baba, I would, perhaps, have given her the name of the Prasanthi Nilayam block where she could find a doctor, and I would have returned to my meditation. But now Baba's words resounded in my mind. **So, I left meditation and went with her to fetch the doctor.** I got the required medical assistance for her in time, despite losing two hours of the precious *Brahma muhurtam* time for meditation.

These are all little acts, of course. **But, as Swami says, it is such small acts that**

contribute to building one's character and fostering one's spiritual growth over time.

It is difficult to verbalize the transformation that takes place within. **Suffice to say, I tried earnestly to practice Swami's teachings and earn His grace to reach the ultimate goal of effacing my ego and surrendering totally and unconditionally at His lotus feet. By His Grace, I accept everything (pain and pleasure) as His *prasad* (blessing), thereby achieving a sense of equanimity in every situation.**

Thus, I have the satisfaction of treading the path toward the ideal, thanks to Bhagawan's compassionate assurance: "*Why fear, when I am here?*"

Jai Sai Ram.

Dr. A. Adivi Reddy 
USA



Dr. A. Adivi Reddy obtained his bachelor's degree in agriculture from Madras University, India. He completed his Ph.D. at Cornell University, U.S.A., and served in many capacities at the Andhra Pradesh (A.P.) Department of Agriculture and at the A.P. Agricultural University in India. He retired as the director of the Extension Education Institute. He is the author of many publications and has received numerous awards.

He lived in the immediate divine presence of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in Prasanthi Nilayam for 14 years and also served as an honorary advisor to the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning for village improvement programs. He served in the Sri Sathya Sai Central office and as a Trustee of the Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust. In 1996, with the blessings and instructions from Bhagawan Baba, he wrote the book, 'Uniqueness of Swami and His Teachings.' He also authored a set of nine volumes on the unique teachings of Swami, titled, 'Sai Nava Ratna Maala,' or "Necklace of Nine Sai Gems."



Swami's Delays are Not Denials

My first memory of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is as a high school student in Fiji, in the early 1960s. I saw His photograph at the home of one of the earliest Sai devotees there. Afterwards, I didn't think more about it, and life went on. I went to Sydney for university education and returned to Fiji as a medical doctor. My wife, Swaran, had graduated as a doctor in Fiji. After the first military coup in Fiji in 1987, we, like several others, moved to Sydney, Australia, where Swaran and I both worked our way up to senior professional positions in Obstetrics & Gynecology.

In Sydney, more than two decades after I had first seen Swami's picture, I became aware of some of His teachings. Swaran had grown up in a family where both her parents were ardent Sai devotees. I often had lengthy

discussions with my father-in-law after his visits to Puttaparthi, and I was particularly interested in Swami's teachings on the negative effects of ego and attachment in our lives. This led me to sincerely start reading about Sai Baba and His advent. My wife and I also regularly discussed our Sai readings.

The initial pull gradually drew me deeper and deeper into His embrace. Soon, there was a realization that everything happening in our lives was by His grace and that, with His grace, anything is possible.

Love at First Sight

Our first visit to Puttaparthi was on December 31, 1994. I was there to be with my wife, who had promised her father that she would visit Prasanthi Nilayam. But when we first

In the past 14 years, the project has been living by Swami's message "Love All; Serve All." In the process, our lives have been gradually transformed...

saw Swami from a distance as He glided past, giving *darshan* to thousands of devotees sitting silently in adoration, it invoked an awe-inspiring feeling—it was love at first sight. As I sat there, I thought, "So you are the person whose picture I first saw in Fiji. You looked like a Fijian with your frizzy hair, but now I see someone who looks verily divine."

That first visit naturally led to regular annual or biannual visits to see Swami. We prayed fervently and wished for a close physical interaction with Him. However, at best, there was a glance and occasionally a furtive touch. Even then, after hours in the queue, one was lucky to get seated in the first few rows. Each visit to Puttaparthi was special. There were the darshans, bhajans, and encounters with long-standing devotees, along with listening to talks specially arranged for Western devotees and the discipline of the ashram. Additionally, the rebukes of the *sevadal* (volunteers) and the cold morning showers were all preparing us for our spiritual journey with Sai.

Once home, Sai literature, study circles, *satsangs*, and Sai Center activities drew us closer and closer to Swami, who revealed to us our own potential for goodness and godliness. As our commitment grew, so did our understanding. **We understood that through serving, we learned more about loving all.** This led us to attend a medical camp in an aboriginal settlement in Toomeelah, Northern New South Wales, Australia, in 2005. Toomeelah is not far from Tyalgum, where we attended our annual Sai Retreat in

2025. Tyalgum is in an ancient volcanic crater and has deep spiritual significance for the aboriginal people, which was palpable for us.

An Inspired Project

Soon, we were attending annual medical camps with devotees from Australia and New Zealand. Before long, we even started thinking about establishing a Sai Medical Centre in Fiji. But for that, we needed Swami's approval, which called for physical interaction with Him. This seemed to be an insurmountable challenge.

Many senior devotees encouraged us with kind words and advised, "When the time is right, it will happen." Each visit to Puttaparthi then became a mission for us to get His permission to realize our dream of setting up a medical center. Though we rationalized our repeated disappointments, our resolve was often challenged. **We found some solace in Shirdi Baba's words, *Shraddha, Saburi* (Faith, Patience).**

Through it all, we decided to continue our efforts. We acquired a block of land in Fiji, intending to return to our homeland and build a medical center with Swami's blessings. As soon as we had done that, at one of the medical camps in 2009, a devotee from New Zealand sought us out and challenged us, saying, "You keep talking about a Medical Centre in Fiji. If you are serious, start, and we will come and help you build it." Was this a challenge from Swami? **Swaran saw this clearly as the sign from Swami that we had been waiting for!**

Coming Full Circle

In February 2010, I received a call from Sri Lakshminarayana, the administrator of medical services at Puttaparthi, asking if I could help with a project in the General Hospital at the ashram. This came at an opportune time when I was invited to present a paper at a conference in Kathmandu, Nepal. I enthusiastically agreed to assist with the project at the ashram. I was also excited, hoping that I might be able to get close enough to Bhagawan to get His blessings for the Fiji project.

Just a week before my assignment was to start at Prasanthi Nilayam in April 2010, Mr. Lakshminarayana informed me that Swami would not be in Puttaparthi at that time because He would be blessing the cities of Delhi and Shimla. He suggested that I postpone my visit. I reassured him that, despite being disappointed that Swami would be away on travels, I would keep my commitment.

I arrived at Puttaparthi on April 18, 2010. It was a Sunday morning. The ashram looked deserted since Swami was not physically present. I was assigned a room, and I settled in for an afternoon nap. Suddenly, the *vedam* chanting began in the *mandir*.

I rushed out of the room to see Mr. Rati-lal Pala hurrying toward Sai Kulwant Hall! I asked him what was happening, and he said, "Swami has come back!"

Amazingly, it was in Mr. Pala's flat in Fiji that I had first seen Swami's photograph in the early 1960s! I felt something special from the 'Sai-incidence,' as things seemed to be coming full circle.

Downpour of Divine Grace

I made it to Sai Kulwant Hall in time. Due to my work assignment, I was allocated a seat on the veranda, so when Swami came, I was sitting near Him. Then everything happened quickly. I was kneeling before Him, seeking His approval and blessings for the Fiji project. **He approved it, blessed everyone involved, and gave me *padanamaskar*. The divine nod had finally come after 17 years! There was a sense of bliss that is beyond description.**

In September 2010, I was presenting a paper at a medical conference in Mumbai. Any trip to India would be incomplete without a visit to Puttaparthi. I spent a week at the ashram, and, once again, I was called by Swami. I was thrilled as He asked about the project and allowed me to show Him pictures, showing the progress of the project in Fiji.





Thus, the Viseisei Sai Health Centre was built and inaugurated on April 2, 2011, almost three weeks before Swami's Mahasamadhi. In the following week, the SSSIO Zone 3 Medical Camp was held at this new health center. The community was excited and grateful for the free local healthcare facility. **One of the local elders asked me why the logo says, "Love All, Serve All."** I explained it was what Sathya Sai Baba inspires us to do, adding that, without Baba, there would be no Viseisei Sai Health Centre.

Continued Grace

After startup, daily operational challenges and budget constraints began to stress me. In October 2011, Swaran went to Prasanthi Nilayam to serve at the Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital. I was able to join her for only a few days. Not having Swami physically present was difficult, and I was despon-

dent. However, Swaran reassured me that Swami was very much present with us and that I should visit the Mahasamadhi and have a 'heart-to-heart' talk with Him. When I did this, I instantly realized that the Medical Centre was Swami's project and that He would take care of it.

Swami is with us in every step as we try to follow His commandment, "Love All, Serve All." **He is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. We can be fearless in following His teachings, as He says, "Why fear when I am here?"**

I realized that I was not the doer, and that was an exhilarating and inspiring feeling. The moment I got the feeling and received this message, the 'messenger' disappeared! Resources immediately began to flow, and the Viseisei Health Centre, apart from providing primary health care, also became the

lead contributor in several health-related community projects. A colleague in Sydney, who hoped we would conduct a community screening program for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), volunteered to support the project. The donated amount eventually turned out to be \$108,000! **That figure made it clear to us that it was Swami's work again!**

Do Your Best God Does The Rest

In a dream, Swami had told Swaran, ***"You do your work with love and devotion, and I will take care of the rest."***

The Health Centre operates in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of Fiji and provides outpatient services, seeing approximately 100 patients daily. It has conducted outreach projects, serving over 180 villages and settlements, in empowering women and girls in reproductive health and social issues; screening for NCDs, promoting health and wellness for families; small community development projects such as providing clean water, and training Community Health Workers along with medical students.

In the past 14 years, the project has been living by Swami's message "Love All; Serve All." In the process, our lives have been gradually transformed because practicing unconditional love and service has helped us realize that we are serving no one but ourselves!

Over the recent years, we have had our own challenges in sustaining the Fiji project. **I have learnt to speak to Swami 'heart-to-**

heart' and surrender my concerns at His lotus feet. Solutions to almost all challenges appear almost as soon as we verbalize them, often from unexpected sources.

In 2024, a donor, who is not a Sai devotee, lent his support. Through his and others' generosity, the Viseisei Sai Health Centre is being expanded to add more space and a 'day surgery' unit. It will also have the capacity for specialist consultations in collaboration with, and the support of the Sai Medical Unit of SSSIO Zone 3 (Australia & PNG, New Zealand, and Fiji). **It is no coincidence that this expansion is happening in Swami's 100th year of advent.**

There is no doubt that Swami is omnipresent and awaits our call. He is all-knowing and ever-ready to support us in doing His work. **He is omnipotent, and with His protection, we can be fearless.** He says that by loving all and serving all, we can practice *nishkama karma* (action without attachment and doership) and, in the process, destroy our ego and sense of attachment and thus realize our full spiritual potential.

Swami says that if we offer our "availability" to Him, He will confer the "capability" to perform the work. In our journey with Sai, we need to be receptive to His beckoning to transform us so that we can grow spiritually. His divine grace is with us forever. We learnt the lesson that if we take one step toward Sai, He will take a hundred steps toward you.

Jai Sairam

Dr. Rajat Gyaneshwar
FIJI



Dr. Rajat Gyaneshwar resides in Fiji. He is an Emeritus Professor and the former dean of the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Fiji National University. He is also a former director of Women & Child Health, Sydney Southwest Area Health Service, Sydney, Australia.

Dr. Gyaneshwar has served in the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO) of Fiji for decades in various positions. He is the chairman of the Fiji Trust, and a past national council president of the SSSIO of Fiji. He is also the Chairman of the Viseisei Sai Health Centre Trust, where he is fully dedicated to serving the health-care needs of the local residents.



100th Birthday Celebrations of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba & 11th World Conference

19–23 November 2025

19 Nov 2025

Ladies Day

20-22 Nov 2025

11th World Conference

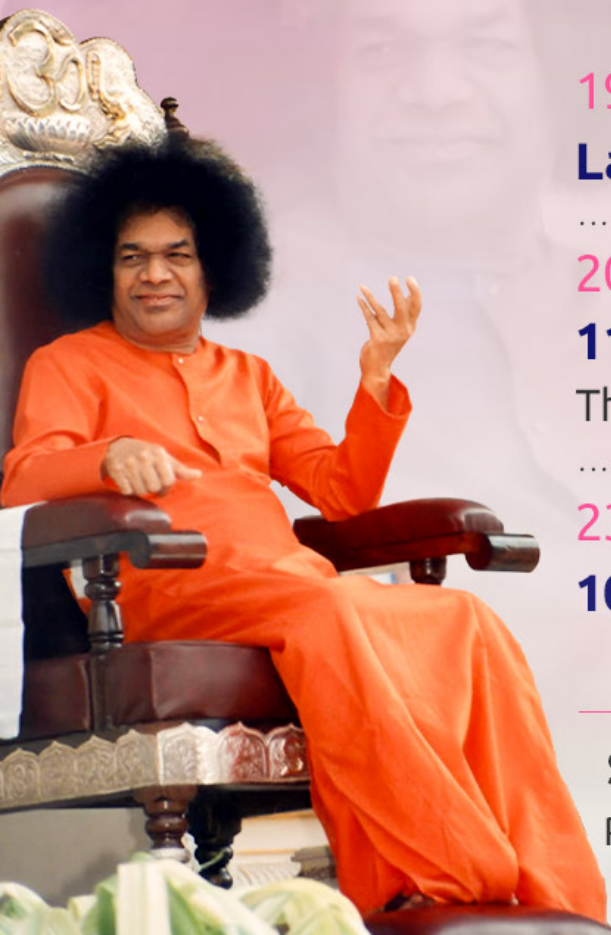
Theme - "Purity is Enlightenment"

23 Nov 2025

100th Birthday Celebrations



Scan the QR code
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Sai Prema Nilayam, Riverside, California

Register now: www.sathyasai100.org/registration



100TH
BIRTHDAY
OFFERINGS

Madagascar

Medical Camps



“Service to Man is Service to God”

As the devotees of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba around the world engaged in loving remembrance and worship of their Lord on the occasion of Aradhana Mahotsavam in April 2025, a team of 185 volunteers from the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO) implemented a service project of epic proportions. As a humble offering of love and service to the underprivileged people of Madagascar, medical camps were held from the 21st to the 25th of April in Antananarivo, providing expertise across 14 medical specialties to more than 6,600 patients. Rooted in the principles of Sai Ideal Healthcare, which is free, universal, compassionate, and state-of-the-art healthcare, the camp provided high-quality medical services to underserved communities. It also fostered unity, spiritual upliftment, and transformation among those who served and the recipients of service.

United International Team

This sacred mission was the culmination of months of preparation, beginning in December 2024 under Swami's loving guidance, that brought together His children from across the world. **The united force of 185 volunteers comprised an international team of 53 members, joined by 132 local volunteers.** There were 34 healthcare professionals and 19 general volunteers from Australia, Botswana, Canada, New Zealand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. They were nicely complemented by a local team of 48 healthcare professionals, 37 interpreters, and 47 general volunteers from Madagascar and Mauritius. Enthusiastic and capable young adults played an active role across all areas of service, constantly infusing fresh energy into the camp.

The healthcare team comprised specialists across general practice/family medicine, pediatrics, gastroenterology, cardiology, obstetrics & gynecology, surgery, ENT, phys-

iotherapy, pain management, dentistry, optometry, nursing, laboratory services, and pharmacy. General volunteers played crucial roles in critical areas, including interpretation, crowd control, registration, cooking, media, transportation, and cleaning. Fueling the entire activity was the kitchen seva team which worked tirelessly to provide hearty meals for the whole group. The groundwork for the camp was coordinated by the SSSIO Madagascar, under the leadership of Mr. Krishna Rambojun.

Pre-Camp Outreach

On the morning of April 19, Dr. Ramadevi Sankaran (Co-Chair of the SSSIO Medical Committee) conducted an **E.A.S.E.** workshop (focusing on **E**ating, **A**ttitude, **S**leep, and **E**xercise) at the Sai School in Antananarivo, impacting the lives of 250 children and parents. That same afternoon, **an insightful orientation was held on the core principles of Sai Ideal Healthcare for local healthcare professionals** by Dr. Sankaran and Dr. Dinesh Lal (Co-Chair of the SSSIO Medical Committee), Dr. Yatish Merchant (Member, SSSIO Medical Committee), Dr. Sunil Kadiyala (Zone 9 Medical Director), Mr. Ankur Patel (lead pharmacist) and Dr. Hasit Patel (General Physician).





On April 20, Easter Sunday, the team set up the campsite and then visited the Sai Center in Antananarivo where they served food to about 400 children. *Bhajans* and *prasadam* were a beautiful prelude to the wonderful and blissful days to follow.

The Fulfilling Camp Days

Following recommendations from the Ministry of Health, the medical camps were held in two interior locations in Antananarivo. Two Catholic schools were identified and prepared by the SSSIO of Madagascar. The respective Mayors extended full cooperation, facilitating local announcements and security arrangements. Ecole Catholique de Fiombonana St Vincent de Paul in Antananarivo hosted the camp for the first two days, and Ecole Catholique d'Andoharanofotsy St Pierre Malaza, Antananarivo hosted it for the next three days.

The SSSIO medical camp commenced on Monday, April 21, 2025. Every morning the international team would leave the hotel by 5:45 am in three vehicles, eager to see the patients. **But even more eager were the patients who would begin lining up as early as 3 am! In fact, on the final day of the camp, many patients chose to wait overnight starting at 6 pm the previous day!**

The crowd management team played a vital role throughout the process, patiently interacting with those waiting, and compassionately monitoring and coordinating an orderly flow of patients.

Over five days, an astounding total of 6,633 patients were served—the highest number recorded in any such medical camps by the SSSIO. Many of these patients received consultations across multiple disciplines, resulting in over 20,000 individual consultations. A humbling yet heartbreaking realization for the team was that, for some patients, this was the first-ever meeting with a doctor—aside from occasional immunizations at local health centers!

In addition to medical consultations, the SSSIO medical camp offered a wide range of services including blood tests, malaria screening, electrocardiograms, ultrasounds, echocardiograms, and cancer screening where necessary. Patients also benefited from minor surgical procedures, dental extractions, physiotherapy, and pain management, which were provided. The treatment was complemented by the distribution of medicines, eyeglasses, dental kits, and hygiene kits to those who needed them. An integral part of the “treatment” was a “treat,” snacks given to children accompanying patients in the waiting areas.

Highlights

1. General Medicine and Gastroenterology

The doctors treated a wide range of health issues, including high blood pressure, heart conditions, stroke aftereffects, diabetes, anemia, malnutrition, dehydration, digestive problems, joint pain, suspected TB, HIV, cancer, and skin infections such as scabies and fungal rashes. Empathetic care was given to patients who showed signs of emotional stress, possibly linked to social or alcohol-related issues. A few cases with serious stomach symptoms were given ultrasounds to rule out cancer and were referred for further tests if needed.

Dr. Hema Kamthamneni expressed her gratitude to Swami and added, “It has been a deeply rewarding and eye-opening experience in several ways, reminding me to be thankful, reinforcing the importance of accessible healthcare, and illustrating the profound impact that even small interventions can have on individuals and communities without borders

...As I reflect on this mission, I am reminded of the privilege and responsibility of being part of such an initiative. This medical camp was not just about providing treatment—it was about fostering hope, building connections, and reaffirming the fundamental right to health for all.”



2. Cardiology

The team of three cardiologists conducted daily ECGs and echocardiograms, averaging 7 to 9 of each procedure per day. These tests helped doctors make quick and accurate decisions for treatment.



3. Pediatrics

Many children saw a doctor for the first time ever in their lives. Most suffered from health problems that could be prevented with better access to food, hygiene, and healthcare! Common issues included allergies, asthma, coughs, stomach infections, dehydration, poor nutrition, skin problems, seizures, delayed growth, ear infections, dental decay, and birth-related conditions. Some children needed surgery for hernias and other treatable issues and were given referrals for further care. The case of the girl who couldn't attend school can also be found in an article in this issue.

To help beyond the camp, the team suggested taking the following steps in the future to provide sustainable and meaningful support to needy children.

- A surgical camp for children who need operations.
- Regular clinics for asthma and epilepsy management
- School-based health education focusing on hygiene and nutrition.
- Annual dental care campaign.
- Partnering with schools for regular health check-ups.
- Training local doctors and nurses with remote assistance from international medical specialists.

Children are considered as representatives of God on earth. This was evident from the testimony of Dr. Ramadevi Sankaran, who shared, “Swami’s love and energy were felt and experienced throughout the camp. On Aradhana day, April 24, I was intensely praying to see Swami and asking for signs of His presence. The next second I lifted my head and saw a boy leaning against the door wearing a t-shirt that said, ‘LOVE 23.’ **That was an instantaneous response to the prayer.**”

4. Gynecology

Two gynecologists saw up to 250 women daily, assisted by a trainee doctor. They offered pregnancy check-ups using a portable ultrasound, provided nutritional supplements, and treated common issues like ovarian cysts and fibroids. Ultrasound tests helped identify serious conditions, including late-stage cancers, which were referred for further care. This service was made possible by the unwavering local support received.



5. Surgery

The surgical team saw 30–50 patients. Several children had hernia. There were also cases of thyroid swellings and advanced breast cancer. The team performed 7–15 procedures each day, including minor surgeries and joint injections. They treated conditions like dislocated shoulders, knee issues, cysts, lipomas, ingrown toenails, and tongue-tie in children.



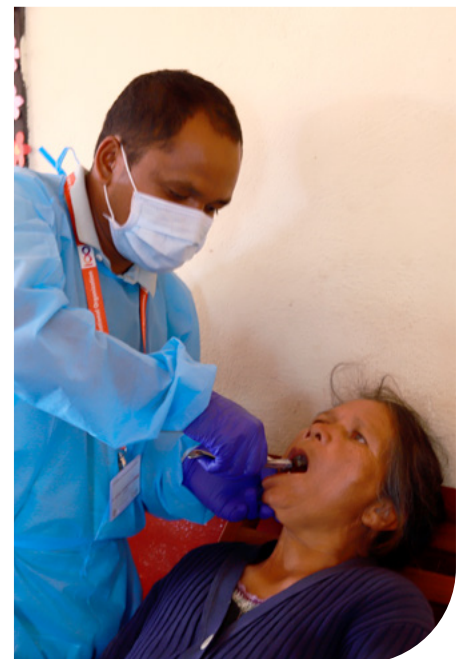
6. Emergency Care

With Swami's blessings, the team handled emergencies very well. **A 4-month-old baby in breathing distress was treated with medication and monitored over two days until it fully recovered.** A young man who collapsed due to dangerously high blood sugar was stabilized, given insulin, provided health advice and referred to the local Sai Clinic for continued care.



7. Dentistry

The five-member dental team treated around 300 patients daily, performing 375–400 tooth extractions each day. Due to high demand, the focus was solely on extractions, providing hundreds of people relief from severe dental pain and infections.



8. Physiotherapy

The two-member physiotherapy team helped restore comfort and movement for many patients, often for the first time. They distributed wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches, braces, and inserts, giving mobility, dignity, and hope to those who had long struggled with physical challenges. The impact of these assistive devices was immediately visible, which moved Dr. Ramesh Malladi and Dr. Vasudevan Suryakumar. “Each day, we had the opportunity to serve around 80 patients, many of whom had limited access to rehabilitation services. Witnessing the immediate impact of our care, from restored mobility to renewed hope, was both humbling and inspiring.”



9. Pain Management

This department remained very busy throughout the camp handling a steady flow of patients and delivering impactful care. The patients were not only from Madagascar but also members of the medical team as well!



10. Ear Nose Throat (ENT)

The two-member ENT team examined approximately 200 to 250 patients daily, mostly for allergies and nasal issues like deviated septum. Common conditions included ear infections, chronic ear discharge, defective hearing, tonsillitis, and sinus problems

The atmosphere at the medical camps was akin to a large family gathering. As well stated by Dr. Balakrishnan Raju, “My sincere thanks to our Bhagawan for the chance of serving in this camp. I loved meeting fellow doctors and volunteers and it felt like a large family.”



11. Eye Department

The Eye Department at the 2025 Madagascar Medical Camp had six optometrists (three international, and three local), supported by four volunteers and interpreters. Over five days, they saw 2,004 patients and distributed 2,088 prescription glasses and 1,000 sunglasses.

Most patients had their vision tested and received glasses to improve their sight for distance and reading. One example is a 12-year-old boy who had his first eye test. He had trouble seeing the school board and experienced itchy eyes due to mild allergies and a common vision problem (astigmatism). **His great joy in being able to read the board easily was something that must be experienced to be understood!** Most of the patients were happy with being able to read fine print, especially to read their bible without having eyestrain and headaches.

12. Pharmacy

A total of 2,129 kilograms of medicines and medical supplies were used during the camp. The most commonly used medicines included pain relievers such as ibuprofen and paracetamol, stomach medicines like omeprazole, vitamins and iron supplements, antibiotics including amoxicillin and doxycycline, allergy medicines like cetirizine, and steroid nasal sprays.



13. Nursing

The nursing team was essential to keeping operations running smoothly and providing comprehensive care before patients saw doctors. They checked vital signs, weight, and blood sugar, took patient histories, and helped direct patients to the right specialists, ensuring patients received well-rounded care throughout the camp.

14. Laboratory Services

Several tests were offered on-site, including checks for control of diabetes (HbA1c), cholesterol, hemoglobin, malaria, blood glucose, and white blood cell counts. These tests helped diagnose conditions such as anemia, diabetes, and malaria in both adults and children.



An Offering of Gratitude for the 100th Birthday of Bhagawan

The Madagascar Medical Camp concluded on April 25 **with a heartfelt closing ceremony**, where SSSIO leaders and organizers expressed deep gratitude to all who contributed their time, skills, and financial support. A follow-up EASE workshop was held the next day, nurturing values of service among local students.

The team looks forward to expanding the permanent Sai Clinic in Antananarivo from

two days a week to five days a week and appointing a dedicated pediatrician, given the high number of children treated. **The camp was a resounding success and the referred cases are being managed by the local team for long-term care. This entire mission, dedicated to Swami for His 100th Birthday,** was carried out as a prayer of love in action—offered with devotion, humility, and gratitude at His divine lotus feet.

International Medical Committee
SSSIO





Yes, and Everything After



It was day three of the SSSIO's medical mission in April 2025. We were in Antananarivo, a city in Madagascar vibrant with life, yet shadowed by inequity. Its streets hum with motion and resilience. But beneath that energy, I saw a fragile healthcare system, where access was uneven, mental health sidelined, and survival often came before care.

Most of the patients we saw were adults living with chronic conditions, often undiagnosed or untreated due to limited resources, high medication costs, and the deeper social determinants of health. It was a familiar landscape, one I had seen across the world, including in my own clinic on the South Side of Chicago—a community rich in culture and resilience, yet long shaped by disinvestment, structural racism, and deep health inequities.

Noro, my translator by what felt like divine design, was fluent in French, English, and Malagasy. She was more than just a linguistic bridge, and over the days we worked together, she ended up being my emotional compass, grounding me in moments when language alone couldn't

carry the weight of what we witnessed. A budding psychologist, she brought a rare sensitivity to each encounter.

Many patients looked puzzled when we asked about their home or work environment, what they valued about themselves, or what brought them joy. Perhaps it didn't fit the idea of what a medical encounter was supposed to be or resonate with what they were used to being asked.

But for us, those questions were quiet invitations—openings into the stories behind the symptoms. What surfaced often revealed pain far deeper than the physical: emotional burdens, mental strain, the weight of survival. **In those moments, medicine became conversation—and healing began, perhaps, simply by being heard.**

As the clinic cleared out for lunch, a girl rushed in and dropped into the empty chair in front of us, registration slip in hand. "CC: abdominal pain" was scribbled on it. "She's only sixteen," Noro noted. I hesitated briefly; she wasn't technically in my

consultation area as an adult provider. But something in her pleading eyes made me say 'yes.' Noro nodded. We would see her. Her symptoms, vague epigastric pain, were familiar. But in someone so young, they felt out of place. Her story was plausible, yet something didn't sit right. A quiet unease lingered over us. Finally, pushing past my own bias, I asked Noro to pose a difficult question:

"Does she drink?"

The girl answered, "**Yes.**"

Even Noro looked surprised. "She's been drinking daily since age ten."

No hesitation. No shame. Just a fact. Alcohol had long been a part of her environment, given her parents' regular use. As her pain intensified, she explained that she increasingly reached for more alcohol to numb the discomfort. It was the only thing she knew to do.

With quiet grace, Noro leaned in, not in her role at the clinic, but as a young woman who understood what it meant to be vulnerable and unseen. ***We knew that we couldn't end the visit with a prescription and counseling alone.*** We looked at each other and shared an unspoken 'yes.' A thought from our monthly *Geetha Vahini* study circle echoed in my mind: "When the why is clear, the how is easy."

This teenager had stirred something in us. In her, we saw a younger version of ourselves, carrying too much yet still holding hope. She had to leave school after fourth grade; not from lack of interest, but because her family couldn't afford the fees. Education, like healthcare, also seemed to be more of a privilege than a right.

Practicing in underserved surroundings over the years has quietly reshaped how I understand my role as a physician. It extends beyond diagnosing and prescribing and often involves advocating within complex, fractured systems, and confronting the social drivers that shape health. **At that moment, I was reminded that my role was to help open a door beyond the circumstances that confined her. Not just to offer immediate care, but to offer hope for the possibility of change, to a future rooted in dignity and hope.**

And suddenly in that mindful reflection, the answer to 'how?' manifested. I asked her, "If given the chance, would you like to go back to school?" "**Yes,**" she said without hesitation.

Another 'yes.' Quiet. Hopeful.

"What would you like to be?"

"A doctor."

"Why?"

"So, I can take care of my parents. And kids like me."

No self-pity. Just a quiet resolve.

Just three days before this encounter we had witnessed the Sathya Sai School of Madagascar in action offering children free, holistic, values-based education. I ran to find Aunty Meera, a radiant force in the Sai community who oversees the Sathya Sai School in Tana with her family and volunteers. Unabashedly, I asked for her help to see if this girl could enroll in her school. Aunty Meera smiled with a twinkle in her eyes. "Let's see what we can do," which was her way of saying 'yes.'

Later, she met Noro and the girl. They spoke softly in a mix of French and Malagasy, getting to know one another the way women across generations do, with

warmth, curiosity, and quiet trust. After a while, Aunt Meera leaned forward, eyes full of compassion, and asked “Would you like to study at our school?” The girl smiled; an overwhelmed, bright, and unexpected smile. A face that looked dejected suddenly burst into light bubbling with enthusiasm. Another ‘yes.’ Perhaps the **most important one** of these encounters!

Hugs were shared, and the young patient disappeared from our sight. As Noro and I unpacked the experience, we felt that perhaps the real work lies in saying ‘yes’ to the unexpected opening, to the quiet pull of divine purpose, and to tune in to the sacred flow that uses us as instruments of the divine.

We hope to hear that one day she has found her way back to the school and pursued the dream she once shared. That part of her story remains unwritten but is full of possibility. Her quiet courage

mirrored what we hadn’t yet named. Her vulnerability stirred something that radiated light and was essential; a reminder that resilience can be tender and shared fragility can be a quiet tether between souls.

It felt like a breath of something sacred, inviting us to stay in the flow; be present, open, and curious about where it might lead.

In global healthcare, stories often end this way—on the edge of possibility. We don’t always get to follow up, know the outcome, and the closure. Still, there were many ‘yeses’ that day—hers, ours, and Aunt Meera’s. A simple, powerful word. ***Yes. It’s not always in the giving but in the quiet receiving of truth, of emotion, of presence, where the real shift begins. And that, too, begins with a yes.***

Dr. Geetha Govindarajan

USA



Geetha Govindarajan MD, PhD, MPH is a physician-scientist and public health practitioner trained in internal medicine, cardiovascular physiology, and public health. As Director of Clinical Innovation at a large community health center in Chicago, she leads population health efforts that blend digital tools, integrative care, and equity for marginalized communities. Her journey from her young adult years onwards has included leadership and service through the SSSIO, including a free clinic, deepening her understanding of healing and shared purpose.

LOVE IN ACTION



CANADA

Planting Trees on a Windy Spring Day

On the extremely cold, and windy morning of April 26, 2025, volunteers from the Pickering and Durham Sai Centers in Canada gathered with warmth in their hearts to plant 60 trees as a service to Mother Earth. **Held in observance of the auspicious 100th Birthday celebrations of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**, this heartfelt initiative was guided by Swami's teachings on selfless service and love for nature. Devotees of all ages came with gloves, shovels, and smiles, ready to turn a cold day into one of love, warmth, and selfless service.



As families, youth, and elders worked side by side, each tree planted became a tribute to Swami's universal message of unity, love, and environmental stewardship. Sixty trees were successfully planted. This was more than just a community service project; it was an act of love, a beautiful reminder that with Swami's grace even the coldest winds cannot deter hearts warmed by devotion.



COLOMBIA

Humane and Human Connection for the Elderly

Since 2023, ten SSSIO volunteers in Colombia have been providing loving care to over 100 elderly residents at the San Joaquín and Santa Ana Geriatric Homes, located in the municipality of San Francisco, Cundinamarca, as well as at four other locations in Bogotá. The dedicated volunteers bring love, joy, and entertainment to the seniors, in addition to basic necessities such as food and warm clothing. Many of the elderly residents in these homes have been abandoned by their families, and the presence and attention of the volunteers serve as a vital source of comfort and human connection for them.

As a gesture of compassion and empathy, some volunteers dress as clowns to bring joy



and fun to the moments shared. This year, 14 elderly residents at the Funza unit received sweatshirts, snacks, and food supplies on January 18. On March 16, 2025, 45 elderly residents in the San Francisco unit received bed linens, a snack, and food supplies. **These acts of loving service, in addition to material donations, also bring comfort, dignity, and joy to the elderly.**



SRI LANKA

Uplifting Communities with Love and Care

In March 2025, the Northern Region of the SSSIO Sri Lanka conducted two transformative Village Improvement Projects (VIPs) in the Jaffna district—one on March 2, 2025, in Palaly and another on March 24, 2025, in Navalady. These initiatives help to uplift rural communities through medical care and spiritual guidance. They also assist community members in earning a living to become self-reliant by providing livestock such as goats and cattle, saplings that yield commercial crops, or instruments like sewing machines for cottage industries.

In Palaly, 82 individuals, including 45 resettled families, benefited from values-based sessions, medical awareness, and the distribution of over 120 fruit saplings and planting



kits. Approximately 200 people were served meals lovingly. In Navalady, health check-ups were provided for 70 people, including home visits for the elderly. Over 250 meal packs were distributed, along with coconut and fruit saplings, and Sai-Protein mix was given to children under five. **Driven by dedicated Sai volunteers from Jaffna and Point Pedro, both projects reflected Swami's ideals of love, selfless service, and spiritual upliftment.**



USA

Sustained Selfless Service to Alleviate Food Insecurity

In Lowell, Massachusetts, USA, where food insecurity affects 40% of residents, especially those in Asian and Hispanic communities, monthly Sai Unity Center Pantry Service, an initiative of the Love All Serve All (LASA) Foundation, stands as a beacon of compassion.

The Sai Unity Center Pantry hosts monthly grocery distributions, that provide families with a dignified, choice-based shopping experience that reduces waste and meets individual needs. For those unable to visit, volunteers provide home deliveries, and a mobile pantry extends services to remote areas. Fresh produce from the center's community garden promotes healthier meals, while partnerships with the Merrimack Valley Food Bank and Lowell



Alliance ensure a steady food supply for those most in need.

This initiative unites a community of volunteers dedicated to alleviating food insecurity and providing nourishment while fostering a sense of dignity and empowerment for the recipients. **Inspired by the message of Sri Sathya Sai Baba that feeding the hungry is one of the highest forms of service, Sai volunteers work tirelessly to offer nutritious food supplies.**

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



glory of
Womanhood

I Take Care
of You

SOMETIME IN 1982, WHILE OUTDOORS ONE NIGHT, AND GAZING AT THE STARS IN THE SKY, I SOFTLY SAID, “GOD IS ON EARTH IN HUMAN FORM, AND I WANT TO SEE HIM.” Less than a week later, a friend showed me a photo of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and quietly stated, “He is my teacher, and He lives in India.” As we sat and continued talking, we simultaneously became aware of a golden aura expanding throughout the entire room, and I saw the hem of an orange robe floating in the aura of light. Neither of us was startled or frightened. **As the glowing aura intensified, my friend excitedly exclaimed, “Sai Baba is here! I feel His presence!”** I calmly responded, **“I feel it too, and what a warm, wonderful feeling of love!”** The experience left my friend in an exalted state of happiness and joy.

As a result of other spiritual experiences throughout life, I calmly accepted the phenomenal mystical experience with no fear or excitement, but with the acceptance of it being divinity displaying its majesty.

After this experience, numerous problems began surfacing, and it seemed every aspect of my life began turning upside down, inside out, and spinning out of control. Utter chaos reigned! **I made agonizing pleas to my beloved Lord Jesus for help, for answers, and some sort of understanding.**

A Religious Background Filled with Spiritual Experiences

I grew up in an African Methodist Episcopal Church founded by my grandmother and her sister, my great aunt. The church had begun virtually in the living room of my aunt. Over the years, the church moved to a basement with no structure on the main floor. Slowly, with persever-

ance, dedication, much hard work, and sacrifice, those two determined ladies built the church building.

We all loved Jesus a lot! Most times, we loved attending church and all the church services such as Sunday School classes (similar to SSE), prayer meetings, choir practice, revivals, conferences, etc. It was also a stern family stipulation that all the youth must attend! The church strongly supported its youth parishioners, encouraged higher education, and provided scholarships for those going off to college. Most importantly, there were numerous spiritual experiences of reaching higher realms or levels of consciousness, which I can now name as bliss; knowledge that there were much greater things beyond appearances and experiences on a physical level. However, there was a part of me that felt untapped and unfulfilled.

In the midst of the “storm” of my life that came after that mystical experience of seeing Sai Baba, one day I was in a conversation with a friend, a Christian Pentecostal minister. **In the middle of a sentence, he suddenly stopped talking and said, “I see someone standing beside you—a brown man with lots of bushy hair, wearing a long orange robe. He wants you to know that God is very close to you, that He loves you very much, and that He is taking care of you.”**

Sathya Sai Baba is God in Human Form

Soon after this experience with the minister, I began experiencing a strong, overwhelming sense of an upcoming trip, but there were no indications of where, when, or how. Common sense assured me that a trip was simply not feasible on my tight budget. The puzzling, intu-

**During one such interview, Swami stated,
“You worry about your future. I take care of you.”
Years later, in another interview, He lovingly
but sternly said, “You worry about your future.
I TOLD you I take care of you!”**

itive feeling steadily grew stronger. I felt a ‘force’ pushing me to put all my household items in storage and move. I made arrangements to temporarily move in with my brother and his family. Rather hesitantly, I told him, “I’ll be leaving on a trip in a few weeks or so, but where to, I don’t know.” I couldn’t imagine what he must have thought of me; probably that his sister was losing her mind!

Ten days after the move, the friend who had shown the photo of Sathya Sai invited me to join her for a spiritual meeting at the Ebell Theater in Los Angeles, California. After arriving, I learned it was a Sathya Sai Baba public meeting. Guest speakers spoke of their phenomenal experiences with Him, and we saw a film about Him, His teachings, and His Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV). His appearance was extraordinarily captivating, and His golden brown face glowed with love, tenderness, and compassion. In the film, as He walked across the sand toward the large crowd waiting to see Him, I realized that He wasn’t walking like a human being; He was simply gliding. My eyes intently followed Him on the screen. His presence permeated the entire auditorium. At some point, only His face appeared, and His eyes, the most astoundingly, incredibly, beautiful eyes, looked directly into mine. **In an instant,**

I experienced, without a doubt, that Sathya Sai Baba is God in human form.

A Dream Come True Experience

The day after the public meeting, in July 1983, I had my first dream of Sathya Sai. **In the dream, He and I stood under a tree on a hill overlooking a village with three mountains in the background. It looked and felt incredibly peaceful.** He and I stood next to a large golden globe of the world on a pendulum. He was about to place me on the globe with Him, go to the village, and then to the highest mountaintop. (I later learned this is the meditation tree behind the mandir, and the village is Prasanthi Nilayam.) The dream was very vivid, and in beautiful, vivid colors.

Amazingly, the next day, a one-way airline ticket arrived in the mail! The same friend who had shown me His picture and invited me to the public meeting, repeatedly assured me that the ticket was indeed from Sai Baba and that He was inviting me to visit Him in India.

In the fall of 1983, I departed from Los Angeles, on a journey to see Sri Sathya Sai Baba. There was an intuitive feeling that, as a result of the trip, my life would never be the same. **Somehow, I had a deep trust and faith that He would always be with me through the upcoming life-changing journey.**

Onboard the 'Sathya Sai Liberation Express'

At the time, I had no idea my trip would last exactly one year. **Sathya Sai, Swami, lovingly guided, directed, and sustained me on every leg of the journey, with a one-way ticket to unfamiliar lands, unknown people, and His physical presence.**

The journey took me to England for a stay, then to Rome in October 1983 for a Sathya Sai Baba Conference titled, 'Unity is Divinity–Purity is Enlightenment', back to the UK, and then on to India. I arrived in Prasanthi Nilayam on the night of November 21, 1983. A huge crowd had already gathered for the upcoming Sathya Sai's 58th birthday celebration and an SSEHV Conference. That night, I slept in the sheds on a straw mat on the floor, the only accommodation available because of the crowds. I was late for *darshan* the next morning and ended up seated in the last row. I sat there, overwhelmed and in awe while anticipating the arrival of Baba. One of the *sevadals* began poking my back and motioning to me to move up as she commanded the other ladies to clear the way. She continued pushing me forward until I ended up in the front row!

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, Sathya Sai appeared and stood on the *mandir*. **There are absolutely no words to describe the appearance and aura of God in human form, but I can say He was radiantly more beautiful than in the videos shown in Los Angeles.** He stepped off the *mandir* onto the sand and slowly walked to where I was sitting. He stopped, stood before me, looked



deeply into my eyes, and gave me the inner message, "I want you to know that I know you are here." My journey on the 'Sai Liberation Express' had begun, and my stay in India lasted nine months. The untapped and unfulfilled feelings I previously mentioned vanished, as if they had never existed.

During the next few days, I was invited to attend the SSEHV Conference, which enhanced my understanding of the program that began in England with Victor and Genevieve Kanu. I did not have the faintest idea then that SSEHV would become a major part of my life.

Spiritual Experiences Continue

Shortly after returning from the first trip to Prasanthi Nilayam, I experienced a profound dream of Krishna and Sathya Sai. In the dream, I was sitting on the street curb with the people who lived on the street and neighboring streets of my earlier years, anxiously waiting for Krishna to come and give *darshan*. **When Krishna came and stood in front of me, He changed to Sathya Sai.** Then Swami and I joined my aunt (who founded the church) and went to her home, which was a few houses down from my home. She went to her kitchen and began

“I am grateful to Him that in His own timing, children and adults around the world are being exposed to SSEHV, His divine gift, and grasp the opportunity to access and manifest the innate human values, and the divinity within themselves”

cooking while Swami and I stayed in her living room. Swami was very happy and so very, very loving! Obviously, this entire community was Krishna devotees in previous lifetimes, but they were now Christians, basking in the same divine love.

Also, while I was in Rishikesh in 1984 walking along the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains along the Ganges, I inwardly asked for a memento to take back from this holy place. Looking down at the ground, I saw a stone that stood out from the other stones. It was clearly in the shape of a heart with what appeared to be veins running through it. I knew there was a deep spiritual significance connected to the stone and the energy that emanated from it. **When it was later shown to a group of Sai Spiritual Education students in the USA, they saw Sathya Sai’s face in it. When I showed the stone to my mother, she saw the face of Jesus on it.** During her illnesses, many times, Jesus would physically appear at the foot of her bed and assure her that He was always with her and that she would recover from the illness, which she always did.

Sathya Sai Education in Human Values

Within a year after returning to the USA from India, I was mentored into working

with SSEHV in the community and began learning the art of integrating human values into all levels of planning, development, and implementation of youth and adult programs. **SSEHV, God’s gift to all humanity, experienced in heart-to-heart connections with community persons from a variety of ages, backgrounds, cultures, and religions, can be summed up in one word... bliss!**

An Example of the Impact of SSEHV on the Community

According to a public school counselor, “The Sathya Sai Education in Human Values program has proven to be priceless. I have had the opportunity to observe pre-Sathya Sai and post-Sathya Sai children. **Children who were not previously exposed to the Sathya Sai program often exhibit an inability to tolerate others’ opinions, differences, or choices. However, after being introduced to Sathya Sai, not only do the children learn to tolerate others’ differences, opinions, and choices, but they learn how to disagree peacefully.** Sathya Sai appeals to all senses, allowing no child to be left behind. Whether children are auditory, visual, or kinetic learners, the program reaches them all. Each lesson is linked with a culminating life-applicable lesson. The lessons not only enhance the children’s ability to learn but also permit

the teachers to be creative as well. The lessons are designed so that they can be comprehensively mastered by the children. ..." (After describing the five techniques, the counselor continues)... "In conclusion, a life-applicable lesson is introduced by the teacher, giving the child the chance to see how they can link the character trait or human value into their personal lives. The Sathya Sai program is truly invaluable."

*Public School Counselor, M.Ed., PLPC
Lead SSEHV Teacher at United Church
Community Centers*

I am grateful to Him that in His own timing, children and adults around the world are being exposed to SSEHV, His divine gift, and grasp the opportunity to access and manifest the innate human values, and the divinity within themselves. **As a result, they will live noble, peaceful, happy, and productive lives, thus bringing peace to the world.**

Coming Full Circle

In a dream years later, I saw that it is the heart-to-heart connection with God that

really matters, and this, in turn, eliminates the need for words. After all these years, I still struggle to find words to express my experiences with God in His form and formless aspects. Yet, I felt my story coming full circle based on Swami's statements during the many interviews that He lovingly blessed me with.

During one such interview, Swami stated, "You worry about your future. I take care of you." Years later, in another interview, He lovingly but sternly said, "You worry about your future. I TOLD you I take care of you!"

These words took me back in a flash to the words of the Christian Pentecostal minister! Swami was obviously referring to the words that He made that minister speak to me back then: "He wants you to know that God is very close to you, that He loves you very much, and that He is taking care of you."

Isn't knowing that more than enough for my life?

Ms. Doris Hampton 
USA



Ms. Doris Hampton hails from Missouri, USA. She pledged her heart to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba during her first visit to Him in 1983. She is a faculty member at the Institute of Sathya Sai Education-USA, and a member of the SSSIO International Education Committee since 2000. Doris served as a Marketing Consultant in many well-known organizations and is now retired.

Over 30 years, she has trained and implemented Sathya Sai Education in Human Values in numerous community and school programs in many countries. Ms. Doris Hampton is the author of the SSEHV Global Compendium published by the SSSIO Education Committee and Co-author of the SSEHV Manual for the Community and the SSEHV-Approaching the Community Handbook. She has traveled to many countries, sharing Swami's love and message.



from the International Sai Young Adults



The spirit of the 'Three Wise Men' came alive in the Dominican Republic in early 2025, as the Sai Young Adults (YAs) implemented their traditional "Give Me a Toy" service project. With a mission to bring smiles and hope to children in vulnerable situations, four events were organized across the country to give gifts, reflecting the message of Sri Sathya Sai Baba from May 15, 1971, "Service is the sincerest form of adoration of God."

It all began on January 5, 2025, at the Sathya Sai Human Values School in La Vega, where laughter echoed through the classrooms, and more than 210 toys found their way into eager little hands bringing joy. Children from the school and surrounding communities came together to celebrate through music, games, and values-based activities that gently emphasized gratitude and solidarity.

A week later, on January 12, the spirit of service traveled to Dr. Arturo Grullón Pediatric Hospital in Santiago. Here, 110 toys were gifted to young patients, turning hospital bedsides into spaces of cheer. **Volunteers shared not just gifts but heartfelt words of hope, lighting up the halls with warmth and encouragement.**



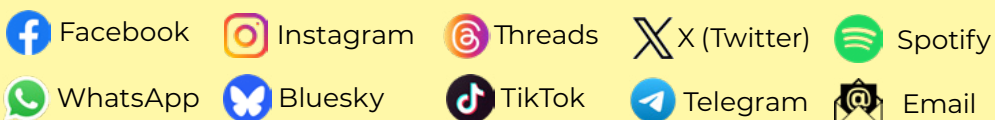
On January 19, Young Adults visited the Gozen Orphanage in San Francisco de Macorís. With arms full of toys, clothing, food, and of course pizza and ice cream, the Sai youth spent a meaningful day with the children. A human values class, interactive games, and sharing snacks created moments of connection and joy that will be fondly remembered.

Finally, the journey reached its joyful conclusion on February 1 at the Remar Foundation Children's Home in Santo Domingo East. Here, 50 toys were distributed amidst fun, laughter, and team-building games that nurtured the children's sense of self-worth and camaraderie.

This initiative, which touched the lives of hundreds of children and Young Adults, transcended material gifts, leaving a lasting impact on the hearts of those who served. Each toy was a living reminder of Swami's words from November 15, 1975, "Seva (selfless service) brings you nearer to Me." As the campaign wrapped up, the Sai Young Adults renewed their commitment to be instruments of love and to bring hope to those in need. This experience strengthened the realization that when we serve with pure hearts, we not only transform others' lives, we also transform ourselves.



Follow Young Adults on Social Media



yacoordinator@sathyasai.org | <https://sathyasai.org/ya>

THE MIRROR WITHIN



Reflect
Reconnect
Realize

The Young Adults National Retreat of Argentina was held at the Noccan Kani House in El Recreo, Santa Fe province, from March 1-4, 2025. The House belongs to SSSIO Argentina and in 1995, an album consisting of photos, including the building's construction, was blessed by Swami. It has since been preserved at the Sri Sathya Sai Center of Santa Fe. **Twelve YAs from different provinces gathered to immerse themselves in a retreat highlighted by spiritual growth, reflection, and connection—all offered with love at Swami's divine Feet.**

The retreat featured a diverse and enriching program. It included a session on physical well-being titled "Active Life, Happy Life! Exercising with Swami," the sacred *vedic* ritual of *Agni Hotra*, yoga sessions, and a tree planting activity. A workshop titled "The Mirror" encouraged participants to see themselves, recognize the divinity in all creation, and realize that the external world reflects our inner reality. YAs also engaged in a creative group activity composing *bhajans* and visited the Mocoví indigenous community. There, they learned about the community's way of life, spiritual traditions, and their worship of the one Omnipresent God. The program also included two inspiring talks; one focused on storytelling through personal experiences and another sharing personal insights from the time spent in Swami's *ashram*. A bus tour of local tourist sites added a touch of exploration and fellowship.

Grateful hearts overflowed with joy as the participants thanked Swami for the opportunity to share this sacred journey with fellow spiritual aspirants from all over the country. **The retreat was a powerful reminder of unity in diversity and that all are One.**

Red Envelopes of Love



On January 25, 2025, the Sai Young Adults of Hong Kong hosted a heartwarming Chinese New Year (CNY) service at the HK Baptist Mr. & Mrs. Aue Shue Hung Rehabilitation and Healthcare Home. Sixteen Young Adults came together to bring joy to 30 elderly residents, creating a day filled with laughter, connection, and cultural celebration.

The YAs organized a variety of engaging activities rooted in Chinese culture and values. A calligraphy session allowed residents to paint meaningful written characters symbolizing happiness, health, and prosperity, fostering both creativity and cultural pride. A lively CNY-themed bingo game and a memory card game centered on Chinese food and Hong Kong landmarks kept spirits high while stimulating cognitive function. Simple hand exercises were introduced, promoting physical well-being and encouraging mobility among the participants.

In addition to the activities, the Young Adults thoughtfully prepared essential items, such as tissue rolls, winter socks, toothpaste, and cupcakes, to meet the residents' needs and add a sweet touch to the day. To cap off the celebration, each resident received a *lai see*, a traditional red envelope given during Chinese festivities. It contained fortune cookies and a greeting card with Swami's teachings in English and Chinese, offering blessings and love for the new year.

The CNY service beautifully exemplified the spirit of service, leaving both the elderly and the YAs uplifted and grateful. **By sharing their time, love, and care, the Young Adults honored the wisdom of the elderly and strengthened the bonds between generations, living the true meaning of service.**



STRENGTHENING BONDS OF DIVINITY

LIKE MANY SSE GRADUATES, I STARTED MY YOUNG ADULT JOURNEY IN A BRAND-NEW CITY.

Dallas is just a five-hour drive from my hometown of Houston, but moving away from the comfort and regulations of my parents' roof was a major shift. In the whirlwind of the first year of college life, the one place that immediately gave me a sense of familiarity and security was the Dallas Sai Center and its warm and inclusive YA community. I was a regular attendee of the Houston Sai Center since 2004 and graduated from the Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) program in 2014. For my family, Sunday evenings were always dedicated to center activities, no matter what. The Houston Sai community grounded me, and I always felt that all of us—children, YAs, and seniors alike—were united by Swami's teachings and core values of love, peace, right conduct, truth, and nonviolence. Swami's overpowering message of unity of faiths, unity in diversity, and unity above all, always rang true to me and helped me appreciate the similarities among all of us.

During my first year of undergraduate studies, the Dallas YA community welcomed me with open arms and introduced me to a completely new wave of energy. The Dallas YA group organized meetups in library rooms on campus where we discussed

real-life topics through the lens of Swami's teachings. Hearing how others navigated challenges while keeping Swami at the center of their lives even after graduating from SSE inspired me. As a new YA, hearing the stories of the older YAs gave me not just spiritual insight, but meaningful camaraderie rooted in shared values.

When I returned to Houston in 2018 to attend optometry school, I noticed a stark difference between the Dallas and Houston YA communities. While the Houston YA community still held regular *bhajans* and service activities, there was little opportunity for YAs to connect outside of center hours in casual, peer-led space, and the group was altogether much less active socially.

Motivated by my positive experiences in Dallas, I reached out to the female YA representative of the Houston Sai Center with the idea of starting monthly YA gatherings. Around the same time, a YA from Boston visited Houston and shared how regular, informal YA meetings helped them form a tightly bonded group. Inspired, encouraged, and with the help of the Houston YA leadership team, we launched the first monthly Houston YA meetup in May 2018 at the University of Houston.

We took one step toward bringing Sai Young Adults closer together, and Swami lovingly took one hundred steps toward strengthening the bonds of divinity inherent in us.



The topic was “Connecting with Swami,” and it was led by the male YA representative at that time. The open environment away from structured center routines made it easy for everyone to share comfortably and openly. It didn’t take long for us to see the value of these gatherings—not just in the content shared, but in the camaraderie, and support systems formed and the age gaps bridged.

We formalized the meetups as YA-only sessions hosted monthly and led by a different YA each time. Presenters chose topics relevant to their lives, with a focus on self-improvement and spiritual transformation. These sessions could draw on any source of inspiration, but inevitably, they circled back to Swami’s teachings, proof of their universal resonance.

We held in-person meetups across Houston in public libraries and devotees’ homes until March 2020, when the pandemic shut down public gatherings. Determined not to lose momentum on this initiative that was so very dear to my heart, I converted that month’s session, titled “Coping with Corona,” into a shareable Google document. I posted reflective questions and invited YAs to contribute their thoughts. Surprisingly, this new format expanded our reach. YAs from across the region participated, offering solace and solidarity during a difficult time.

From April 2020, the YA meetups moved to the Zoom platform. This allowed us to welcome YAs from other cities, states, and even countries! Friends from Canada and India joined, and participation increased. The online format has remained in place ever since, making the space even more inclusive. Discussion topics over the years have included positive thinking, building self-confidence, duality, power of prayer, *karma*, inclusivity, and finding inner harmony, to name a few.

Each meetup follows a format at the discretion of the presenter, and different formats are encouraged to continue expanding our horizons and creativity. Most sessions begin with three *Omkars* and a short icebreaker. The presenter introduces their topic, shares personal experiences and interpretations, and invites others to do the same. Everyone is encouraged to ask questions and offer insights. We close with a recap slide of key takeaways and conclude with the *shanti* mantra. Attendance typically ranges from 6-12 participants, with a rise in attendance during holidays.

From the start, I was determined to ensure the longevity of this endeavor. To ensure the memories and learnings from each session are preserved, I’ve been documenting them on our website* to share with present and future YAs who could benefit from these resonant themes.



What began as an effort to fill a Houston-centric social void in the YA community soon revealed itself to be something far greater.

What began as an effort to fill a Houston-centric social void in the YA community soon revealed itself to be something far greater. It became a meaningful way to learn from each other and inspire each other to be better. As Sai YAs, our lives are inherent examples of Swami's message to the world. In the chaos of entering the real world away from the shelter of our parents' guardianship, the YA get-togethers helped to embody His values in our daily lives while building a support system to guide us through difficult times. The strength of a community with similar moral values proved to be invaluable. When we share our challenges and seek advice from fellow YAs who have encountered similar crossroads, we find comfort, perspective, and practical tools to move forward with Swami in our hearts in a more relatable and practical way.

These monthly assemblies have become a sanctuary of shared growth. By creat-

ing a space that is open, inclusive, and grounded in mutual respect, we're building a network of YAs who feel supported, seen, and spiritually connected, regardless of how full their schedules are or how far they may be from a Sai Center. More than anything, these gatherings inspire us to keep striving together toward becoming better versions of ourselves, one heartfelt conversation at a time.

While many YAs have expressed appreciation for these sessions, I always feel like I am the one who gets the most out of every topic, always walking away with fresh insights and renewed energy. We took one step toward bringing Sai Young Adults closer together, and Swami lovingly took one hundred steps toward strengthening the bonds of divinity inherent in us.

Dr. Keerthana Kumar
USA



*Website for YA meetups: <https://yameetups.weebly.com>



SAI SHINE

CELEBRATING

**BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA'S
100TH BIRTHDAY!**

**Share your Swami experiences
with a:**

Story

Poem

Bhajan

Video

Letter

Comic Strip

Painting

SUBMIT BY: SEPTEMBER 1, 2025

Submit to: <https://www.sathyasai.org/education/sai-shine/submit>
For any questions, please reach out to sse@sathyasai.org.

*Let's celebrate Swami's love together and make
Sai Shine sparkle with your beautiful offerings!*

Gurus of My Life

To every teacher who lit my way,
With steady hands and words to stay,
Who offered more than books could give,
And taught me not just how to live.

You shaped my thoughts with quiet grace,
And helped me find my truest place.
You didn't rush to mend each fall,
But watched me rise and learn it all.

You taught me strength in being kind,
And how to lead a restless mind.
Not just the "what," but also "why,"
Not just to chase, but when to try.

And then came Life, without a face,
No final bell, no resting place.
No lessons planned, no time to prep,
Just sudden turns with every step.

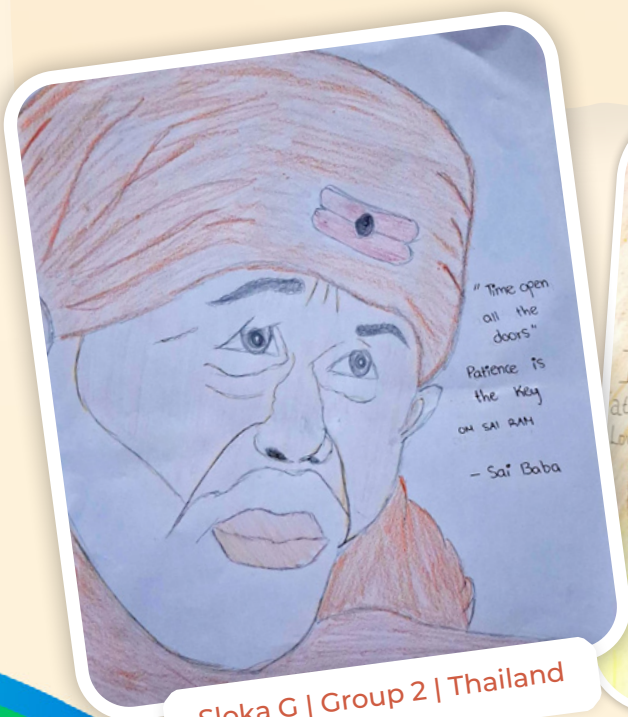
It tested me in ways so deep,
It taught through loss,
through dreams I keep.
It never warned, it never spoke,
It built me up each time I broke.

"If you don't fix yourself," it said,
"Then life will fix you in its stead."
And in those words, both tough and true,
I saw the work I had to do.

So here I stand, with heart and mind,
Grateful for all you left behind.
To every Guru on my way,
I honor you this blessed day.

May I reflect your light and grace,
In every thought, in every space.
Not just today, but all life through,
I walk this path because of you.

Sankar S | Group 4 | Thailand



Sloka G | Group 2 | Thailand



Kuhan R | Group 2 | Malaysia

On Guru Purnima's sacred day,
We fold our hands, and we pray.
To Sai Baba, our guiding star,
Who we love like a superstar.

Love all, serve all, we must follow,
Or else our lives will be hollow.
All are Gods children, He saw the same,
The spark of God in every name.

We come together on this auspicious day,
To honor our Guru, we sit and pray.
In this difficult time, we seek your grace,
Guide us O Baba,
and make this world a better place.

Kyra A | Group 3 | Malaysia

Swami, when I feel insecure or small,
You are the one I always call.
Your voice inside is soft and kind,
A leading guide for heart and mind.

When I make mistakes or lose my way,
You help me learn in a better way.
Not with scolding or a frown,
But with a smile that
always calms me down.

You teach me how to choose what's right,
To speak with love, to shine with light.
In every word, thought, and deed,
You remind me: love is all I need.

I may be young, still learning too,
But Swami, I will follow You.
On Guru Poornima, I just pray
Help me grow stronger every day.

Hareeka S | Group 3 | Malaysia

On Guru Purnima, bright and clear,
We bow to those we hold so dear,
To Mother's love, so pure, so kind,
And Father's strength, a steady mind.

To our balvikas gurus, our shining light,
Who turn our darkness into bright,
And to Swami, a soul's true friend,
Whose wisdom knows no start, no end.

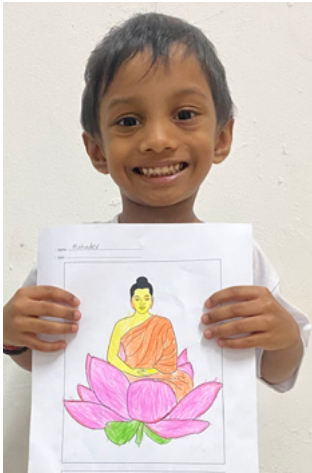
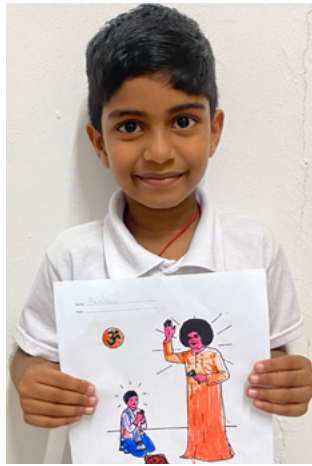
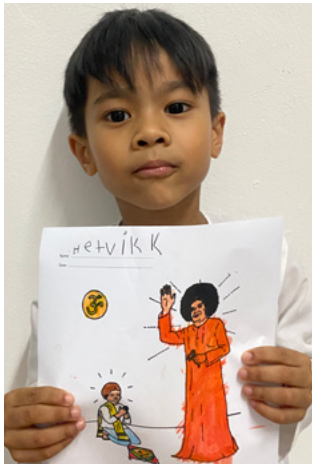
They guide us first with gentle hand,
And teach us how to bravely stand,
In every word, in every prayer,
Their blessings linger everywhere.

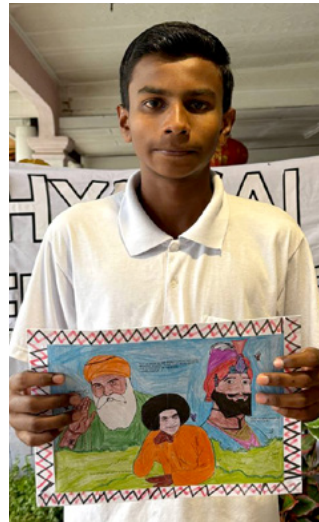
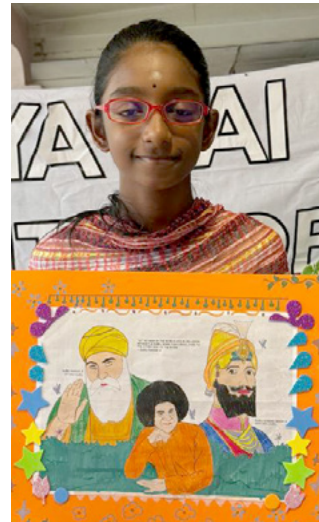
Today we thank, with heart and soul,
The ones who make our spirit whole,
Mother, Father, Guru's & Swami's grace,
Forever in our hearts, their place.

Sanjana S | Group 3 | Malaysia



Guru Poornima Paintings by SSE Students from Malaysia





Upcoming SSSIO Events

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

Date of Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
July 10, 2025	Thursday	Guru Poornima
August 9-10, 2025	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri
September 5-7, 2025	Friday-Sunday	Sathya Sai International Conference Zone 4, Malaysia



Streaming on 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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YouTube



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Threads



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Email



Eternal Companion email list



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



God is Omnipresent. So, do not act differently when you are away from My presence. Be always and everywhere conscious of the presence. Be vigilant, even while engaged in little tasks. Maintain silence, in the recesses of the heart, as well as outside. The Gita says, God's hands and feet are everywhere. You can hear his footsteps only when no other sound hinders. God, out of His infinite grace, assumes the Form that the devotee yearns for. He is Purity. He is the Supreme Wisdom, He is ever-free, ever merciful. Develop the awareness of God, see Him and serve Him in every living being.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
November 24, 1980



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Help Ever • Hurt Never

