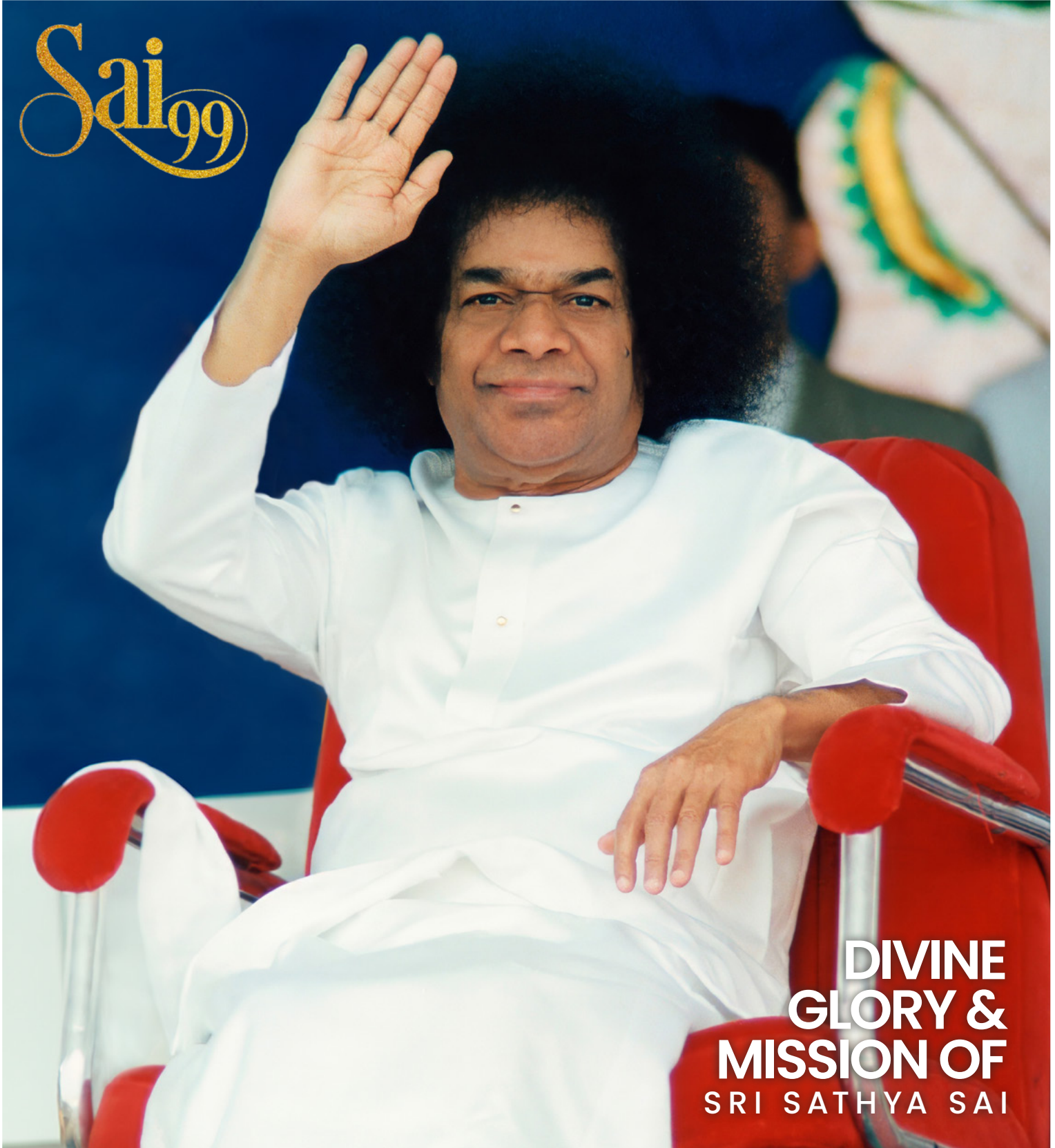


SATHYA SAI
THE
ETERNAL
COMPANION



VOLUME 3, ISSUE 11
NOVEMBER 2024

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



All belong to the caste of humanity, the religion of love, and the language of the heart. The same object, water, is called by different names in different languages. Likewise, have faith that God is one, whatever the name that is used—whether Allah, Jesus, Buddha or Rama. Don't criticize any religion. By developing this universalism, you bring joy to Bhagawan. Many overseas devotees greeted me in the morning with "Happy Birthday." I am always happy. It is enough if you are happy. True happiness is union with God. From today you have to take a new path. You must spend your lives in harmony, co-operation, and mutual esteem. See the Divine in all things. That is the source of true and lasting bliss. It can be got only through Love.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

November 23, 1995



DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO
BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA





Volume 3 • Issue 11 • November 2024

ISSN 2831-6908 (Online)

ISSN 2831-6916 (Print)

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Riverside, California, USA

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publisher at info@sathyasai.org

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Published by: Sri Sathya Sai International Organization

sathyasai.org

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KNOW THYSELF

“Know Thyself” is an ancient aphorism inscribed in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in Greece. The principal meaning of the phrase in its original application was “know your limits.” In the 4th century BC, however, the maxim was re-interpreted by Plato, who understood it to mean, broadly speaking, “know your soul.” Christian, Jewish, and Islamic saints found various scriptural equivalents for the maxim, to discuss the subject of Self-knowledge.

However, even before aphorism came to be, from time immemorial, humanity has engaged in an eternal quest to know about creation and its origins. What is the purpose of this creation? Why and how was the human species created? What is the purpose of human life? What is our destiny, and what happens after death? This inquiry has been going on for eternity by sincere seekers of truth.

Inquiry in the Vedic Texts

This inquiry is beautifully depicted in the *Nasadiya Sukta*, known as the Hymn of Creation, which appears in the Rig Veda (one of the four sacred canonical Hindu texts), at least 3,500 years old. This *Sukta* reveals that before creation, there was neither existence nor non-existence, neither death nor

immortality. Notably, the *Sukta* proclaims that even gods came after the creation of this universe. So, who then knows how the universe came into being? This reasoning reveals the logical mind and intense inquiry of the ancient seers. **In fact, in the Bhrigu Valli of the Taittiriya Upanishad, the disciple Bhrigu asks his father Varuna to instruct him of the Reality, Brahman, from which all beings emerge, by which all beings are sustained and into which all beings merge.**

The teacher, also the father of the disciple Bhrigu, instructs him to seek the Eternal through penance (*tapas*), concentration, and meditation. **After rigorous penance, the faithful son returned with his revelation that food is God.** This is indeed true because all beings are born from food. Having been born, they are alive because of food. And on departing, they merge back into the elements to become food. Then, the wise teacher responded, instructing him to return and continue doing penance. **This time, Bhrigu returns with his newfound revelation, saying that the life principle, or prana, is God.** This is indeed true because all beings are born from the life principle, sustained by the life principle, and upon departing, become one with the life princi-

ple. Still unsatisfied, the teacher tells Bhrigu to return and continue with his penance.

The third time, Bhrigu returned with **the answer that the mind is God because all beings are born from the mind, they are sustained by the mind, and they merge back into the mind.** Still not satisfied, Varuna instructs his son to return to find the ultimate truth. **This time, Bhrigu returns with the answer that the intellect (*vijnana*) is Brahman because everyone is born from the intellect, sustained by the intellect, and departs, entering into *vijnana*.** The patient guru was still not satisfied and told him to continue his penance. That is when the disciple finally realizes that bliss is Brahman. **All beings are born from bliss. Being born, they remain alive because of bliss and finally depart, returning to bliss.** Thus, one must cross the five sheaths (*koshas*) to achieve the ultimate.

We begin the journey from the gross to the subtle to the subtlest as we move from the sheath of food, ultimately, to the sheath of bliss. Finally, we reach *Atma* (Self) or Brahman (Supreme Reality). This example shows the intensity and perseverance required in our spiritual practices. **The message, as the Kathopanishad says, is, "Arise. Awake. Stop not till the goal is reached (*utthistatha; jagratha; prapyavarannibodhita*)."**

The moving story of Waltercito Bravo which is included in this issue, provides a modern-day example of such a quest and journey which became possible only through the grace and blessings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Despite being diagnosed with congenital hemolytic anemia and undergoing great pains, little Bravo led a life of great peace and joy. His open letter on the eve of his passing is clear evidence of his journey of "know thyself." He writes:

We always identify ourselves with our bodies and senses. Others identify us by our thoughts and emotions. But we are the unchanging eternal Atma, Brahman, or Divine Love.

"...remember that Baba said I would get well and be completely normal (in the interview when I was a little boy). Hence, don't worry about something that will go away with the body. Baba is curing me of my ignorance, which will help others to believe in His grandeur and divinity... Even if Baba does not cure my body, it is not that He is not truthful; it is because He speaks in divine terms... **It means He will cure me of my ignorance and that I will know my true Self."**

To 'Know Thyself' is the Best Service

Great sages like Sri Adi Shankaracharya, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Bhagawan Sri Ramana Maharshi, and Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj were adept practitioners in search of this timeless wisdom to 'Know Thyself.' They also guided many seekers in this path of Self-inquiry. **Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Avatar of this age, has come to show us that the very purpose of this life is to realize our true nature, i.e., to realize we are that eternal *Atma*, Brahman, or Divine Love.** In His writings, *Jnana Vahini*, *Sutra Vahini*, *Upanishad Vahini* and *Gita Vahini*, Bhagawan Baba describes different ways to attain *Jnana* (Self-knowledge). The goal is to manifest divinity in our own lives and also help others realize the same.

Once we realize we are not the body, mind, or intellect, fear goes away. Lord Sai says, “Why fear when I am here?”

The journey to “Know Thyself” is deeply personal yet universally relevant. It is a path that transcends religious doctrines, cultural backgrounds, and historical references. The insights by Baba simplify and further enrich the teachings of many sages and offer a comprehensive roadmap for this supreme inner quest. **By integrating these practices into our daily life, we can transform ourselves and contribute positively to society by fostering harmony, peace, love, and understanding in this chaotic and divided world.**

Once, when I asked Swami, “What is the best service?” He emphatically said, “**The best service one can do is to Know Thyself.**” He added that only when we know ourselves can we understand the Avatar, God, and the mystery of creation.

Importance of Jnana

The importance of the path of knowledge or wisdom is emphasized in many sacred spiritual texts like the *Ashtavakra Gita*, *Yoga Vashishta*, and many Upanishads. The great sage and advaitic master, Adi Shankaracharya, says, “*jnanad-eva tu kaivalyam prapyate yena muchyate* (only by Jnana or Knowledge can one attain liberation).” Lord Krishna emphasizes in the Bhagavad Gita (4:38), “*Na Jnanena Sadrusham* (There is nothing equal to Jnana)” and (4:33) “*Sarvam Jnanam Parisampatyet* (Everything finally ends up in Jnana).” **Jnana is the ultimate experience, where the road ends.**

Lord Krishna further says that devotees come to Him for personal gains, relief from illness, and Self-inquiry (seekers of knowledge). But the greatest is the *Jnani* (Knower of the Self),

whom He considers equal to Himself! God is *Jnani*, and *Jnani* is God! But becoming a *Jnani* also needs the grace of God. In the sacred *Avadhuta Gita* (Song of the free soul), Lord Dattatreya declares, “*Ishwar anugrahad eva pumsam advaita vasana* (**It is only by the grace of Ishwara or God that one gets interested in Advaita, Self-knowledge.**)” Otherwise, man will remain caught up in ritualism and other practices related to the material plane, especially in the early stages of the spiritual quest.

Swami says repeatedly, “A man with a dual mind is half blind.” He says, “*Advaita darshanam jnanam* (True wisdom is seeing Oneness).”

What is Jnana?

The great teacher Adi Shankaracharya says, “*swaswaroopa anusandhanam* (To know who we truly are)” is *Jnana*. Knowing our true nature is *Jnana*. It is also said, “*abheda darshanam jnanam* (seeing only Oneness without differences is *Jnanam*).” Baba beautifully explains this in a manner that everyone can understand, “*You are not one but three. The one you think you are—the body. The one others think you are—the mind. The one that you really are—the Atma.*” **We always identify ourselves with our bodies and senses. Others identify us by our thoughts and emotions. But we are the unchanging eternal Atma, Brahman, or Divine Love.**

The four Mahavakyas (The great sayings) proclaim—*Prajnanam Brahma* (Awareness is Brahman), *Tat Twam Asi* (That Thou Art), *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman), *Ayatma Brahma* (I am Atma or Brahman). Each of these profound truths are

taken from each of the four Vedas, and contain the essence of all the Upanishads. They all reveal the same Truth that we are the unchanging, eternal *Atma*. **As Adi Sankaracharya says, the essence of Vedanta is “*Brahma sathyam jagan-mithya; jeevo Brahmaiva naparah* (Brahman alone is the Truth. The whole world is an illusion. The embodied being is Brahman and not different).”** This is the only Truth and to realize this is the purpose of all spiritual practices. Swami exhorts the same after conferring His Birthday blessings in a letter included in this issue. Swami concludes the letter with, *“Overcome the worldly distractions and realize the Supreme Lord.”*

That is why Swami emphasizes, *“Always remember God who is eternal and true. Never believe the world, which is temporary, ever-changing, and illusory. Assert your Godhead all the time.”*

Spiritual Practices to Move Toward Self-Knowledge

The common path universally emphasized by all masters is that of Self-inquiry. Traditionally, in Vedanta, this is described as *“Neti Neti.”* First, we must deny everything—“Not this! Not this!” Deny that we are the body. We are the mind; we are the intellect, and deny that we are anything of the visible world. We are that which remains after denying everything! Finally, we come in touch with the ultimate reality. **Here, Bhagawan Baba has beautifully presented the true meaning of “*Neti, Neti*” more comprehensively.** Differing from the common interpretation of the process of negation to define reality, He says that the term truly means “Not ONLY this, Not ONLY this.” In other words, the body, the mind, the intellect, and the world that we deny as Brahman, are very much Brahman! All are One—Brahman.

In Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 13, Verse 17, Lord Krishna declares the same principle:

YOU ARE NOT ONE BUT THREE

The one you think you are

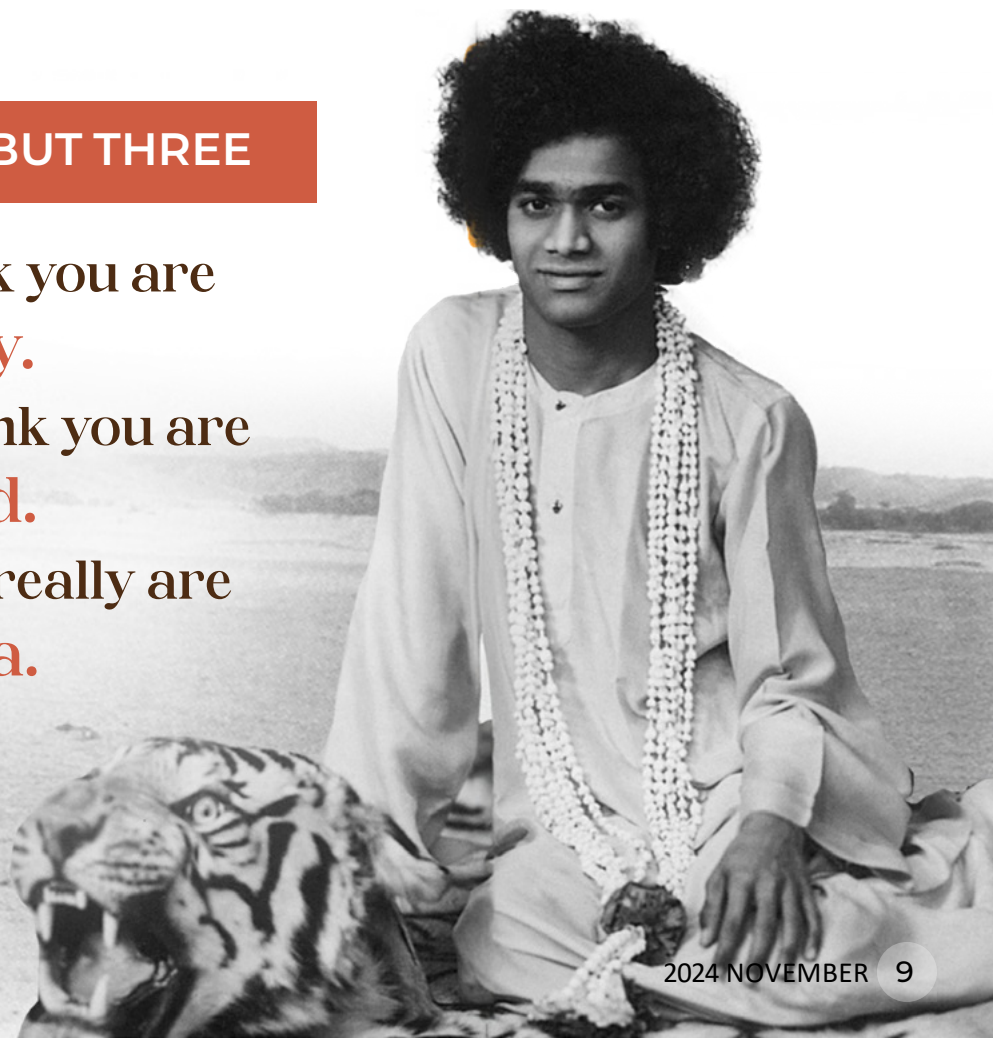
The Body.

The one others think you are

The Mind.

The one that you really are

The Atma.



*avibhaktam cha bhuteshu
vibhaktam iva cha sthitam
bhuta-bhartri cha tajjneyam
grasishnu prabhavishnu cha*

He is indivisible, yet He appears to be divided amongst living beings. Know the Supreme Entity to be the sustainer, annihilator, and creator of all beings.

How to Achieve Self-Knowledge?

Let us take the analogy of looking at oneself in a mirror. The reasons that one is not able to see one's true image or self in the mirror are also the three reasons why one is not able to see one's own SELF:

1. *Mala* (impurity, physical as well as mental, on the mirror surface),
2. *Vikshepa* (internal and external agitations or disturbances of the mirror) and
3. *Avarana* (curtain of "not knowing" that covers the mirror or clouds our consciousness).

Explaining further on how to overcome these three problems, Swami, in His previous incarnation as Shirdi Sai, expounded on a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita, 4:34,

*tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprashnena sevaya
upadekshyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattva-darshinah*

Learn the Truth by prostrating to a spiritual master. Inquire with reverence and render service unto the master. Such an enlightened being can impart *Jnana* unto you because he has verily seen the Truth.

Baba gives a unique explanation by splitting the Sanskrit term '*te jnanam*,' following the grammatical rules, in the above verse as '*te ajnanam*' instead of the customarily accepted '*te jnanam*.' No other commentator has said this. The meaning now changes. It now says that the enlightened being teaches 'what is ignorance' instead of 'what is knowledge.' **When Baba says that God will**

teach us what ignorance is, He implies that we are already realized beings, embodiments of knowledge or Divine Love. But the veil of ignorance covers that knowledge, and the grace of the master removes this covering. And how is that done?

Overcoming Vikshepa with Devotion

Vikshepa can be overcome by complete surrender or prostration (path of devotion), which removes agitation in the mind.

Lord Krishna promises in Chapter 10, Verse 10 of the Bhagavad Gita, "To those whose minds are always worshipping Me in loving devotion, I give the divine knowledge by which they can attain Me."

The greatest example of this is Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He had such intense love for Mother Kali that he saw everything, sentient and insentient, permeated by the divine mother. **Even his teacher, Totapuri, who was a master of Advaita, realized that one can experience absolute oneness through intense devotion.** Thus, the Guru, too, learned from the so-called disciple!

To see the microbes, one needs a microscope. To see far-away objects, we need telescopes. Similarly, to 'see' *Jnana*, we need this '*Jnana-scope*' of devotion to the Lord. That is the '*Divya Chakshu* (Divine Vision)' that Lord Krishna, in the middle of the battlefield, bestows on Arjuna to see His cosmic form (*Vishwaroopa*) with all the universes of the past, present, and future.

Once, I asked Swami, "Lord Krishna said, 'To those who are always devoted and worship me with love, I grant the wisdom by which they can reach Me,' (Bhagavad Gita, 10:10). So, if I love you, will I be enlightened?" **Swami replied, "Yes! If you have such absolute faith and surrender with intense love and purity, I will give you Jnana."** The master

has the power to grant the experience of oneness. We see this in the life of Swami Vivekananda (Naren), as well. When he was seeking sincerely and yearning intensely, just by a touch, his Master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa granted him the experience of seeing everything permeated by God. It was an unusual experience, and it actually frightened little Naren, who requested Sri Ramakrishna to bring him back to the 'normal' plane. **One needs to be prepared to receive this experience where we see everything permeated by God.** The same thing happened to Arjuna. He was frightened by the cosmic vision granted to him and prayed to Lord Krishna to assume His 'normal' form.

Overcoming *Mala* and *Avarana*

Baba says we can attain *Jnana* through loving and selfless service (*Seva*) to the Guru, or God. This includes service to any being or object in the entire universe because it is nothing but a manifestation of God. The experience of a young adult, Ms. Ahrabie, included in this issue, highlights how service done to others is actually service done to oneself! Swami says that such selfless service helps to overcome '*Mala*' or the impurities of the mind. The scriptures say, "*chittasya shuddhaye karmanaha* (the object of action is to purify the heart)." **Such purity, Swami says, is enlightenment.** When one is pure, one comes face to face with *Atma* or Brahman. Jesus also says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Finally, we come to the process Shirdi Baba calls "*Pariprashna*," or sincere inquiry. It is not asking from idle curiosity, or for the sake of mere asking, but from sincere longing as the great saints did. It is only such sincere longing that makes Self-inquiry possible. This process of Self-inquiry lifts the curtain of ignorance or *Avarana*, which covers the mirror and reveals the Truth.

Lord Krishna says, "Those whose faith is deep and who have practiced controlling their mind and senses attain divine knowledge." *Shraddhavan labhate jnanam.* (Bhagavad Gita, 4:39) **Absolute faith in the scriptures, one's Guru, the teachings of the Guru, and, most importantly, in oneself is necessary to achieve *Jnana*.** But this path of inquiry is like walking on a razor's edge. So, along with such faith, one needs complete mastery over the senses to reach the ultimate goal.

Three Obstacles in the Path of Self-Inquiry

Mind: The mind alone is key and is responsible for both bondage and liberation, depending on how it is used. Just like a key, it locks and unlocks. **Swami says that turning our minds toward God gives freedom and liberation, but turning it toward the material world binds us in bondage.** Thus, there is great emphasis on the control of the mind.

Swami says in the *Sutra Vahini* that one should possess six treasures (*shad sampathi*) to receive the knowledge of the Brahman. They are *Yama* (control of mind), *Niyama* (control of body and senses), *Pratyahara* (withdrawal from the world), *Shraddha* (absolute faith), *Thitiksha* (forbearance) and *Samadana* (equanimity). The foremost is the control of the mind. Let us focus on that one alone in this editorial.

The mind and the senses are interconnected. In His infinite love and compassion, Swami delivered a series of nine discourses during the Dussehra festival of 1976, where He talks about various techniques for the control of the mind. **He emphasizes *abhyasa* (constant practice) and *vairagya* (detachment) as the two fundamental techniques** one needs to persevere. Perseverance is one of the '3 Ps,' (the other two being purity and patience), that Swami exhorts us to practice. While doing so, it should be accompanied by dispassion. God should be our only attachment. Swami says that our heart is

a single-seater sofa, not a game of musical chairs. Similarly, Lord Jesus also says that one cannot serve two masters—God and mammon (money).

The other techniques for mind control include *japa* (repetition of the name), *dhyana* (meditation on God), and *bhajan* (singing the glories of God). The mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts. So, let us begin by neutralizing bad thoughts with good thoughts before proceeding to the level of ‘no thoughts.’ **Then, there is no mind, and the Self becomes spontaneously Self-effulgent.**

Doubt and Fear: Swami beautifully says that life’s journey is from the shore of *samshayatma vinashyati* (the one with doubt will perish) to the shore of *shraddhavan labhate jnanam* (the one with absolute faith will attain *Jnana*). Along with doubt, one should also banish fear. Fear exists only when one has body-consciousness. **Once we realize we are not the body, mind, or intellect, fear goes away. Lord Sai says, “Why fear when I am here?”** When we remember the truth that God is always with us, we will not have any fear.

Pride: Swami says there are eight types of pride—physical strength, birth, scholarship, wealth, penance, beauty, youth, and power. **The pride of penance, or spiritual pride, is the most subtle and damaging of all. So, it is important to have humility.** The Bible records, “...he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” In His profound teachings, known as ‘Sermon on the Mount,’ Lord Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.”

Benefits of *Jnana* and Qualities of *Jnani*

Jnanat eva tu kaivalyam—only through *Jnana* can one attain liberation. Once one attains *Jnana*, one also acquires supreme peace, which passeth understanding as stated by Lord Jesus. **Swami calls such peace ‘Prasanthi.’ It is no ordinary peace. It is supreme peace, not perturbed by any changes or ups and downs of life.** Lord Krishna says, “one with

“...If I love you,
will I be
enlightened?”

Swami replied,
“Yes! If you have such
absolute faith and
surrender with intense
love and purity, I will
give you *Jnana*.”



absolute faith will attain supreme peace readily (*jnanam labdhva param shanthi achirena adhigachatthi*)." (Bhagavad Gita, 4:39)

Lord Krishna also says, "The enlightened sages call those persons wise whose every action is free from desire for material pleasures and who have burnt the results of work (*karma*) in the fire of divine knowledge." (Bhagavad Gita, 4:19) (*Karma* is the seed for our future births. **The fire of wisdom, or *Jnana*, burns away these seeds.**)

Verses 8 to 12 of the 13th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita pertain to what *Jnana* is and how a *Jnani* behaves. **This is a good reference for checking our progress.** Swami has expanded on these pointers. They are:

1. *amanitvam* (humility)
2. *adambhitvam* (unpretentiousness)
3. *ahimsa* (nonviolence in thought, word, and deed)
4. *kshanti* (forgiveness, which Swami says is the nature of Love—to give and forgive)
5. *arjavam* (straightforwardness with the harmony of thought, word, and deed)
6. *acharyopasanam* (blessings of Guru or God)
7. *shaucham* (purity, internal and external, free from the six vices)
8. *sthairyam* (steadfastness without ever being perturbed)
9. *atma-vinigraha* (self-control)
10. *indriyartheshu vairagyam* (dispassion toward and mastery over the senses that are always focused outward)
11. *anahankara* (absence of egotism)
12. *janma-mrityu-jara-vyadhi-duhkha-doshanudarshanam* (mindful of the evils and temporary nature of birth, death, old age, disease, and sorrow)

13. *asaktir anabhisvanganah putra-dara-grihadishu* (absence of clinging to spouse, children, home, etc., because everything belongs to God, and we are just trustees)
14. *nityam cha sama-chittatvam ishtan-ishtopapattishu* (equanimity amidst all desirable and undesirable events in life)
15. *mayi chananya-yogena* (constant and exclusive devotion toward God)
16. *bhaktir avyabhicharini* (not changing Gurus and Gods like a prostitute changes masters)
17. *vivikta-desha-sevitvam* (affinity for solitude, or true silence)
18. *aratir jana-sansadi* (aversion to mundane society, or worldly company)
19. *adhyatma-jnana-nityatvam* (steadiness in acquiring spiritual knowledge)
20. *tattva-jnanartha-darshanam* (philosophical pursuit of the absolute Truth)

One must have deep spiritual hunger to experience the ultimate reality. Any amount of talking, reading, learning, or listening cannot match an iota of personal experience. **The scriptures emphasize that this is *Aparoksha Anubhuti* (direct experience) and not *Paroksha Anubhuti* (indirect experience based on reading the scriptures or from friends, teachers, etc.). Only direct experience makes us come face to face with God and realize Brahman, which should be our goal.**

Let us embark on this path of Self-discovery, which is the greatest adventure of life. The treasures we seek are already within us. They merely await our recognition. May our journey inward be illuminated by wisdom, guided by love, and finally fulfilled by the realization of our true Self. We can surely achieve this in this very lifetime by the grace of our Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and our sincere efforts and perseverance.

Jai Sai Ram.



You are God

*Na-punyam na-paapam na-saukhyam
na-duhkham
Na-mantra na-thirtho na-veda
na-yajnam
aham bhojanam naiva bhojyam
na-bhokta
Sadananda-roopam advaitam
Shivoham! Shivoham!*

(Sanskrit verse)

Neither am I bound by merit nor sin,
neither by worldly joy nor by sorrow,
Neither am I bound by sacred hymns
nor by sacred pilgrimage places, nor
charities, nor by sacrifices,
I am not the enjoyment (experience), the
object of enjoyment (experienced), or
the enjoyer (experiencer),

**I am the Ever Blissful, Non-dual Reality;
I am Shiva, I am Shiva.**

Embodiments of Love! You have no merit (*punyam*), no sin (*paapam*). There is no happiness or sorrow. You are not the form of a sacred chant (*mantra*), the form of a machine (*yantra*), or the form of mystic words (*tantra*). You are not a yoga practitioner (*yogi*), one seeking sense pleasure (*bhogi*), or a renunciant (*vairagi*). Who are you then? You are ever blissful (*sadananda*) and blessed with auspicious forms (*mangalakaras*). But based on external forms, you perceive diversity, believe in it, and live in ignorance.

The true Self is represented by the concept of 'I.' Poor, rich, ignorant, great scholars, women, men, children, and adults - everyone uses the word 'I' when introducing themselves. So, the real Self is represented by 'I.' The Vedas (*shrutis*) proclaim the 'I' (*Nenu*) as *Atma* or the spiritual heart (*hridaya*). **The heart represents the abode of compassion (*daya*). Therefore, you are all embodiments of compassion.** Peace can reign in the world only when every individual recognizes and follows the path of compassion. We pray, "May all the worlds be happy (*samastha loka sukhhino bhavantu*)," however, we forget that the basis of this happiness is compassion. Human beings cannot introduce themselves without using the word 'I.' Birds and beasts do not use the term 'I' because they cannot express it in words. Otherwise, they would have proclaimed, "I am a bird," "I am a monkey," "I am an eagle," "I am a dog," and so forth. The entire universe is based on the principle 'I' and the same 'I' is present in every living being. **The all-pervasive principle of Brahman is vast and referred to as 'I.'** Human beings do not understand this "principle of Self" properly. They are engrossed in delusion by thinking the body itself is the 'I' or the true Self.

The Seer and the Seen

The entire universe is associated with duality (*dvaitam*). First is 'this' (seen), and the second is the 'I' (seer). **So 'this' refers to what is seen or the perceived reality (*drishyam*), and 'I' refers to the seer or perceiver (*drashta*).** Without the 'seer,' the 'seen' cannot exist. Here are some examples. If you see a cloth and say this is cloth, the reference to the fabric cannot be made without using the term 'this.' The term 'this' must refer to a specific object in this universe. "This is a glass tumbler." Here, the term 'this' proves the existence of the tumbler. "This is a hall." If the term

'this' is not used, a question arises: which hall? So, 'this' is always associated with the name and form of the perceived object. It is always the perceiver (seer) who testifies to the existence of the perceived (seen). When you see the bulbs emitting light in the hall, the light is not produced by the bulb but by the electric current in the bulb. Here, the bulb is just a medium (*upadhi*).

When a young boy was asked, "When did you arrive?" he answered, "I came here on the 20th, Swami." When asked, "Why did you come?" He answered, "I came for the Convocation." Who is it that came on the 20th? The body (of the boy). He is identifying himself with the body. Yesterday, he slipped and had a fracture in the leg. Today, he came to Me and said, "Swami! My leg sustained a fracture." Does this not imply that his leg is different from him? At one moment, you identify yourself with your body. At another moment, you distinguish yourself as separate from your body. Therefore, the seen (*drishya*) is different from you (the seer). **You, who is present as the One in all the seen objects, is the ultimate Truth (Reality).**

Truth does not undergo any change in the past, present, or future. The Vedas declare that unchanging entity as 'I.' That 'I' is the *Atma*. Then *Atma* became heart, the seat of compassion (*karuna*). **All terms like 'I,' *Karuna, Atma, Hridaya, or God* are synonymous.** They are all different names given to the same entity. Rama or Krishna, whichever name one may be called, is a name and form given to an individual, but that is not the true form. The correct name for anyone at birth is 'I.' Even for God, the first original name is 'I.' The Upanishads declare "*Aham Bhahma-asmi*" (I am Brahman).

Aham ('I') comes first in this declaration, and *Brahman* comes after that. Hence, the 'I' is the primal basis for everything. Very few attempt to recognize the nature of this 'I.'

Many people are involved in various types of spiritual practices. For whose sake are these practices done? The usual answer is, "I am doing spiritual practices to seek God."

But why search for God when He is omnipresent? Is there any one foolish enough to go on searching for his own whereabouts? Is there anyone who asks where am I? A person who goes around asking "where am I?" will be considered one who lost his intellect (*buddhi*), and will be considered ready for admission into a mental asylum. The term 'I' is one's own form. God is one's own form. Mother is one's own form. Today, man is not able to recognize the true and eternal reality of Brahman. This situation needs to be changed. How can it be done? **True spiritual practice is to think of the Atma, the changeless reality, and forget the unreal, ever-changing non-Self.**

*Maanu diddvacchu mari vampu
lekunda
Diddavacchu rayi tinnaganu
Manasu didda galare mari vampu
lekunda
Unna maata telupuchunnamata*
(Telugu poem)

The bent tree can be straightened, and a rock can be straightened. Can a crooked mind ever be reformed?

It is the uncontrolled mind that accounts for a man going astray. The mind is the root cause of one's sorrow and happiness, merits and sins, enjoyment and distress. What, then, is the meaning of man's search? It is the desire to experience the vision of the *Atma* (Self). People perform various spiritual practices. The aspirants take up various forms of spiritual practices, viz., listening (*shravanam*), singing (*keerthanam*), chanting the Lord's names (*Vishnu smaranam*), servitude (*paadasevanam*), salutation (*vandanam*), ritualistic worship (*archanam*), friendship (*sneham*), and surrender (*atma nivedanam*).

Why do aspirants perform these spiritual practices? It is not for the search for *Atma*. Nor is it for attaining divinity. It is only for satisfying the mad (wayward) mind.

Why should we perform spiritual practices? They are for only one goal. It is to forget identification with the body (*anatma bhava*). Then you realize that *Atma* is the only reality. Awareness of reality and ignorance of the Self are not separate entities but states of mind. The *anatma bhava* is like the darkness in a room. It has no existence of its own. For example, the moment the lights are turned on, the darkness disappears. So, the absence of light is darkness, and the lack of wisdom or awareness of *Atma* is ignorance. Our spiritual practices are for our satisfaction only (arising from the mind). Many take up meditation, some sing the glory of the Lord (*bhajans*), and some repeat the name of God (*japa*). All these are done to satisfy the mind. Question why we are doing meditation, what is the goal (*dhyeya*), what is the purpose, and who is doing meditation? And, when you are yourself in meditation, enquire for whose sake is this meditation? **When we realize the unity between the meditation and the object of meditation, there is no further need to do any specific practices.**

You may doubt whether one can proclaim, "*aham brahmasmi*" (I am Brahman). Yes, you can say it. However, in the proclamation, "*aham brahmasmi*" (I am God), before the word 'Brahma (God),' there is the word 'aham (I).' **First, understand this 'I' principle. The 'I' principle is verily God. 'I' and God are not separate words.** There is only one, not two entities (*ekam eva adviteeyam brahma*). In this type of doctrine, those who lead a worldly life attribute various names and forms to God. There exists only One. An object is called by various names based on the nature of the activities. Here is a small example.

A Brahmin, when performing worship in a temple, is called a priest. When he cooks in the kitchen, the same Brahmin is called a cook. And the same Brahmin, when he renders a reading of the almanac (*panchanga*), is called a *panchanga* Brahmin. The Brahmin is the same. But, based on his activities, he is given different names. Likewise, God is One. We are attributing different names and forms to God. The One Lord has many names (*ek prabhuke aneka naam*). We attribute these forms and names to Him. **God has no form or name. That is why the Vedas have taught that God is attributeless (*nirgunam*), unsullied (*niranjanam*), eternal abode (*sanathanam nicketanam*), ever-present (*nithya*), pure (*shuddha*), enlightened (*buddha*), liberated (*mukta*), and the embodiment of sacredness (*nirmala swarupinam*).** Unable to recognize such divinity, we read many books, go to many gurus, and listen to many teachings. But what is the result of all these activities? In the end, we gain nothing. So, you have to correct yourself.

The Role of the Mind

You have to subdue and control the mind. The mind is a great robber. There is always a danger of keeping such a robber near us with all these valuable possessions in the form of our spiritual practices. Our good virtues are our true wealth. **To keep our good virtues on the right path, we have to keep the robber (mind) at a distance. We have to catch hold of this robber called the mind. We should not believe the mind at all. It is because of the mind one loses peace.** It is important that one has faith in one's own divinity.

For God, there are no other names than 'I.' This is called 'Aham' in Sanskrit. *Aham* means 'I.' The 'I' is not the body. **The 'I' is the master of the body (*deha*), mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), senses (*indriyas*), and the memory faculty of the mind (*chitta*).**

You are such a master. We are not able to understand this principle of divinity well.

We build a small temple and try to worship the divinity that pervades the entire universe. Is it right to build such a small temple to worship divinity, which is so vast and all-pervading? We are bringing disrepute to God by such worship. We are worshipping such a vast and magnificent divinity in a small photo at home. It is a sin to bring down such infinite divinity to lower heights by such means. If you desire, you may keep one picture for worship. By putting many pictures, we are bringing disrepute to the divine. **God has no name or form. Recognize the omnipresent nature of God.**

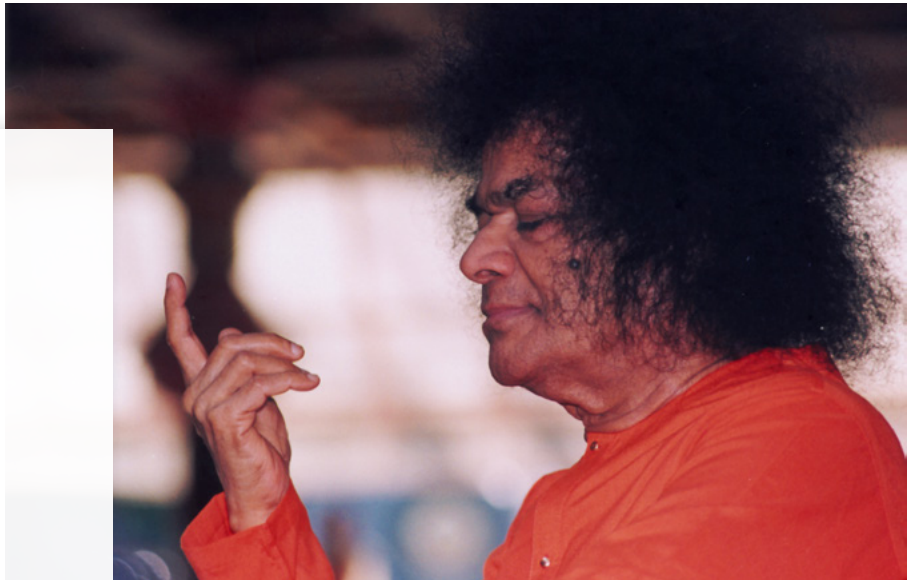
*Brahmandam-antata
prabaluchundedi neeku
Alayambu-namarchanalaviyaguna
Koti suryula kanthi meti galgina
neeku
Pramida deepamu nevaru patta
galaru
Ajaharadulakaina andani vaniki
Nee roopu kanugona-nevari-taramu
Sarva bhootamula sancharinchedu
neeku
Sariyaina perida sadhyamaguna
Brahmandamantayu bojjalo-
nunnatti
Bhakshya bhojyamu neeku petta
taguna
Sarva jalamu landu
sancharinchedi neeku
Snanambu cheyimpa
sadhyamaguna
Brathuku kosamu bahu bhadha
bhaddhulairi*

(Telugu Poem)

Is it possible to confine the one that pervades the universe to a temple? Who can offer a lamp to the One with the light and the glory of a million Suns? How is it possible to recognize the form of the One whose glory could not be comprehended even by

“

Only on the day one closes these physical eyes and opens the eyes of wisdom will we understand our divinity.



Lords Aja and Hara? Is it possible to give a suitable name to the One who pervades all beings? Is it possible to offer food to the One who has the entire Universe in Him? Is it possible to give a sacred bath to the One who is in all bodies of water?

We are creating these names and forms for our livelihood and to cope with our illusions. This is not the proper spiritual practice. **God is the omnipresent 'I.'** It is not enough to simply utter 'I' with the lips. **One should wholeheartedly vouchsafe that divinity is 'I,' which is the witness. This is the true teaching.**

All the unrest in the world today can be wiped out only by the philosophy of 'I.' The 'I' principle is equally present both in the one who loves and the one who hates. That 'I' principle is in you as well. This being the case, who expresses hatred against another, and who expresses love toward another? **No one can express hatred toward the principle of 'I' that is present in everything. From this day on, do not harbor hatred, and then you will not indulge in evil actions.**

Wherever one sees, there is unrest; fear, and catastrophic incidents. What is the

reason for all this? We are restless and have no peace because we do not recognize the Oneness. **The divinity is present in you, Me, everyone and everything else.** The electricity in all the bulbs is one and the same. If the electric power is gone, all the bulbs will go off, and there will be darkness. That electricity is the 'I' principle. That is the principle of Brahman (*Brahma tatwa*). We have to make some efforts to recognize this principle of Brahman. Where are the differences? The differences are in the identification with the body. Where do the feelings of the body come from? They come out of the mind.

Prior to marriage, who is the wife, and who is the husband? However, after marriage, the attachment that she is my wife gets imprinted. Prior to birth, who is the mother, and who is the child? It is only after birth that we say he is my child. We have created these for ourselves. We are the ones who fostered these associations and attachments. Otherwise, there is no connection at all. **The one Divine Self (*ekatma*) present in all is the only real connection.**

Truth is One; the scholars call it by different names (*ekamsat vipra bahudha*

vadanti). Each one uses a different name to denote an object. There is water in the tumbler. People who speak Telugu call the water 'neeru.' Those who speak Hindi call it 'pani.' Those who speak English call it 'water.' People who speak Tamil refer to it as 'tanni.' Those who speak Sanskrit say 'vari.' Whatever name is used to denote water, one can't change the water. Similarly, no matter what forms and names are used, the divinity is One.

*Chavu puttukalenatti Shaswathundu
Aadi madhyantha rahitud-
anadi vadu
Taanu chavaka puttaka
champabadaka
Atmayai yundina aa Brahma Nene*
(Telugu Poem)

The eternal One without birth and death without the beginning, middle, or an end
The One who has neither birth nor death, and cannot be killed
I am that Brahman resident in the form of *Atma*.

That 'I' is Brahman. The body has death and birth, but the 'I' principle has neither birth nor death. Everyone should strive to recognize such divinity. Everything and everyone is an embodiment of *Atma*. Therefore, in the Bhagavad Gita, it is said that 'I' is the inner self of all beings (*mamaatma sarva bhutantaratma*). We fail to understand such divinity. If we understand, then there will not be any scope for misunderstanding and adversities. Thus, everyone should recognize the meaning of the 'I.'

The Gopikas of yore went through the pangs of separation from Lord Krishna. They tried to capture and tie down Krishna. Although Lord Krishna was visiting their homes every day and partaking of milk and curd, the Gopikas couldn't catch hold of Him. Even though Lord Krishna was in their homes, they could not see Him. Lord Krishna told them that He would help by

teaching them a clever trick to catch Him. One day, Lord Krishna poured out all the milk on the floor. He walked to get His feet wet with milk. Lord Krishna then ran as soon as the Gopikas came to catch hold of Him. When Lord Krishna started running, there were His footprints in milk. The Gopikas were able to follow the footprints and capture Sri Krishna. [The external manifestations are only to help find the Lord who is Always Present.]

That day, the Gopikas said,

*Ninu kanugona-galamaa, Krishna,
Ninu Kanugona-galamaa!
Anuvukante ati sookshma roopudavu
Ghanamu kante
ati ghananeeyudavu
Enubadi naalugu laksha jeevamula
Anayambuna nedabaayak-unduvata
Anuvuranu trunakaashtamu
modaluga
Akhanda roopudavai velayuduvata*
(Telugu Poem)

Can we find you, Krishna?
Can we find you?

You are subtler than an atom
You are heavier than the heaviest
In the 84 lakhs (8.4 million)
living beings,
Thou art always present
Starting from an atom, a grain,
a strand of grass, or in wood,
you are established in your
infinite form.

The Gopikas further said, "After all, our physical eyes are made of skin. We are not blessed with the eyes of wisdom. **Only on the day one closes these physical eyes and opens the eyes of wisdom will we understand our divinity.**" For the very purpose of recognizing this, many people visit temples. What is the purpose of going to a temple? It is to get the divine sight (*darshan*) of God. But as one stands in front of God, one closes one's eyes. Why should a person who went to see God close their eyes? It is to say, "Oh God! It is not

“Wherever you see, it is a temple of God. The body is a moving temple of God. When you understand this Truth, you do not look for God in a special place. God is behind you, with you, and always protecting you.”

with these physical eyes that we should see you. It is to see God with the inner eye (*hridaya netra*) that one closes the physical eyes and contemplates God with the Heart (*hridaya*).”

There are many such sacred secrets (teachings) in divinity. However, none of the scholars teach these. None of the books teach the right meaning of these. When it comes to a human, one does not understand oneself and is unable to recognize divinity.

Recognize the Omnipresence of God

God is only a witness. You should recognize that each one is divine. During the Vedic times, in the beginning, there were only a few thousand people. Recognizing all of them as the forms of God, the Vedas declared and described God as having a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand legs (*Sahasra Sheersha Purushaha, Sahasraksha Sahasrapath*). This means that every individual is verily the form of God. When we begin to recognize this omnipresence of God, we will aspire only to realize the divine within and refrain from doing evil. One should always question oneself about the kind of actions one undertakes. This will lead one to question whether it is a godly act. God will never resort to doing harm to anyone. Then the question might arise, “Who is responsible for all the evil in the world?” The persons indulging in the evil deeds are responsible. God remains only as a witness. God never hurts anyone. God never hates anyone. God never loves. You love and hate all on your own. **Therefore, the rewards or punish-**

ments one reaps in life are fruits of one’s own actions and not conferred by God.

When you are born from the mother’s womb, there are no visible garlands around the neck. You are not born with either of a necklace of pearls or beautiful chains studded with diamonds and emeralds. **There is only one garland around your neck. It is a heavy garland with all your actions (*karmas*) of past lives, both good and bad, without any modification, bestowed upon you by Brahma, the creator.**

This garland around the neck is made up of our own actions and not gifted by God. In a sense, it is neither given nor received. Only when God is separate from oneself can there be any giving and receiving. Divinity residing in each of us is only One. We should love this Oneness of Atma. We should love and aspire for such a sense of Oneness.

To control this mad mind, people undertake some spiritual practices. They believe that by following these spiritual practices, the mind can be controlled. But, a thief will never help to catch himself. Our mind is a great thief. Who can ever catch it? Only with the help of the mind can the mind be controlled, not otherwise. An uncontrolled mind makes us go away from divinity. This is what we need to learn today. The mind is a barrier to all spiritual practices. It helps in everything else in life, but it will not help in divine endeavors.

Flies and mosquitoes land on everything, but they do not come to rest on fire. Similarly, the mind wanders everywhere on all different matters, but it will stay away from the divine. We must control the mind



The
body has death
and birth,
but the
'I'
principle has
neither birth
nor death.

to attain such divinity. We should not go after the whims of the mind. A person who follows the untethered mind will stoop down to depths that are lower than that of an animal. **Only the one who keeps one's mind under control is truly valiant (*dheera*) and courageous. That person alone becomes a hero.**

A small example. The epic, Ramayana, is an important standard of reference in world history. Hanuman, an ardent devotee of Rama, is peaceful, virtuous, and strong. Such a valorous Hanuman was very humble in the divine presence of Rama. He appeared meek whenever He saw his beloved Lord Rama. However, when He went to the demonic king Ravana, He stood as a valiant hero. He is humble in the presence of divinity but courageous in confronting cruelty.

How should our minds be in various situations? **We should show courage and be valiant against situations that are obstacles. We should remain humble in situations that are helpful to us. This is called *Ahamtatva* (the Principle of Self).** *Aham* means the Self. But if one thinks of oneself (*aham*) as the form or body (*akaram*), it becomes ego (*ahamkaram*). The form or body is not the true Self. Once the iden-

tification with the form or body is gone, we are left with the Self. This Self is considered verily as Brahman, but not the ego. **We should forget this form (bodily attachment), trust in divinity to spend our lives without ego, and end our lives with the realization of the true Self.**

Every human being repeats 'I.' If you question anyone, they will respond in the same way about their identity. This principle of Oneness of the Self is present in everyone. That is the 'I.' An individual should recognize that 'I' principle and behave accordingly. The divine pervades the entire universe, exists within all living beings, and is present at all times. However, we worship such almighty with narrow-mindedness. That is the main reason for our unrest. **Is it not ignorance to limit the all-pervasive God to a small image and do the worship?** This approach is merely a reflection of our physical and material life. All these are traits of outgoing tendencies. Only when these outgoing tendencies are renounced does the inward journey begin. Therefore, these outgoing tendencies must gradually change.

It is not wrong to engage in any work, job, business, or education. However, all actions should be regarded as divine actions. **Offer**



all your actions to God by saying “*Sarva Karma Bhagavath Prityartham,*” which means that all actions are performed to please God. There is no need to abandon any action. No need to give up any task. Trust that all actions are to please God.

When asked who is doing these, the response comes, “I am” doing them. Who is this “I am?” Realize that “I am” is Brahman. With this understanding, you should think, “I am.” You should not utter names associated with the body like “I am Ramayya” or “I am Krishnayya”. These are merely names given to the body and not your true identity. These identities associated with the form and body are taking humanity away from the true identity of divinity. We must eliminate these distinctions based on the form. Continue with your occupation, but do not depend solely on it. When asked, “What degree have you earned?” One might say, “I have completed my MBA.” Who completed the MBA? It pertains only to this body. God does not have an MBA or BA. We have no degrees; there is only one, and it is characterized as formless, pure, non-dual, and qualified non-dual. That is why God always remains in eternal bliss.

On my way here, some people wished me “Happy birthday!” You should wish happiness to those who are not happy. I am always happy. I don’t need your ‘happy’ wishes. **God is the embodiment of eternal bliss. God is always blissful.** Love and hatred are merely emotions of the mind.

*Nithyanandam parama sukhadam
kevalam Jnana-murthim
Dwandatheetham gagana
sadrusham megha varnam
shubhangam*

(Sanskrit verse)

The divine is eternal and absolute bliss; the highest joy; beyond all limitations of time and space, pure consciousness, all-pervasive; embodiment of wisdom; beyond

duality; as vast as space; cloud-like in complexion; the auspicious form with perfect features.

The clouds are black in color. These clouds move across the sky, but the electricity hidden within them shines and glitters. Similarly, wisdom should shine behind the clouds of education, and divinity should shine over the mind that is mired in darkness.

Once you forget the mind, whom should we seek, whom should we worship, and whom should we search for? Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Narayana are all names we have assigned to various gods we worship. We chose these names for our liking. Names are not important. Forms are not eternal. But the Truth is eternal. Truth is Oneness. Oneness is Truth. Truth is God, and it can be considered a form of God in today's world. **That Truth is changeless. Such changeless Truth must be transformed into the changeless principle of 'I' with the help of the principle of love.** The root cause of unrest in the world is our own mind. We are fostering both love and hatred. These two are caused by our own mind. Love does not come and grow from anywhere. Hatred does not come from somewhere else. Both love and hatred are feelings in our own mind.

Understand the Spiritual Basis of the 'I' Principle

Embodiments of Divine Atma! You are striving in so many ways and taking up various spiritual practices. To the extent possible, realize that the principle of 'I' is related to the 'Self.' When you believe in your own 'Self,' you will not experience any suffering. Even if such sufferings come like insurmountable mountains, they will melt away and vanish like snow. These are merely passing clouds. Why should we confront such passing clouds? The clouds form because of the Sun's heat. Those very clouds that came because of the

Sun, cover the Sun again. In the Vedas, it is said that from His (God's) mind emerged the moon, and from His eyes arose the Sun (*chandrama manasojatah chaksho suryo ajayata*). As long as the Sun is present, we do not seek the moon. It is only in the absence of the Sun that we look for the moon. **Similarly, as long as we have true knowledge of the Self, we are not subject to the delusions of the mind.** The moon does not shine on its own; it shines because of the light of the Sun falling upon it. The essence of the mind is influenced by the Sun's radiance. We depend on the Sun, which influences us. The Self is indeed the Sun, while the mind is the moon. Only when we forget the Self do we rely on the mind.

Today, if we are dependent on the mind, then we are forgetting the Self. We are neglecting the principle of the Self. If we hold onto the Self, the influence of the mind will have no effect. When the Sun is shining, the moon cannot be seen. Even if it shines, we are not dependent on the moon's light. The sunlight is brilliantly radiant. In the same way, the principle of our heart and Self is transformed into a brilliance of divinity. You should rely on that. But we should not at all be affected by the influence of the mind. The principle of 'I' must be believed as the principle of the Self. **In every place, in every person, in every action, there exists 'I.' Therefore, when this principle of 'I' is firmly believed and practiced, gradually, the body-consciousness will be forgotten.** When we forget ourselves, we should forget the body and the mind as well. Only when we forget these two, then we will understand our true nature.

You may say, "Swami, we lead a simple family life and have the responsibility of taking care of our spouse and children. How do we manage all these?" My answer is I never told you to give up all your work.

Have faith in God and do all your duties as God's work. You are not advised to abandon your work. Do your duties diligently. You can lead life without feeling burdened. **When you instill *Atmatatwa* (the principle of Self) in your heart, everything becomes easy and successful. Today, unrest prevails in all countries. What is the reason? It is because people have forgotten the principle of the Self.**

People have lost confidence in Self and have developed faith in the world. We see the world but do not believe that the world is permeated by God. The ignorant fool sees yet doesn't see and recognize the Truth (*pashyan api cha na pashyati moodho*). All that you see is God. God is closer than one's own mother. All that you perceive with your eyes is verily God. You are the seer and the seen. The unity of the seer and the seen is the true principle of the Self. Unite the two (the seer and the seen), and that's when the sweetness begins. You are holding sugar in one hand and water in the other; in such case, water remains water, and sugar remains as sugar. When you bring them together, it is neither sugar nor water. It has become syrup.

Likewise, you are in nature and see nature as separate from you. When you enter the pooja room, the feeling of God enters you. This is not the right attitude. In truth, His hands and feet are everywhere (*sarvatah paanipaadam*). **Wherever you see, it is a temple of God. The body is a moving temple of God. When you understand this Truth, you do not look for God in a special place. God is behind you, with you, and always protecting you.** We should not forget such a God. Even a mother might sometimes forget her child, but God does not forget you. God is the dearest. Sometimes, even a mother might stay away from her child, but the *Atmatatwa* cannot be distanced. Only the *Atmatatwa* is nearer than the nearest. If we ignore such a prin-

ciple of the Self, what else is there to believe in?

Do not misunderstand what I say about the spiritual practices taken up by people. All practices are happening externally, in a worldly way, and only in an outward way. **The more we reduce our worldly responsibilities, the more peace we get.** Remember, less luggage, more comfort, makes travel a pleasure. Reduce responsibilities, but discharge your duties. Devotees coming to Prasanthi Nilayam should not waste their energy by talking excessively. You are coming to "Prasanthi Nilayam," but are you experiencing peace? No, No. You are talking to everyone and going to their houses. Are you cats or rats to wander about in other people's houses? Why have you come to this place, and for what purpose? Why are you going from house to house? Why do you talk to everyone? Spend time peacefully taking advantage of the good opportunity.

Gather all these precious experiences and put them into practice when you return home. Where there is grass, all the cattle will run there. They do not see whether there is a watchman or whether a fence has been erected. The moment they see green grass, they immediately eat it, chew it, and swallow it. After they return to their places, they bring back the cud and chew again. They ruminate what they have gathered.. They don't waste the opportunity given. But man, in the present day, is not like that. He is wasting the opportunity given to him. Instead of gathering inner peace, he wastes all his time and energy gossiping. **With excessive talk, our energy gets wasted. So, the mind cannot concentrate during meditation, even for a moment.** Who is related to whom? For whose relationship have you come here? Firmly hold on to the divine principle in yourself.

You went to the market to buy mangoes. But can you buy all the mangoes in the

“Everyone belongs to Me.
I belong to you, and you
belong to Me. Understand and
strengthen this relationship.
This is My sole desire.”



market? You can buy mangoes based on how much money you have in your pocket. You have two rupees in your pocket and want to buy four rupees worth of mangoes. Can you buy them? No! So, buy only two rupees worth of mangoes. In the same way, take up tasks within your capacity. Many people unnecessarily talk as if they know everything. In reality, there is no one more ignorant than them. Theirs is mere bookish knowledge. There are descriptions of several Indian sweets like *gulab jamun*,

palkova (milk cake), and *barfi* in the book. By reading about them, will you know their taste or enjoy them? No, only if you eat a *gulab jamun* will you realize its taste and delicacy. Similarly, there is no use in learning from a book without experiencing it. **Eating and digesting a sweet is practical knowledge. When we practice it, we understand its joy. Without practice, there is no point in memorizing the whole book.**

Many memorize all 700 verses of the sacred Bhagavad Gita. But what is the use? Those seven hundred verses may only do good to the throat. But practice the teachings of just one verse; that is enough. You must put at least one thing into practice. You don't need to memorize all the verses. Women know very well that checking a couple of grains is enough to know whether the rice is cooked. Suppose you want to taste the ocean. It is enough to place one drop on the tongue, and the taste is known. You do not need to drink the entire ocean. **Similarly, put one thing into practice: that is enough. Why read heaps and mountains of books?**

*Pustakamula-ninda mastuga
chaduvunde*

*Mastakamula ninda mattii mendu
ittivaru nannu eruganga nertura?*

Enta chaduvulundi emi phalamu?

(Telugu Poem)

Books are full of information. Minds are full of dirt (ignorance). Can such people ever know Me? What is the use of all such education?

Everything that is in the mind is like mere dirt (ignorance). This is not true education. Whatever is read should be put into practice to some extent. Whatever is heard, practice at least one or two things. Simply saying Rama, Krishna, Govinda, and Narayana is not enough. Simply pronouncing (the sacred names of God) with the tongue is not enough. It should be installed in the heart. The one that is installed in the

heart will be with you forever. You see one God and say Rama; you see another and say Krishna. This is all a big show. If you sincerely inquire while practicing something, you will understand it in the future, even if you don't comprehend it today. Even if no one tells you, your conscience will reveal it someday.

Avoid bad company and be with good people. Follow your conscience. This is true devotion. There is no need to try following the external form and outward aspects. Recognize your true nature. Ask yourself who you are. We are eager to hear news from the whole world. We go over American news, Russian news, and Pakistan news. All this news is a mere nuisance. Inside us is the real news, the true view of the Reality. We must hold on to that.

Typically, paper does not have any taste or odor. However, it can develop odors based on the materials it is used to wrap. Today's newspaper becomes tomorrow's waste-paper. The next day, you wrap jasmine flowers in paper. If you smell the paper, it smells like jasmine flowers. Is the smell of jasmine in the paper? No. It is because of the association with jasmine flowers, we experienced a pleasant smell. In the same paper, if some *pakoda* (an Indian snack) is wrapped, you will notice the smell of *pakodas*. What is the reason? It is because of the association with *pakoda*, you get the *pakoda* smell. Use the same paper to wrap dry fish. You cannot even go near it due to the foul smell. All of these smells are caused by contact of the paper with different objects, but it is not the nature of the paper.

Therefore,

*Tyaja durjjana samsargam
Bhaja sadhu samaagamam
kuru punyam ahoratram
smara nithyam-anityataam.*

(Sanskrit verse)

1. Give up the company of evil people.
2. Be in the company of the good and the holy.
3. Day and night, do good and meritorious deeds.
4. Remember what is eternal and what is temporary.

All of you should follow these four principles. When we do good deeds, we will become good human beings. Vyasa summarized the essence of the 18 Puranas in two sentences: "Doing good to others is meritorious (*punya*). Harming others is sinful (*paapa*)." (*paropakaraya punyaaya, papaya para-peedanam*). **Help ever, hurt never—we must follow these two maxims.** Then, no country will be in danger. All countries shall remain safe. The whole world is like a big building. All countries are like rooms in that building, not separate areas. We are living in a room called Bharat (India). If we think this way, then we will be all united. If we reject anyone, it is like denying God. In this way, we must enquire about the principle of 'I' and firmly believe in that principle.

Swami does not rejoice in the celebration of birthdays. Since all of you have come for this celebration, I am taking part in these for your satisfaction. I do not have any desire. Whether you believe it or not, I do not have any desire. From toe to head, I do not have a single desire. Whatever I do is for your sake. Whatever I say is for your sake. You must recognize this truth.

None have hatred toward me. I do not have hatred toward anyone. All are mine. I belong to all. This is why I bless that may all the worlds be happy (*Loka samasta sukhino bhavantu*). This is My desire. Everyone should take up the righteous path. All should earn a good name. All should have faith that they are the embodiments of *Atma*. You should also experience such a principle of *Atma*. Until such Oneness is experienced, you have to take part in activ-

ities such as devotional singing, repetition of the divine name, and meditation.

You must imprint the fundamental principle of today's message in your hearts and not waste money, food, time, and energy. There are five types of desires that one should control. The very first one, "misuse of money" is evil. **We should not waste money;** if you wish to keep a picture of Bhagawan, you may just keep one. Why waste money unnecessarily buying too many pictures? Do not buy too many pictures.

The second is "misuse of food." **Food is verily God.** The body is a form of food arising from the food partaken by parents. Therefore, don't waste food. Wasting food amounts to the wasting of God.

The third is "don't waste time." Time is God.

*kalaaya namaha, kalakaaya namaha,
kala-darpa-damanaya namaha,
kalateetaya namaha,
kala-svaroopaya namaha, kala-nirmitaya
namaha*

(Sanskrit verse)

Prostrations to God who is *kala* (time), the One who transcends the all powerful time, the One who controls time itself, to Him who is the very embodiment of time, and prostrations to the one who created time itself. **Everything is time. So, time waste is life waste.**

The fourth one is, "**Do not waste energy.**" Energy enters into every one of our actions. Energy is expended when you see, speak, hear, act, or think. **You should see that you do not waste your energy unnecessarily in any one of these activities.**

The fifth one is "One should not forget God at any moment." God is present wherever you may go. He is with you, beside you, and around you always. Hence, there is no need for you to specially go to a temple or a place to pray to God. Your heart is the temple. Turn your vision inward. Thereby understand the Atmic principle.

Your journey to Prasanthi Nilayam must have exhausted you. There is no need to come here.

**DON'T WASTE
MONEY**



**DON'T WASTE
FOOD**



**DON'T WASTE
TIME**



**DON'T WASTE
ENERGY**



**DON'T FORGET
GOD**



It is only for your own satisfaction that you may come. Hence, do not waste time. Do not give room for useless thoughts. Do not waste your love. **Love is life itself. Without love, one is lifeless. Install God, the very embodiment of love, in your hearts.**

Sathya Sai belongs to everyone. All Sai devotees must lead an exemplary life and be role models for others. Avoid unnecessary and excessive association with all and sundry. Many of you have come moving away from your old friendships and contacts. People have come from America, Japan, and Russia, leaving their parents or other relatives behind. Why, then, should they cultivate new relationships with others here? **Stay in solitude as much as possible. Keep your mind pure. There is no need to get involved in unnecessary conversations with others. Talk less, think more.** Cultivate this habit. Unnecessary association with strangers will have serious consequences. You might have noticed in the play staged by the students last night how one person got into trouble because of his association with some undesirable persons. Ultimately, he recognized the truth and felt that his mind had been poisoned by association with bad people. Others should not be blamed. His mistake was not keeping associations with good people. He cried over his folly in joining the bad company. To join the bad company and come to grief is a self-wrought calamity. Keep your association with anyone to the barest minimum, and do not have prolonged associations. **Genuine spiritual aspirants should be particularly careful in eschewing bad company.**

Do not be under the illusion that you are very knowledgeable about things; with egoistic feeling, you feel that you are teaching others about spirituality. What

do you know? What is that you can teach to others? **First, enquire if you have the ability and knowledge to preach to others. This Self-inquiry is very important. For this, Self-confidence is very much essential.** Self-protection is also necessary. So is Self-realization. One should create an environment conducive to spiritual progress and mental peace. That is the only thing Swami wants. I do not expect anything else. Having come to Prasanthi Nilayam, you must become exemplary beings. Outsiders must realize how Sathya Sai students and Sathya Sai devotees lead exemplary, pure, and peaceful lives. This recognition of being exemplary devotees is not for Me, but that good name is for you.

In truth, I have no devotees. You may describe yourselves as Sathya Sai devotees. **Everyone belongs to Me. I belong to you, and you belong to Me. Understand and strengthen this relationship. This is My sole desire.**

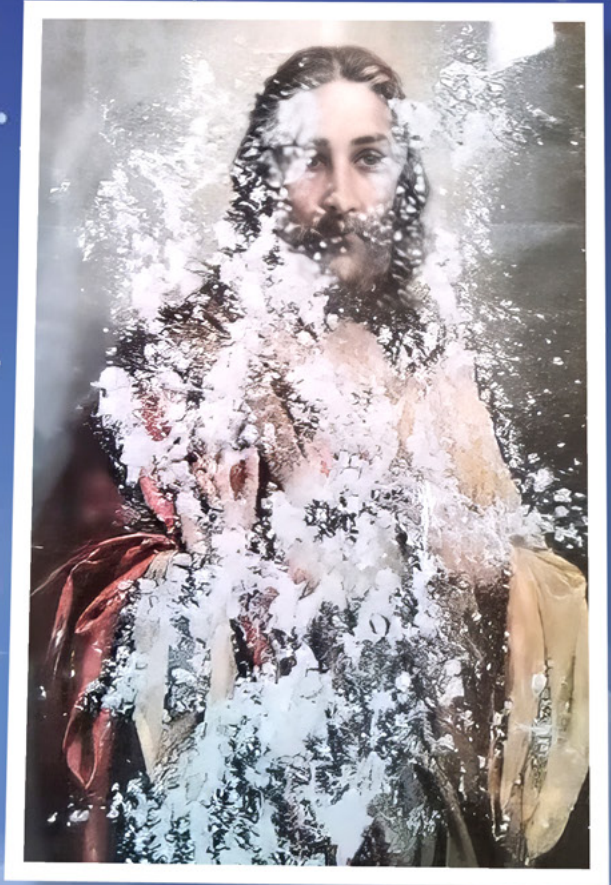
I do not like the celebration of my birthday or the grand decorations done for the event. Such ostentation is not good for anyone. Adopt a practical attitude towards the spiritual life. **It is not enough if you develop and experience sacred feelings on this auspicious day, but you must go out into the world and spread the sacred feelings among others.** Do not waste time by mere talk. Your devotion should not be limited to your stay in Prasanthi Nilayam. It should extend to the outside world, and you must share this with others. Swami is above all distinctions of caste, religion, or language. Remember, the caste of humanity, the religion of love, and the language of the heart—these are the principles that I stand for. Experience this Truth and share your joy with others.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
November 23, 1997





The Only Doctor Who Can Grant A Permanent Cure



IT WAS NOVEMBER 22, 1979, THE EVE OF BABA'S BIRTHDAY.

We finally arrived in Puttaparthi! My spouse, son, and I had gone through so much trouble getting here. Just as we entered, Baba finished His discourse and started a *bhajan*. When we heard His beautiful voice, we left the luggage unattended and ran to the assembly hall, which we later learned was the renowned Poorna Chandra Auditorium. There He was singing a melodious *bhajan*; a chorus of thousands of voices followed Him with devotion. **We were overwhelmed, in the divine presence, and we could hardly believe it.**

Discovering Divinity in Desperation

Just three years ago, I had been a militant atheist. I felt sorry for those who believed in anything other than palpable materials. At that time, it was more likely that I would visit Moscow to take a course on Dialectical Materialism rather than travel to Bangalore, a city whose name I didn't even know, to meet a 'Baba.'

But on December 22, 1976, the fateful diagnosis arrived for my ailing son:

"Dr. Bravo, your son has congenital hemolytic anemia, types S and T, of severe degree. His prognosis is very uncertain and will likely follow a very painful course due to the complications that you, as a pediatrician, know fully well."

“*There is only one God, so I listened to you. I have always been with you. I have brought all of you here.*”

I felt the world was crumbling around me. I thought this could happen to ‘others,’ but why me? Of course, I know the answer now: **Baba was bringing me back on the right path through suffering, which was the product of my past actions, that is, *karma*,** which I had so often laughed off before. These concepts were then philosophically unacceptable to me, given my dialectical materialist training.

Desperation and helplessness made me reluctantly accept all the options of alternative healing that Manuela, my wife, suggested to me, from sorcerers to pseudo-miracle workers. But in the end, they ended up disappointing and misleading us. It was 1977, and I had already devoured all the esoteric and spiritual literature that came to my hands. I had been introduced to the term ‘Avatar’ and had become a believer in that concept. **Thus, when “by chance” I learned of the existence of the Avatar, I believed immediately that Sai Baba was God incarnate and I was His devotee.** I had no doubt! I was surprised at myself for my immediate and unconditional acceptance of this concept! A short article in some magazine with the picture of a man, whom some of my ‘spiritual friends’ found strange and laughable, was more than enough to convince me to become a devotee of Sathya Sai Baba!

The spiritual guide of this group of friends had tried to heal my son, but the disease had only worsened. The doctors had given up hope, too. In the end, everyone said that only God could heal him. “Then only Baba can do

it,” I said aloud with conviction. The guide tried to dissuade me, saying that since he could not heal, Sai Baba certainly could not do it. But I was determined to try.

Dejected and Wounded in Puttaparthi

Weeks later, using the money I had saved for the purchase of a house, Waltercito (my son, also called Walter, Jr.), Manuela, and I left for India without knowing how to speak English and without knowing how to locate Baba in such a vast country. We also didn’t know any Peruvians who had made such a pilgrimage before!

When we finally arrived at Puttaparthi, we were three tiny specks in a sea of devotees who had come to celebrate His Birthday. How could we speak to Swami? Before leaving Lima, we had been told that Baba would leave the *ashram* after His birthday for over a month. So, I had to find a way to get Swami’s attention, even though I was determined to wait months or even years, if necessary, to ask Swami to heal our four-year-old son.

On the day of His Birthday, Baba went out in a Jeep to inaugurate a temple in the village. We thought this was the last chance to see Swami before He departed, and we began to follow Him, running with our child in our arms. The volunteers and the police prevented us from approaching the vehicle, but we stubbornly persisted and pointed our little boy out to Baba. Finally, Baba spoke to us. But it was in English! We understood neither His English nor His hand gestures. Such was our desperation that we created a

“Baba told everyone at that interview that He was very happy because the devotees gathered around Him had been with Him when He came as Rama, Krishna, and Shirdi Sai.

fuss, not ready to leave Him without understanding what He said. But Swami moved on. In the melee, the saree that a devotee had lent to Manuela got torn completely. I had never tried learning English because I considered it the official language of “imperialism,” but now it was also the language of God! I considered this sad situation symbolic of the distance between me and spirituality.

That night, on my way back to our accommodation in a school about 1.5 km from the *ashram*, I stumbled, and a glass piece lodged in the heel of my right foot. I felt a deep pain, and my shoe was flooded with blood. It was raining heavily, and I cried out loudly for my wife, who had returned to the accommodation much earlier, hoping she would respond. It was to no avail. Suddenly, in the deep darkness of the night, I was surprised to hear a sweet and youthful voice saying in Spanish, “Do you need help?” What joy amid the pain! There was someone who spoke Spanish in that place of confusion.

Baba’s Gift of an Interpreter

“Yes,” I replied, “I just had a cut on my foot and can’t walk. But who are you?”

“My name is Juan Carlos, and I am from El Salvador,” he replied. “Lean on me, and I will help you. And where are you from?”

“I am from Peru, and I am with my wife and my ailing son. I brought him to be seen by Baba, but it has not yet been possible. I understand He is leaving tomorrow, and I don’t know what to do...”

“But who told you that? Usually, Swami stays here for a while and then goes to Bangalore.”

That was enough to uplift my spirit, and I almost forgot about the pain as hope again flooded me.

We arrived at the lodging, where an American medical professional examined me and was shocked at the severity of the cut. He treated me with first aid and recommended that I be transferred to the Ashram Hospital. There, the doctor who examined me told me that the wound needed multiple sutures. I warned the doctor to do it without anesthesia because I was highly allergic to local anesthetics. Now, Juan and the doctor were shocked. I gave the doctor a small packet of *vibhuti* that had been handed out in the *ashram* that afternoon and said, “Don’t worry! Apply this ash to my wound and proceed with what has to be done. Baba will take care of the rest.” After a moment of hesitation, the doctor proceeded and finally discharged me, telling me not to get up for eight days and to take antibiotics and pain relievers. From that day, Juan Carlos was our interpreter until the day of our departure.

A Divine Promise

The thought of eight days in bed without seeing Baba was agonizing and unbearable, so I decided to skip that part of the doctor’s prescription. When I left the hospital, I asked Juan Carlos to pick me up at 4 in the morning to go for the auspicious chanting of Omkaram and Suprabhatam in the mandir.

After the morning prayers, we headed to Poorna Chandra Auditorium, where Swami was scheduled to deliver a discourse. Seeing a blood-stained bandage, the volunteers seated me right in front of the stage. When Baba came out, He spoke to a foreign devo-

tee and then came straight to me. I don't know what He said, but I replied with great emotion and desperation that my son was sick and that He should help him. Swami asked His question again, and I insisted on giving my answer, this time showing him the photo of my son. Baba replied, "*I know, I know.*" And for the third time, He asked me the same question, which I simply did not understand. Juan Carlos told me in a low voice that Swami was asking which country I was from. Then, I answered, "**From Peru, Baba.**" He replied, "**I am going to give you an interview.**" When they translated it, I became speechless with joy and cried like a child.

He moved ahead and continued to give *darshan*. In the end, He returned to me and asked for the letters. Once again, I didn't understand anything Swami said. But when Juan Carlos translated it for me, I remembered the bag with the letters from devotees in Peru I had placed behind me against the wall. Despite my conviction that He is God, I was impressed that Baba knew about the letters, which I had not even mentioned to Juan! I promptly handed them to Him, and Baba lovingly accepted them.

My foot wound healed completely on the fourth day without leaving even the slightest scar. I did not take any rest because Baba might call me for an interview at any time, and I could not miss a single *darshan*. The only medicine I used was *vibhuti* once a day. Twelve days later, we were blessed with two interviews on successive days! So many things happened in those two blissful sessions on December 4 and 5, 1979.

Face to Face with God

As the memorable interview started, Swami began by asking us, "*What do the doctors say?*" Without even waiting for an answer, He materialized a medallion with His image for my son, bestowing permanent protection. Telling us to never take it off, He said that Waltercito, my son, would be cured. **He also lovingly assured us that He would take care of everything and that He had always been with us.** Swami gave us packets of *vibhuti* and told us to give it to the child with some water, morning and night.

Then Baba pointed to Manuela, saying, "*She was praying to me.*" He imitated Manuela's posture as she cried and prayed to a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus while holding Waltercito in her arms. Manuela reacted sharply, "I did not pray to You; I prayed to



Jesus.” Baba lovingly replied, **“Yes, but there is only one God, so I listened to you. I have always been with you. I have brought all of you here.”** After that, Baba made a circular motion with His palm and created *vibhuti*. Manuela thought that He was surely pulling it out from under his sleeve. Just as the thought occurred to her, Baba turned around, smiled at her, and pulled up His sleeves to show that nothing was hidden.

Luis Muñiz (President of the Sai Organization of Mexico) began to say to Baba, “Swami, in Peru...”

Baba interrupted him and said, “Yes, yes, yes, *in Peru, there are many devotees of Swami and there is no Sai Center.*” He pointed to Manuela and me, and as a sign of blessing, He told us, *“I bless you and authorize you to form the first Sai Center in Peru.”* He gave instructions to Luis Muñiz to help us with all the necessary arrangements to start a center.

He then provided us with many packets of *vibhuti* as medicine for our little one, instructing him to take it with water every morning and evening. Walter Junior sincerely promised Swami that he would do everything He said. At the end of the interview, Manuela worriedly asked Swami what to do when the *vibhuti* runs out. Swami replied, *“Don’t worry, you will never be lacking.”*

***Vibhuti* Cascade and Interview Blessings**

When Swami said we would never be lacking, we assumed He was referring to *vibhuti*. Later, **I realized that when Swami says we won’t lack anything, He means anything!** We also thought that perhaps *vibhuti* would be sent to us through some devotees returning to Peru. But we knew no one from Peru who would be visiting India.

We got the answer in March 1980, when *vibhuti* began to pour out from two of the

numerous photos of Swami covering practically all the walls of our house! It was with great joy that we communicated Baba’s miracle to the devotees we knew. A month later, the miracle occurred again in the same photos. In fact, from one of them, *vibhuti* fell like rain to the ground! When Manuela put out her hand to catch the shower of *vibhuti*, not a speck fell on her! I tried to do the same, but the *vibhuti* eluded me, too. Our children Miguel, Carmen, and Oscar tried, with the same results. Finally, we had Waltercito put out his hand, and immediately, his hand was covered with the sacred *vibhuti*. The message was clear! It was meant for him.

On May 27, 1980, the first Sai Center in Peru was founded with 52 members. Around August or September, the *vibhuti* manifestation stopped. In November of that year, we traveled to India for the second time as delegates to the Third World Conference of Sai Organizations. During that visit, Swami blessed us with three interviews. In one of them, He called the three of us, Waltercito, Manuela, and I, to the private interview room and made us kneel in front of Him. **He lovingly taught us to chant the Gayatri mantra, line by line.** We felt in our hearts that Swami thus initiated us and accepted us as His devotees.

We visited Him again in 1982, and Swami blessed us again with interviews.

More *Vibhuti* Miracles

In 1986, Waltercito had been suffering from recurring painful episodes caused by his illness. Since Western medicine did not relieve his suffering, we took him to a Chinese doctor, a friend of ours, who, in addition to acupuncture and moxa, prescribed Chinese herbs and medicines. Even though he knew we were vegetarians, the Chinese doctor told our son to eat meat; otherwise, he could not continue treating him. Waltercito listened to him, but once the doctor left, our 10-year-



old child began to cry. He pleaded that he would rather endure pain than eat meat, which Swami had strongly forbidden for true spiritual seekers. We respected his decision and did not take him back to the doctor.

A couple of days later, on March 14, 1986, *vibhuti* again started forming on one of Swami's pictures as a sign of Swami's approval of our son's decision.

That same afternoon, while we were singing *bhajans* before this picture, Waltercito began to shout from the bathroom, telling us that *vibhuti* was coming from a small painting hanging there. Again, on March 16, our other son Oscar began to shout excitedly, "*Vibhuti! Vibhuti!*" The holy ash was now flowing out from the picture of Christ.

This miracle had a special meaning for Manuela. My wife was always worried that her devotion to Baba was a spiritual betrayal of Christ. **With this miracle, the apparent duality ended, and she understood the unity of all religions, that all names and all forms**

belong to God. The *vibhuti* miracles continued. After a while, even *Amrith* or nectar began to ooze from the pictures. These were tangible experiences that we shared with other devotees. **But what cannot be shared are the inner feelings of devotion experienced by every devotee who witnessed the manifestation of Swami's omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence.**

Modern Day Christ

During our visit to Puttaparthi in 1988, Swami blessed us with three interviews. In one of the interviews, Baba, like Jesus Christ, made the lame walk! A man had entered the interview room in a wheelchair but walked out hand in hand with Baba. I opened my heart to Him and listed my concerns, mainly about Waltercito. **Swami said, "Why do you worry so much when I am always with you? Be happy!"** He then pulled Waltercito's cheek tenderly and said several times, "Good boy. Good Boy." He promised us that He would give him a permanent cure.

At the end of that interview, Manuela's camera had run out of film, and she couldn't click any more pictures. But before leaving, Baba said to her, "*Take a picture of Me,*" and sat in His chair. Manuela wondered, "Now, what am I going to do? I don't have any more film." She still stood up and took the photo. It was a miracle because the camera worked! When we left the interview, the camera didn't work again!

On June 30, 1989, Walter Jr.'s 14th birthday, *vibhuti* started coming from the full-length painting of Swami above his bed. After that, so much *Amrith* oozed out that we filled a few pots with it! We have recorded that event on video as well. It was clear that Swami was referring to something deeper when He promised a 'permanent cure' for Waltercito.

Swami's Special Love for Waltercito

In November 1990, I traveled to India with Waltercito, without Manuela.

In that interview, Baba took my son on His lap and asked him, "*What do you want,*





In the photograph above, Walter Jr. is standing behind the angel dressed in white, taken after the performance by the children during Christmas 1990. The photo was signed by Baba. In 1993, vibhuti sprouted from this photo.

boy?” Walter Jr. replied mentally, “I want liberation.” He later told me that he did not say it out loud because he knew of my attachment to him. Baba began to make His usual hand movement, and Walter Jr. could see that a small white light was forming in a spiral in Baba’s hand. That light became a second medal, very similar to the first one He materialized in 1979.

Baba told everyone at that interview that He was very happy because the devotees gathered around Him had been with Him when He came as Rama, Krishna, and Shirdi Sai. He blessed them and told them that they all would have a peaceful, peaceful, peaceful death as a reward.

Waltercito’s Permanent Cure

By 1995, Waltercito’s health got very bad. His spleen had grown very large from anemia. He lost a lot of weight and could barely walk. I was in a lot of grief and anguish because the slightest blow could end his life.

A doctor decided to do an embolization, but things went wrong. Waltercito developed sepsis and had to undergo emergency surgery. A pumpkin-sized spleen had to be removed. The pain became more

acute and more frequent. Waltercito felt that all this resulted from not obeying Swami, who had told him a few years earlier not to have surgery. But in 2000, when he sought answers from Swami, Baba came into his dream and showed him the actions he had committed in a previous life that had generated *karma* to be settled in his present life.

Walter Junior left his body on October 2, 2004. He died peacefully, holding Baba’s medallions in his little hands. He was supposed to travel to India on October 4 with his parents. **Before the body was taken to the crematorium, a *vibhuti* spot formed on his forehead. For us, it was confirmation that he was now free and happy by Baba’s side.**

The loving memory we have of his cremation is a hall full of devotees singing *bhajans* with strength, devotion, and love that filled our hearts with joy. Even Walter Jr.’s university friends, who were not devotees, participated in the *bhajans*.

It is only apt to include in this article the letter that Waltercito had written. The letter was read after the funeral. Listening to it, everyone wept that day.

Letter Written by Walter Bravo Jr.

“Dear brothers and sisters, and parents, and family,

Carmen communicated that I was diagnosed with autoimmune hepatitis. Now that cirrhosis has started, I have decided to write to all of you so that you can understand how things are with me.

First, understand that I am tranquil, even more so than before. Some time ago, I wanted verification that I could unite with God. But don't worry. Though it is true that I am physically tired because of anemia and the typical pain that accompanies my illness, I am happy. Carmen and the rest of the family see my expression of fatigue, which may be interpreted as suffering. But this is not the case. My body suffers, but as I tell Fran and Ciro, one should not pay much attention to it because the mind wants you to believe that you are the body. But the truth is that I am happy.



Second, it is difficult to understand Him. Even if this life that He has given me seems cruel and hard, **it is really the love of God that is manifesting under all circumstances.** I thank Him for making me remember this. Our family can remember His message, and it gives us hope. Even if living through this illness is difficult, He will not give more pain than one can bear. Regarding my own life, I have asked Him to give me these trials while I have the blessing to know Him and when it is easier to overcome them with His help.

A little while ago, I read that Baba says that if the separation is going to end, there should be no balance of *karma* and no pending illness. For me, it is good that more illness is occurring because this signifies that God is accelerating my *karma* to make my separation even shorter.

Third, dear parents, brothers, and sisters, you should know that this illness came when I was prepared to receive it. For many years, I have been preparing to bear severe pain and the unpleasant things I feared at one time, but I am now ready to receive them with happiness. It is wonderful to have known all of you, and this makes me happy, too. **My terminal illness makes me happy because when I think of death, it is something natural that must happen to everyone. It makes me think of God all the time,** and now I realize how much time I have wasted.



And finally, remember that Baba said I would get well and be completely normal (in the interview when I was a little boy). Hence, don't worry about something that will go away with the body. Baba is curing me of my ignorance, which will help others to believe in His grandeur and divinity. This is the reason for all to be happy.

Even if Baba does not cure my body, it is not that He is not truthful; it is because He speaks in divine terms. It is quite possible that the cure which He offered me is not for the body. If this is the case, there is reason to celebrate because it means He will cure me of my ignorance and that I will know my true Self.

I want to make it clear to all whom I am writing that I am not trying to imply that I am enlightened I have been able to discover my defects and my ego, which are still very much a part of me. I am still very attached to my family and my Sai family, too. One can say this is natural, but we must remember that this attachment comes from identification with the body. This love exists because we believe them to be ours; that is, identification with their bodies and their minds. This is pure ignorance. So you can see that I still have a lot of adjustments to make before I can realize God.

But all these trials are appropriate for self-improvement. We can take what we learn in the books of Swami's teachings and apply these lessons to our lives and treasure these teachings in our hearts. Then, this knowledge becomes a blessing. **We must always return to the truth that we are not the body, the mind, or the intellect; rather, we are the Atma, the Self. The Atma does not die, change, or decline.**

In this way, we can always be happy despite what happens to our bodies. Use the body to practice non-attachment. I don't pray that Swami should cure me or improve my health. This is in Swami's hands. If you want to pray and want your prayer to be fruitful, pray that in the end, you will be closer to union with God than at the beginning.

In an interview, Baba said to me, *'Don't worry, be happy.'* What would you do if God ordered you to be happy? He doesn't ask you to do anything impossible. In other words, the strength to be happy is inside us, no matter what might happen. One must try to discover it. **The order from Swami was not just for me; it was for my father, who was in the interview, and all of you reading this.**

So always be happy, and let Baba bless you and protect you."

Walter Bravo, Jr.



Walter, Waltercito, and Manuela

My son's death left a huge void in my life, and I did not know what to do. I lashed out in anger against Swami. I told Manuela that

she should not take Waltercito's ashes to India as he had desired.

But on October 4, 2004, two days after he died, the phone rang very early in the morning. It was Leonardo Gutter, a Sai brother close to the family, who called to tell us that in his meditation that day, Baba told him, "*Walter arrived well and arrived on time.*" That statement filled me with comfort, and I came to my senses. I traveled to India with Walter Jr's ashes and visited Swami, who called me to Him. I wept and sought His forgiveness for reacting in a wrong way. Swami just smiled and lovingly blessed me.

Dr. Walter Bravo, Sr.

PERU



Dr. Walter Bravo, Sr. was a practicing pediatrician in Peru. He was an ardent devotee of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and under Swami's direction, he opened the first Sai Center in Peru in May 1980. On June 21, 2006, Dr. Bravo merged with Baba peacefully. He practiced his profession until the end and encouraged his medical colleagues to serve the needy in the remote and poorest villages. In the words of his children: "Our father was a wonderful father, friend, and devotee of God, who most importantly, gifted us with love for Swami. Today, even his grandchildren follow the spiritual path and actively participate in the Sai Organization of Peru."



The Greatest Wealth

What is the wealth of the saintly woman Anasuya (wife of Sage Athri) who turned the very Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara) into mere babies?

What is the wealth of noble lady Damayanthi who scorched the wretch Vyadha into ashes when he tried to harass her?

What is the wealth of Mother Janaki (consort of Sri Rama) who jumped worshipfully into the fire without hesitation and came out victorious with a smile?

What is the wealth of queen Chandramathi (wife of King Sathya Harishchandra), who happily served in others' houses like a menial servant for the sake of her husband, who was holding on to the truth?

What is the wealth of the chaste princess Savitri (wife of King Satyavan), who brought her husband back to life from death by pleasing the lord of death (Yama)?

What is the wealth on earth that confers everything?

O woman, such noble chastity is verily your wealth.

What other ornament is greater than this?

On this birthday festival of Puttaparthi Sathya Sai, partake the prasada (sanctified offering), of His sweet words and be blessed with long life, health, and happiness, children, grandchildren, and friends. Overcome the worldly distractions and realize the Supreme Lord.

Sri Sathya Sai

Prasanthi Nilayam.
Puttaparthi.



శ్రీ సత్యసాయి
 ప్రసాదం పంపిన పత్రమును
 శాశ్వతముగా నిర్వహించుటకు
 ఆగ్రహించుటకు ముందుగా
 ప్రార్థనలు చేయుటకు సూచించుటకు
 శ్రీ సత్యసాయి సూరిగారు

వేరత్రాపణాస్థులవైవ సవితాంబలన జౌషి
 ఆనానా గు రెమసుయ ధనమకేర్తి
 సెంజాయితే ఆమృసెంకజోకగ వ్యాకు
 కపాయిం మధమయం తధనమకేర్తి
 లగ్నీసుంత ముఖాల్ల యలయకవరహాన
 ముననొల్లు గూనకీ ధనమకేర్తి
 ధన్యకై పకు అంక్ల దాసయై ముకయెంబి
 దరణి వెంక్రమత సద్దవమకేర్తి
 ధన్యప్రతకంను సాంక్ర ధనమకేర్తి
 ధనణి యకి లాక చందక ధనమకేర్తి
 ఆనణి యల్ల సాంక్ర ధనమకేర్తి
 అంకంబె సువీని ఆనశతి కురి.

శ్రీ సత్యసాయి.
 శ్రీ సత్యసాయి.
 ప్రసాదం పంపిన

LOVE IN ACTION



USA

Love All Serve All (LASA) Food Truck Serves Love With Lemonade

Food trucks revolutionized the restaurant landscape by making high-quality fresh meals accessible to ‘foodies’ everywhere. Yet, it is ironic that Los Angeles, which has more food trucks than any other city in the United States, also has more hungry and homeless people than any US city other than New York! If a food truck can serve customers, can it not be utilized to serve the hungry and needy? This was the inspiring thought of a group of devotees in SSSIO–USA, Region 8, who decided to explore this idea.

It seemed like a simple concept. Rent a food truck, get volunteers to make meals, drive the truck to different parts of Los Angeles, and serve anyone in need. The first hurdle occurred when the team learned that a license to operate a food truck was necessary. Renting a truck from commercial operators was also cost-prohibitive. Prayers and sincere efforts led the team to a food truck belonging to Mr. Govinda and Mrs. Shant Atma, a lovely couple serving hot vegan meals for over 30 years to needy students attending UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) who couldn’t afford meals. **It was a match made in heaven. The “Love All Serve All” (LASA) food truck was born.**

A menu of vegan macaroni and cheese loaded with nutritious vegetables, a side serving of crisp corn chips, and fresh lemonade was agreed upon, and the project was launched on Sunday, August 18. After scouting different areas of Los Angeles to find underserved neighborhoods, including the neighborhoods of Venice, Santa Monica, west LA, and downtown LA, the team zeroed in on a downtown



area within ‘Skid Row’ (an area with many homeless street-dwellers) filled with hungry people. With the blessings of Swami, the wheels were set in motion.

Enveloped in the warmth of love, the enthusiastic and energetic team met at 11:00 AM and set out in the LASA truck, wearing matching t-shirts displaying the mission. A gentleman

who introduced himself as the “Mayor of Skid Row” helped the team find a central spot to park the truck. As soon as they parked and started to set up, people lined up for food. There were parents and children, single people on bikes and in wheelchairs, and a man with a Chihuahua dog named Rambo. Two volunteers stood outside the food truck to welcome people and deliver the meals. Five volunteers lovingly served the macaroni and cheese, chips, and lemonade in compostable, disposable, environment-friendly containers. **Patrons were grateful for the rare, warm meal and even more for the refreshing, cool lemonade.** In just 45 minutes, the team ran out of food after serving 140 people on the first day of operations. How the volunteers wished they had more food to serve!

Inspired by this rewarding beginning for the LASA food truck program, the SSSIO volun-



teers decided to continue this service every month and expand it to serve more people more often. **On Sunday, September 15, the LASA truck again went to downtown Los Angeles and served meals to 275 people with love.** With Swami’s blessings and volunteer support, the noble and innovative service will continue in Los Angeles.



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO Sun, Sea, and Sand with the VIPs

The Sri Sathya Sai International Organization of Trinidad and Tobago (SSSIOTT) held its annual service project for the members of the Blind Welfare Association (BWA) of Trinidad and Tobago on September 7, 2024. **This event has been a cherished tradition in the local Sai calendar for over thirty years, where devotees spend a day of sun, sea, and sand with Visually Impaired Persons (VIPs) at Mayaro Beach on the southeast coast of the island.**

VIPs from the North and South branches of the BWA were picked up and transported by bus to the beach houses. The day’s proceedings began with opening prayers and devotional songs by members of the SSSIOTT, **followed by soul-stirring music performances and inspiring speeches by the multi-talented VIP guests.**



After enjoying a delicious meal, a human chain was formed in the water, allowing VIPs, accompanied by their buddies from the host Organization, to bathe safely, encircled by volunteers and lifeguards. Before departing, the VIPs were given care packages and snacks and transported back to their BWA branches.

This year’s event welcomed approximately 150 VIPs, including their family members and 160 Sai devotees. Among them were 40 young adults who played a key role in supporting the service project, ensuring a smooth, enjoyable, and memorable outing for the VIPs.

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

Sri Sathya Sai



Year of Advent

International Sai Medical Conference

September 3-4, 2005

As early as August 28, 1976, in a discourse given at His General Hospital in Whitefield (Bangalore, India), Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba revealed the secret of success for ideal healthcare and medical practice.

"I must also point out to the doctors serving here that perhaps even more than the drugs they prescribe, the sweet, soft words they speak and the love and sympathy they evince can cure better and quicker the illness of their patients. Look upon them as your own kith and kin, as your special guests and as your closest friends; and attend to them lovingly and with unflinching care. I call upon you to maintain this attitude in every situation. Remember that the patient has to cooperate with you in order that you may effect the cure, and when cured, the patient confers on you satisfaction, joy, and a sense of elation. Be grateful to the patient for all this."

Inspired by this holistic and holy vision, on the occasion of the 80th year of the advent of the Avatar, a historic International Medical Conference titled "Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare Mission–Sai Ideal Healthcare," was held on September 3 and 4, 2005. This was organized jointly by the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization of India and the International Medical Committee of the International Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization (The previous name of the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization). **It would be the first conference in the world to focus on the fundamental principles of healthcare postulated by Bhagawan Baba, where discussions were held on**

the challenges as well as the outcomes of delivering medical care with love, compassion, and empathy. The conference was attended by over 900 delegates representing a remarkable geographical distribution of top-notch healthcare professionals from 27 countries.

Detailed Planning and Preparations

In November 2004, Swami formed the International Medical Committee (IMC), laying out guidelines for its functioning, with Dr. Narendranath Reddy as its first Chairman. Within a month of its formation, the IMC was already in the thick of action, conducting and coordinating the relief and rehabilitation efforts for tsunami victims worldwide, especially in Asia. **With this impactful, heartfelt experience, the IMC made dedicated efforts with humility to organize a unique conference, the likes of which had never been seen in the world before.**

Planning for the conference began during Maha Shivaratri 2005 and began to concretize after Guru Poornima the same year. A special website was set up where delegates worldwide registered. The delegates began arriving in Prasanthi Nilayam in late August, though the majority arrived on September 1 and 2. Registrants were provided free accommodation and breakfast, lunch, and dinner on both days of the conference. The menu was extensive and a culinary delight, and on both days, the delegates enjoyed sumptuous feasts.

Every delegate also received a handsome carrying case containing conference materials, including brochures and booklets on Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Healthcare Mission, detailing work done by the Sri Sathya Sai Hospitals and His Organizations all over the world. There was also an issue of "Swiss Med", a review of Medicine and Medical Techniques published in Switzerland, dedicated to the work done by the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences

(SSSIHMS) in Bangalore and Puttaparthi. Another brochure called "Sainet" described the massive malaria prevention program undertaken in Kenya by the Sri Sathya Sai National Trust of Kenya in cooperation with the government of Kenya.



The Sai Ideal Healthcare Exhibition

Before the conference's inauguration, Swami blessed all the delegates with divine



darshan. On the afternoon of September 2, He showered His infinite love and grace on everyone for more than one and a half hours. The morning of September 3 began with Bhagawan's visit to the exhibition hall. **He toured the entire exhibition for nearly half an hour, paying close attention to all the exhibits. The exhibition showcased the outstanding work done worldwide by the Sri Sathya Sai Organizations and Sri Sathya Sai Hospitals on the Sai Ideal Healthcare Mission.**

Every visitor to the exhibition was not only educated on healthy living but also treated to rare and delightful photographs of Swami's direct involvement in setting up and growing the temples of healing.

Inaugurating a Conference with a Lofty Purpose

The conference sought to integrate and reaffirm Swami's teachings on the Science, Art, and Integrity of medicine and promote these noble ideals as the 'SAIence' of medicine.

These ideals included four primary tenets:

1. Practitioners of healthcare should consider the nature and sacredness of human life, the great significance of supporting human life through healthcare, and **respond accordingly, not only with medicines and surgical procedures**

but, more importantly, with love and compassion.

2. Economic considerations should not preclude anyone from receiving the highest benefits of healthcare. Private and government resources must be mobilized to extend the benefits of healthcare, 'Sai Ideal Healthcare.'
3. Healthcare should focus on preventing disease, not merely treating the disease once it occurs.
4. Healthcare professionals, including those in supportive roles, must incorporate these ideals in their practice.

The conference was inaugurated in the divine presence of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the Sai Kulwant Hall. Dr. Michael Goldstein, Chairman of the Prasanthi Council, and Dr. A.N. Safaya, Director of the SSSIHMS, delivered the welcome address and introduction to the conference.

Dr. Michael Goldstein spoke about Bhagawan's healthcare mission, its role as a solution to the healthcare crises in many countries, and the need for humane medicine in the world. He noted how his own life and health have benefited from adherence to Bhagawan's advice on a healthy lifestyle. He also welcomed the wide cross-section of highly qualified healthcare professionals to this historic conference. Dr. A. N. Safaya spoke of the significance of Swami's healthcare initia-

tives in rural India and mentioned some of the recent trail-blazing projects undertaken by the SSSIHMS in advancing compassionate and loving care to patients. Both Dr. Goldstein and Dr. Safaya stressed that the path to better patient health is through the delivery of compassionate, loving, and holistic healthcare.

This was followed by a lecture by the guest speaker, Dr. Alan Gradman. The renowned physician thanked Swami for bringing him to His lotus feet and recounted how **he and his medical practice have incorporated Swami's teachings in their lives and their work. He emphasized the importance of compassion and human values in teaching and practicing medicine.**

The delegates were overjoyed to have the good fortune of being blessed by Swami with His nectarine divine discourse. Swami underscored the importance of getting rid of our body consciousness, and focusing instead on the fundamental "I," which is divine, to serve patients better. **He began His discourse by assuring that He would always take care of each and every devotee. He explained in great detail, emphasizing that the one who realizes the Truth that the same changeless and eternal Atma is present in every living being is the happiest person.**

Swami seemed to reinforce the comments made earlier

by Dr. Narendranath Reddy in his morning talk: "By His very *Sankalpa* Swami can cure incurable diseases; He can make the lame walk and the blind see. He has canceled incurable cancers, and He has raised the dead to life. But that is not the purpose for which Swami has come. **The purpose why Swami has come is to raise our consciousness so that we realize who we are.**"

Intense Afternoon Session Concluding with Divine Darshan

In the afternoon, the conference proceedings were held at the auditorium of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL). Internationally renowned speakers who were experts in their respective professions delivered outstanding talks and intellectually and spiritually enriching presentations. The conference sessions were attended by a wide spectrum of healthcare professionals, including physicians, nursing staff, leaders in medical education, healthcare administrators, medical equipment suppliers, and government officials.

Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman of the International Medical Committee, presented an overview of the Healthcare services rendered by the overseas Sri Sathya Sai Organizations, including medical and veterinary camps, along with disaster relief work done in the wake of the catastrophic 2004 Tsunami that struck portions



Dr. Michael Goldstein



Dr. A.N. Safaya



Dr. Alan Gradman



Dr. Neelam Desai



Dr. A.S. Hegde



Dr. Keki Mistry



Dr. Anil Nanda

of India and Southeast Asia. Then, experts gave three talks on the four pillars of pediatric care, the Sainet project in Kenya, and the role of biomedical and pharmaceutical companies in making technological advances in the delivery of ideal healthcare.

After the afternoon session, all delegates and speakers were ushered back to Sai Kulwant Hall, where Swami blessed everyone once more with divine *darshan* for 90 minutes. An unending stream of love and energy poured forth from Swami, sanctifying the lives of all assembled there.

Stimulating Heads and Touching Hearts

The morning session on September 4 began at the auditorium with Dr. Neelam Desai, Head of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, SSSIHMS, Puttaparthi. She presented astounding data on the types and numbers of surgeries carried out at the Super Specialty Hospital since its opening in 1991. The work done at Swami's hospitals is a testament that Sai Ideal Healthcare is here and now, providing state-of-the-art, specialized tertiary healthcare, free of charge to all regardless of color, creed, or caste and delivered with utmost humility, love, compassion, and empathy.

Dr. A.S. Hegde, Chairman of the Department of Neurosciences, SSSIHMS, Whitefield, presented the critical services provided by the Neurosurgical department. He cited a mortality rate of only 1.39 percent, which is far lower than that experienced by the most renowned neurosurgeons in the world. Yet, the cases selected were highly complex since they represented the advanced state of the disease, **demonstrating that with Sai as our savior, we are merely His Instruments, as He does the healing.**

Dr. Keki Mistry, Director, D. Y. Patil Dental College & Hospital, New Mumbai, and Member of the World Health Organization Expert Advisory Panel on Oral Health presented a comprehensive overview of the medical and veterinary services provided by the Sri Sathya Sai Organization of India. The morning session concluded with a presentation by Dr. Anil Nanda, Professor and Chairman, Department of Neurosurgery, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. He referenced the earliest accounts of neurosurgical interventions mentioned in historical and spiritual texts, to the latest technologies of modern science. **Despite the technical mastery in today's day and age, successful surgery outcome rests in the divine hands that guide the surgeon.** He stressed the importance of not getting carried away with



Dr. Michael Rakoff



Dr. Venkatraman Sadanand



the latest technology available but treating patients with utmost respect and reverence.

The Unforgettable and Divine Valedictory Session

The valedictory session was held in the Sai Kulwant Hall in the divine presence of Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It began with a speech by Dr. Michael Rakoff, a pediatrician and healthcare consultant, outlining his experience applying human values to the practice of medicine. He noted that everyone at the conference had **a sense of unity, harmony, humility, love, and sacrifice—ideals that reflect Swami’s teachings.**

Dr. Venkatraman Sadanand, an accomplished neurosurgeon from Chicago, also spoke of the spirit of sacrifice, which is the hallmark of a good doctor. He concluded with powerful words, “We must love our

patients—love, love, love till it hurts. Love till there is nothing left of your body. All that you can see is the God within you. As physicians, we have to ask ourselves—**‘In what way have I given up something dear to me so that I can make someone happy?’**”

When he went up to receive Swami’s blessings after the talk, Swami, with a gentle wave of His hand and a sweet smile on His face, manifested a beautiful chain with a crystal Lingam and lovingly put it around Dr. Sadanand’s neck. Baba declared that this is His true form.

Swami’s Shower of Love During the Conference

Swami very lovingly gave mementos to all the speakers and also the members of the working committee who worked tirelessly to make the conference a success. As each



Swami blesses key contributors of the conference with a special commemorative silver plate in a box.

person went up to Swami to collect his/her memento, a 'moment of love,' Swami had a kind word or a gentle pat on the cheek for them, or a mesmerizing smile, or a divine blessing. These were great moments of loving intimacy and supreme bliss for each recipient. Swami showered the love and compassion that He wanted every medical caregiver to share so that the patient is better informed about the disease and does not have to worry and return frequently to the physician.

The theme and delivery of the conference reflected words from Bhagawan's discourse in August 1976:

"Look upon your patients as your own kith and kin, as your special guests and as your closest friends, and attend to them lovingly and with unflinching care. I call you to maintain this attitude in every situation."

The scheduled speeches were done, the mementos were distributed, and the parting messages from the organizers were delivered. But Swami wanted to bless the participants with more! He asked all the eminent doctors seated beside Him on the dais to share their thoughts. It was literally an unexpected, pleasant bonus as several of them enjoyed this blessed opportunity and divine boon.

Overall, the conference delegates from all over the world were exposed to Bhagawan's healthcare mission and His teachings on patient care and tasted His infinite love and compassion. **They took this message and experience to their homeland and, through their own examples, continue to serve as beacons of love and examples of Bhagawan's teachings.** Their renewed approach to healthcare will undoubtedly spread the ideals of Sai Healthcare and serve the world better.



My Divine Music Teacher

I WAS A LITTLE GIRL OF FIVE AND A HALF YEARS OLD WHEN I JOINED THE FIRST-GRADE CLASS AT SWAMI'S PRIMARY SCHOOL in Puttaparthi in 1990. Besides academics, we had a host of extra-curricular activities to select. I decided to join the music class. We could choose from two types of music -Hindustani (North Indian classical) or Carnatic (South Indian classical).

But in reality, there wasn't much of a choice for the students. The teachers assigned the child based on his/her mother tongue. Since my parents were South Indians, I was logically placed in the Carnatic music class. Since we had been residents of Bombay (Mumbai today) for several years, I spoke Marathi and Hindi at home, more aligned with Hindustani music. I wasn't familiar with the tongue-twisting lyrics of most Southern classical music.

Facing the Music While Learning Music

The first day of music class was one that I can never forget! The class was conducted in a natural setting, under the trees in the school compound. The teacher sang each line of a song and asked the students, six girls and four boys, to repeat it. Because of the language barrier, I was struggling with the lyrics of the songs. As the teacher started reprimanding me for not being able to repeat even a single line without stuttering, Swami's car entered the school premises from the General Hospital gate!

Seeing us under the tree, He stopped His car, quickly got down, and walked toward us. None of us tried to approach Him and acted like we were 'absorbed' in our music class. The teacher started teaching the song again from the beginning, but I failed to follow even a single line again because of the difficulty in pronouncing the words. And Swami was watching! I was single-handedly ruining the performance of the class.

“Silently, I thanked Swami and felt grateful that I have such a wonderful Lord to whom I can rush with every little problem. He resolves all problems in a manner that is good for everyone.”

The teacher was now exasperated and stopped the other children from following and singing the lines. She asked me to repeat the words after her. I was very nervous, so even though she sang the words slowly, I couldn't repeat more than two words. The teacher gave up, looked at Swami, and said, "Swami, we will move her from the Carnatic group to the Hindustani group because she is unable to cope in this class."

Hearing that, I started crying. Knowing that Swami showed a lot of interest in Carnatic music, I wanted to be part of this 'popular' group. I also felt that though I was a good singer, I was being punished for not being able to pronounce the words. As I kept crying, the teacher was at her wit's end about what to do.

With God by My Side...

Swami came near me, lovingly patted my head, and said, "Give the child a few days. She will learn and sing nicely."

My tears dried up instantly. I was so relieved and happy. In one moment, with one loving sentence, Swami lifted me from a hopeless abyss to a joyful zenith. From feeling that I was at the bottom of the class, I now felt at the top because I had His backing. I began to put all my efforts into practicing and pronouncing the difficult words. **His love motivated a six-year-old child to practice for hours on end! In two days, when we had the next music class, I doled out all the lines to perfection, to the teacher's complete satisfaction and utter amazement.** The

Lord enters at the right moment. When the world gives up on you, God is the only one who lovingly supports you, for He knows you and your heart! I felt that with God by my side, there was nothing I could not achieve.

Divine Management

When I was in 3rd grade, our *Carnatic* music teacher got married and left Puttaparthi. We were all worried because we were without a teacher. I wrote a letter to Swami sharing everything that was going on in my mind and heart. I prayed to Swami to send us another music teacher soon.

During *darshan* that Sunday, Swami walked straight to me and took the letter. Even as I smiled gratefully, He opened the letter and read the contents. Then He asked, "*You want another teacher now? How many more teachers do you want?*"

When I did not respond, He asked, "*How many teachers are there now in the school?*" I didn't know and looked back pleadingly at the teachers for help. Some of them mumbled a figure, and I meekly repeated it to Swami. He then smiled and lovingly patted my head, saying that we should all join the Hindustani music group and that 'Keya Aunty' would henceforth teach us music. Thus, both groups were merged, and then we all started learning Hindustani music.

Though I always wanted to learn Carnatic music, I was ready to change to Hindustani music the moment I knew Swami wanted it that way.



Swami visiting the Primary School

Never Pray for Other's Downfall

When I was in the 7th grade, toward the end of the academic year, I suffered from a severe throat infection when the music competition was to be held. I prided myself on winning the first prize in music every year and the privilege of receiving the prize from Swami, along with a coveted *padanamaskar*. I wanted to win the first prize again. But I could barely even whisper a few words without coughing! I was feeling very bad, but what was I to do? I decided to seek help from my Swami.

As we were seated in the *Mandir* that Thursday morning, I tore a sheet of paper and quickly wrote a letter to Swami. I explained to Him about my sore throat condition, the competition, and my apprehension that I would surely be disqualified. I feared the other students, who may not be as good singers as me, would eventually get the prizes. I lamented to Him that it would be embarrassing for me if this happened. As my disappointment grew, I became more desperate. I prayed that the music teacher, who also served as the judge for the competition, should get sick that day! Then, the competition would have to be postponed for a few days, giving me a chance to recover and participate.

Swami came for *darshan* and walked toward me with a knowing smile. I felt hopeful and raised myself to offer the letter

to Him. He took the letter, blessed me with *padanamaskar*, and walked away, to my great joy and exuberance! But then, even as I was smiling, Swami took a few more steps and dropped my letter into the lap of my music teacher herself! I was petrified! What was I to do now?

The teacher was very happy because Swami granted her *padanamaskar*. I shuddered within, thinking of the consequences once she opened the letter and read it. I had freely shared my feelings and thoughts with Swami, and now, I thought He had 'broken' the sacred pact of secrecy between us! How could He do that?

Swami went in, and after a while, the *bhajans* started. An idea struck me. My music teacher would close her eyes through the *bhajans* every day. I thought I could sneak to her during the *bhajans* and steal the letter from her lap! However, to my dismay, she was so filled with the joy of getting Swami's blessings that she didn't close her eyes at all! She also held the letter in her hands all the while! Now, I lost all hope of retrieving the letter. I began to worry about everything that would happen once we returned to school after *darshan*. The teacher would possibly show the letter to the headmistress and the warden. Everyone would learn of my selfish and mean-spirited prayer, wishing the teacher would fall sick! I was now upset at myself for making such a prayer and

thought that maybe Swami had put me on the spot to teach me a lesson.

The Messenger Vanishes Once the Lesson is Learned

Swami always taught us to pray for everyone's good, and I had made this stupid prayer out of selfishness and jealousy. I was remorseful and promised Swami that I would never do this again. But I was also angry at Swami because He had betrayed my trust. And now, though I had learned my lesson, I would still be exposed for my mistake! I felt that perhaps Swami didn't care so much about me.

The *bhajans* ended. Swami came out, and instead of taking His usual route back to His residence, He changed direction and came toward me! I started fighting with Him in my mind, "Swami, you may be enjoying this whole drama, but You have really put me in a very difficult situation. All I asked was for a little help, and you did this to expose me!"

Swami walked to my music teacher and asked for the letter in her folded palms. It was my letter that He had dropped into her lap earlier! I saw a flicker of hope and prayed, "Swami, please set it right again. I have learned from my mistake. Please, just help me this time."

The teacher gave the letter to Him, and He innocently smiled and asked her, "This is

for me, isn't it?" Even though I was seated four feet away, I shouted, "Yes, Swami, that is for you."

He smiled, took the letter, and walked on.

I heaved a sigh of relief. My music teacher seemed transported into an even higher plane of happiness. She had a smile on her face as she left the Mandir because she had been doubly blessed. But that was not the end of His drama.

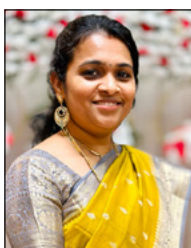
All's Well That Ends Well

Later that day, it was time for the music competition, but I could barely speak. I walked up to the teacher and said I wouldn't be able to sing due to the throat infection. To my surprise, she said, "This year onward, it is a year-round continuous assessment. It will not be based on a single competition." My jaw dropped as I listened to her congratulating me on standing first in the class! I was so overjoyed that tears flowed down my eyes. Silently, I thanked Swami and felt grateful that I have such a wonderful Lord to whom I can rush with every little problem. **He resolves all problems in a manner that is good for everyone.**

Swami is my music teacher. He also taught me the greatest lessons of my life through music.

Mrs. Pooja Digumarti

INDIA



Mrs. Pooja Digumarti lives in India and has been a devotee of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba since childhood. She is the third generation of Sai devotees in her family and studied from Grades 1 to 12 at the Sathya Sai Primary School at Puttaparthi. She graduated with a B.Com (Hons) from the Anantapur Campus of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. She is an investment banking professional and is currently working with a financial advisory firm.

from the
International Sai Young Adults

Reliving His Life through His Message

The Sathya Sai International Organization of Malaysia (SSIOM) recently held its National Sai Convention from August 31 to September 1, 2024, in Kuala Lumpur. The theme of this year's convention was 'My Life is My Message: Living His Message.' The special event attracted around 500 devotees, with the young adults actively participating in various roles.

'EASE-ing' into a Healthier Lifestyle

Young adults played a key role as facilitators for the EASE workshop that focused on building four actionable habits: **E**xercise regularly, have a positive **A**ttitude, **S**leep deeply, and **E**at responsibly (EASE). While the topics may appear to cover common daily practices, the facilitators offered practical tips on integrating these habits into everyday life. This workshop was beneficial in inspiring everyone to adopt a healthier lifestyle and recognize the value of maintaining this consistently, along with developing constant integrated awareness.

Tough or Toughened?

The young adults had a memorable satsang with Mr. Aravind Balasubramanya, International Young Adults Advisor. He emphasized the shared sense of belong-

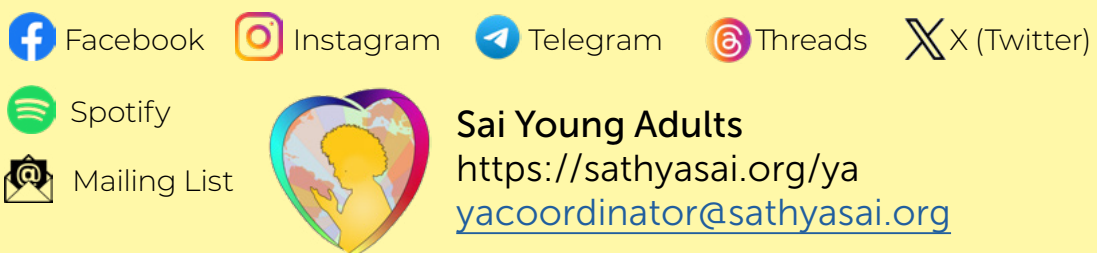


ing among Swami's youth and the universal challenges they face. His reflections on Swami's teachings resonated deeply, highlighting how Swami not only presents challenges but also provides the inner strength to overcome them. **He reminded everyone that every challenge is Swami's way of molding us into stronger, better individuals to further our spiritual progress.**

Living His Message Workshop

This workshop, led by the young adults toward the end of the convention, encapsulated the essence of the earlier sessions. **It culminated with the reaffirmation that we are truly living His message.** Participants left the workshop feeling inspired by the meaningful sessions to make sincere efforts to put His message into action.

Follow the @saiyoungadults accounts on social media



From Nature to Nurture:

Transforming Lives through Sai Hikes in Ireland

Over the past five years, the Sri Sathya Sai Center in Dublin, Ireland, has experienced a significant influx of youth. These YAs bring with them diverse talents, aspirations, and challenges. However, only a small portion (about 10%) have been exposed previously to the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and His Organization. Despite this setback, the positive force has been the unifying sense of belonging to the Sai Family. Recognizing that the future prosperity and well-being of the world rest in the hands of the youth, there is a growing need to foster deeper personal connections within the YA community.

Complementing the grace of Mother Nature with the youth's love for outdoor activities, a trekking program called Sai Hikes was introduced recently. The uniqueness of Sai Hikes was that it invigorated not only the body but also focused on the purification of the mind and the heart.

A typical Sai Hike includes a forum to discuss personal and professional challenges while exploring each YA's vision for life and their spiritual journey, sharing insights on the functioning of the Sai Organization from those with experience, and adopting different sadhanas (spiritual practices) inspired by discussions during the hike.

Even after just a few hikes, remarkable transformations were witnessed by the



YAs, coupled with a growing sense of unity within the YA community.

- Several participants have received job promotions by applying lessons shared by fellow YAs during the hikes.
- In the face of Ireland's ongoing housing crisis, the Sai Hikes have expanded participants' networks, helping YAs find accommodation through connections within the Sai Family.
- YAs have started sharing about their vulnerabilities, which has alleviated their worries, boosted their self-confidence, and helped them overcome challenges like depression and anxiety. This has been especially impactful for single mothers and those facing relationship difficulties.
- There has been a notable increase in participation in weekly *bhajan* sessions (devotional singing) and *satsangs*. Those unfamiliar with Sai bhajans are now proactively learning them, often reaching out to other YAs to join in practice sessions.
- The YAs have enthusiastically taken full responsibility for organizing Sri Sathya Sai Baba's 2024 Birthday celebrations under the mentorship of senior devotees.

‘Retreat’ing into Good Company in the USA



Region 6

Labor Day weekend (August 31–September 2, 2024) in the United States marked a time of reconnection and rejuvenation with retreats held in several SSSIO regions. An integral part of the retreat experience is the energy and participation of young adults (YAs).

In the North-Central (**SSSIO USA, Region 5**), over 15 YAs demonstrated remarkable initiative and leadership through planning and executing various activities. They successfully managed a blood drive with over 30 people donating blood. Showcasing their creativity, the YAs designed an actionable two-part workshop titled *‘Strength in Unity,’* complementing the theme of the talk by Dr. Suresh Govind, the featured speaker. As a cultural offering, the YAs performed an R&B song, an alternative rock/R&B fusion, and a *Qawwali*. The YAs also had a heart-to-heart conversation with Dr. Suresh Govind about navigating through the challenges faced by the YAs

today. The YAs from Milwaukee and Minneapolis continued their tradition of emceeing the events throughout the retreat.

In the Pacific North (**SSSIO USA, Region 6**), the YAs embraced the outdoor surroundings, connecting with Mother Nature. The YAs orchestrated a game called *‘Values Venture’* where the participants embarked on a spirited adventure through various stations, each designed to engage and inspire. At each station, challenges ranged from sharing heartfelt reflections on service to testing dexterity with a hands-free cup-stacking exercise and even a lively game of *‘Swami Says.’* The clues gathered at each station culminated in a collaborative effort to decipher a service-related quote, adding an element of playful camaraderie and team-building exercises.

In Northern California and Nevada (**SSSIO USA, Region 7**), the YAs helped coordinate all the bhajan offerings and handled the retreat’s audio-video support needs. They



helped design the main workshop on the retreat's theme—'One Step Towards Sai,' emphasizing the profound role of gratitude in taking the first step toward Sai. With a play titled 'One Small Step of Faith, One Giant Leap Towards Sai,' the theatrical talents of YAs shone with three acts depicting the transformative power of taking that initial step toward Sai with sincerity and faith. **It was a poignant reminder of Swami's ever-present grace in response to our efforts of just one small step!** The YAs also assisted the SSE camp by creating custom design buttons that helped run a value-based 'green light-red light' game.

In the Southwest (**SSSIO USA, Region 9**), the importance of Vedas was highlighted in a YA-led segment, with the recitation of the sacred *Purusha Suktam*, which emphasizes divinity manifesting as the universe and beyond.

The retreat in South-Central (**SSSIO USA, Region 10**) saw strong participation by 65 young adults. A mobile App was developed by the YAs to streamline communication regarding retreat registration and accommodation. A video tribute to an

ardent devotee of Swami, the late Prof. Anil Kumar, featuring the heartfelt experiences of SSSIO USA, Region 10 devotees, was presented. **Also, a workshop titled 'Leap towards Sai 100—Loving Engagement with Awareness and Practice Towards Sai 100'** was crafted to highlight the relevance of Lord Hanuman's devotion to Lord Rama in today's world. YAs also shared their transformative experiences and learnings from attending the International Sai YA Leaders Retreat in Greece (July 2024), centered around the theme 'Roar your Role.' YAs were key contributors to the overall logistics of the retreat, including tree planting, transportation, accommodation, and registration.



InSAIde Scoop Podcast Series

Series 2022, Episode 10:

“Do Relationships Hamper My Spiritual Progress” featuring Ms. Nira

The finale of the InSAIde Scoop podcast explores the relationship between spirituality and human relationships, particularly through the lens of Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings. The conversation features Ms. Nira, the podcast’s creator, reflecting on her wedding and understanding the intersection between personal and spiritual lives.

The discussion begins with a focus on Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s guidance regarding separating men and women at spiritual gatherings. Nira recounts the story of Prof. S. Bashiruddin, a devotee who addressed this to Him. Baba’s answer was simple but profound—this was a practice of adhering to a Vedic tradition during prayer meetings. If there were no separation of gender, there would be a failure in concentration and meditation, resulting in ineffective prayers. Also, the rationale in considering men and women devotees as our own Sai brothers and Sai sisters is to foster a sense of oneness, reminding us that we all come from the same divine source. While Bhagawan doesn’t operate at the same level of bodily consciousness as us, He does acknowledge the practical challenges of being a human being and understands that we still have work to do on mastering our own mind. **Gender segregation gives us a practical tool to maintain discipline of the mind and focus our efforts on our spiritual progress. With willpower, consistency, and single-mindedness, we can maintain focused attitudes to help us progress spiritually.**



Nira also shares her perspective on whether a partner’s spiritual alignment is necessary for our spiritual growth. Using Mirabai’s story as an example, the discord in faith between her husband and herself spurred her to incline more toward the Lord and grow closer to Him. However, Nira also notes that as we are ‘younger’ in spiritual growth and easily impressionable, having a partner who shares the same beliefs and principles can inspire and motivate us in our sadhana. A relationship built on spirituality is like two souls helping each other reach home and is the best foundation for life.

Lastly, Nira touches on how young adults must navigate intimacy in relationships. She acknowledges that it is a natural part of human existence but warns us of the activities that entangle us rather than liberate us. Sri Sathya Sai Baba encourages us to experience the highest pleasure of life—the bliss of divine love, which is an ever-expansive space that surpasses worldly pleasures.

The episode wraps up with a reflection on the key takeaways, also known as *prasadam* pills, encouraging listeners to prioritize spiritual progress while navigating personal relationships.

You can listen to the full episode here:

[InSAIde Scoop Episode 10–YouTube](#)



Dr. Ahrabie Yogarajah
New Zealand



You Have Been Served

Swami constantly reminds us: “Less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure.”

Yet, as I boarded my flight from New Zealand to Fiji to be a part of the SSSIO Fiji Medicare Camp held on August 25-30, 2024, I had luggage beyond measure. So many worries, anxieties, and frustrations weighed heavily on my mind. Determined not to let this emotional baggage overshadow the experience ahead, I resolved to actively seek and feel Swami’s presence during my days of service. I knew I couldn’t allow these unnecessary burdens to spoil such an incredible opportunity.

The day after I arrived, a message from a senior youth set the tone: “Sister, how blessed you are to render seva to the needy. It’s not an opportunity given to all. Some wish for it but are unable to get it.” From that moment on, Swami’s unseen hand was felt in many ways. One experience on the second day of the Medicare Camp stands out:

I met a gentleman who had been struggling to walk for eight months. Despite my best efforts, I couldn’t understand why he couldn’t walk. He longed to get better so he could return to farming, and as a medical practitioner, I felt frustrated by my inability to diagnose his condition. After examining him, I brought him back to his chair and admitted that I couldn’t provide an answer for his ailment.

He responded with words that humbled me:

“I’ve seen so many doctors, but no one has ever examined me, especially the way you did. **When you touched me, I felt so much healing. I believe in Jesus, and you have Sai Baba. Jesus is working through you. I’m telling you this because I don’t think anyone has.** It’s about healing, and when you touch someone, you do that.”

Later, after visiting the physiotherapists, he returned with his new crutches to thank me. I noticed the logo on his shirt, and although I can’t recall the exact phrase, it included the words “hands” and “serve.”

This interaction had a profound and lasting impact on me. From then on, I made it a point to examine as many patients as I could, even if they came with seemingly simple issues. Upon returning to New Zealand, I continued this practice, examining all my patients, even those who had been stable in the ward for days.

The gentleman may have felt served, but truly, I was the recipient of divine grace. Swami served me through him.



Jessica J | Group 3 | Canada

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SWAMI

Divya S | Group 2 | Australia



Ravi M | Group 1 | Brazil



Sibusiso M | Group 1 | South Africa

Sweet
Wonderful
Amazing
Magical
Inspiring

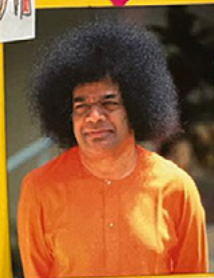
Sai Aarush
Group 2



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

HELP EVER

Hurt never



Happy Birthday Swami.
Here is one swami quote I like -
love all serve all.

Rithvik
Group 1
South Bay SSE



Sai Aarush (Group 2), Rithvik (Group 1) | USA



Sara I | Group 1 | Italy



Sofia B | Group 1 | Italy

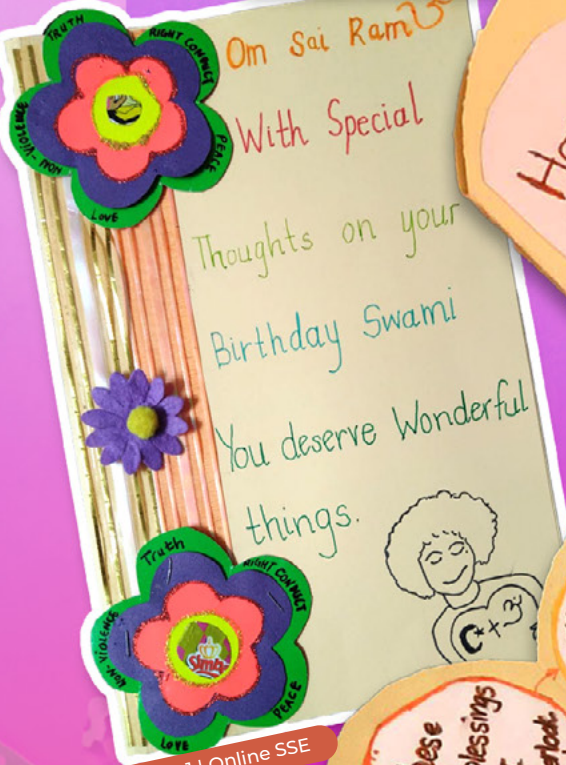
Nkanyezi N | Grade 1 | South Africa



Nivi A | Group 1 | Online SSE



Sai Sri S | Group 1 | Germany



Ariya R | Group 1 | Online SSE

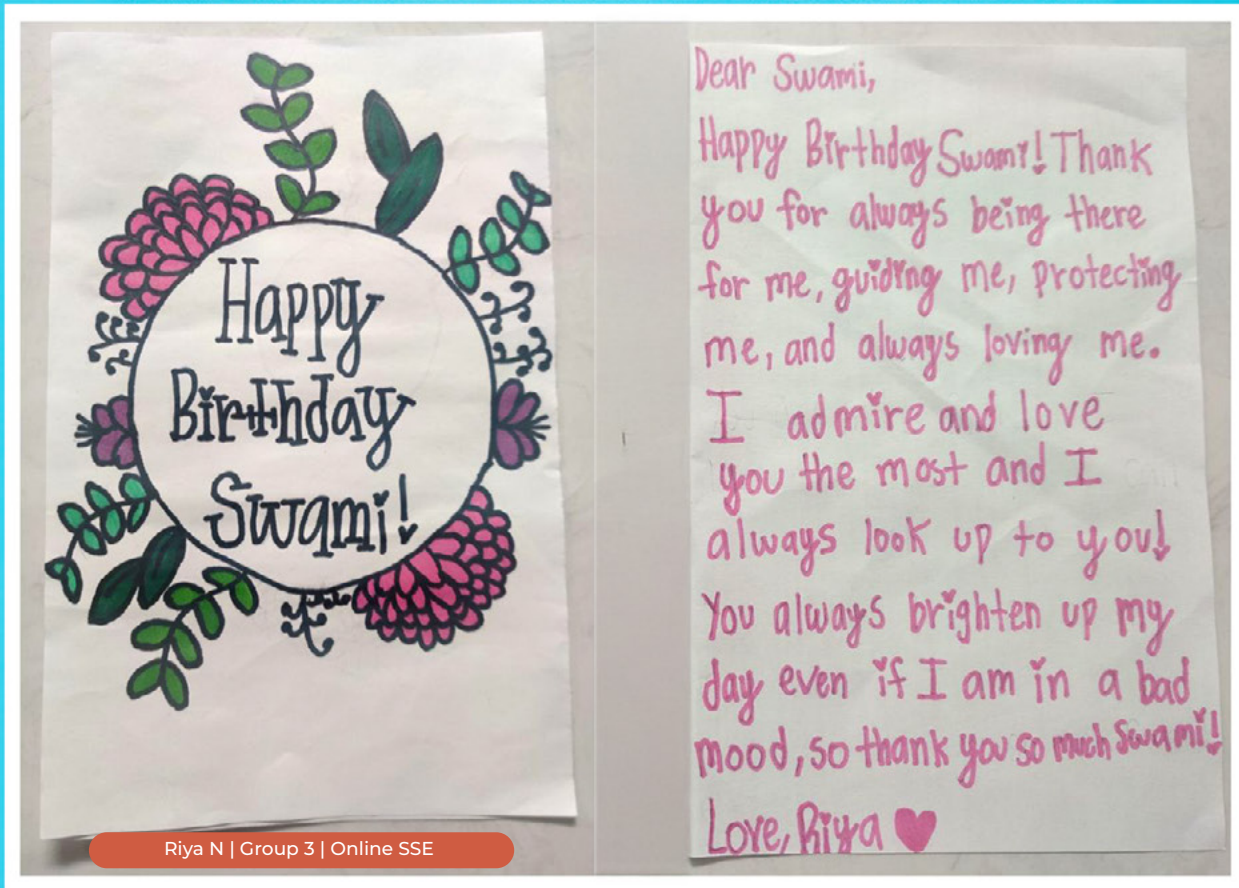


Joshith R | Group 1 | Botswana

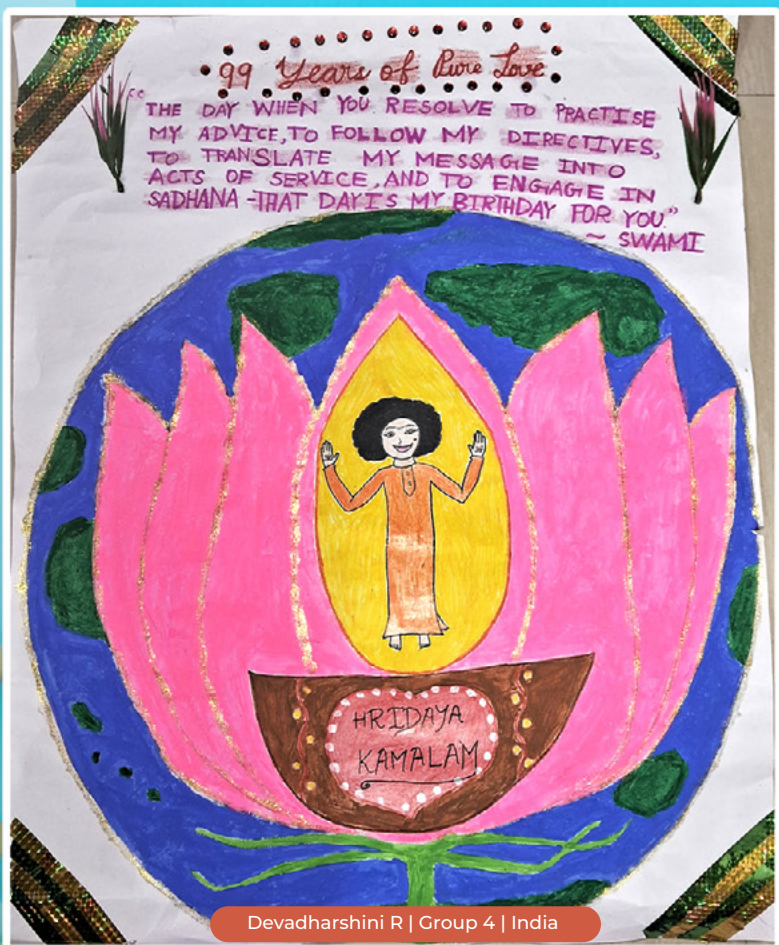


Rakshen N | Group 1 | South Africa





Riya N | Group 3 | Online SSE



Devadharshini R | Group 4 | India



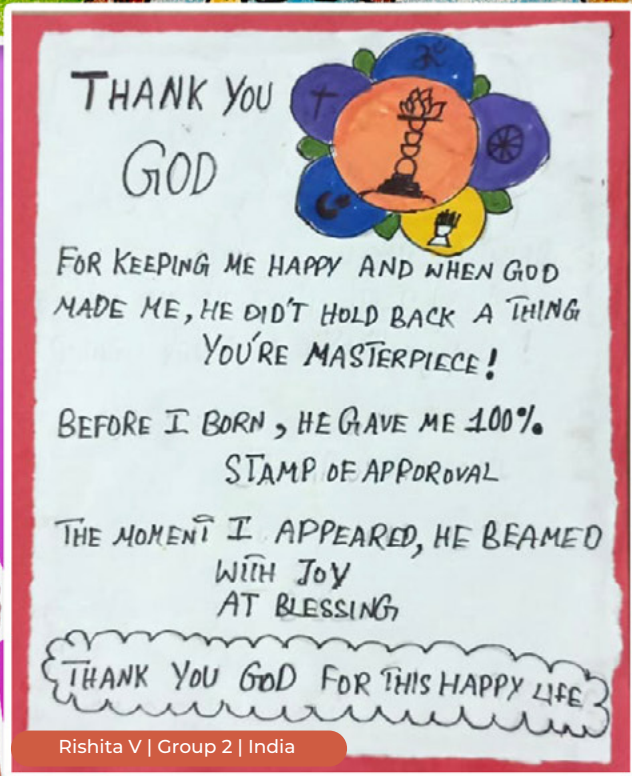
Fanomezantsoa J | Group 2 | Madagascar



Makisha K | Group 2 | Switzerland



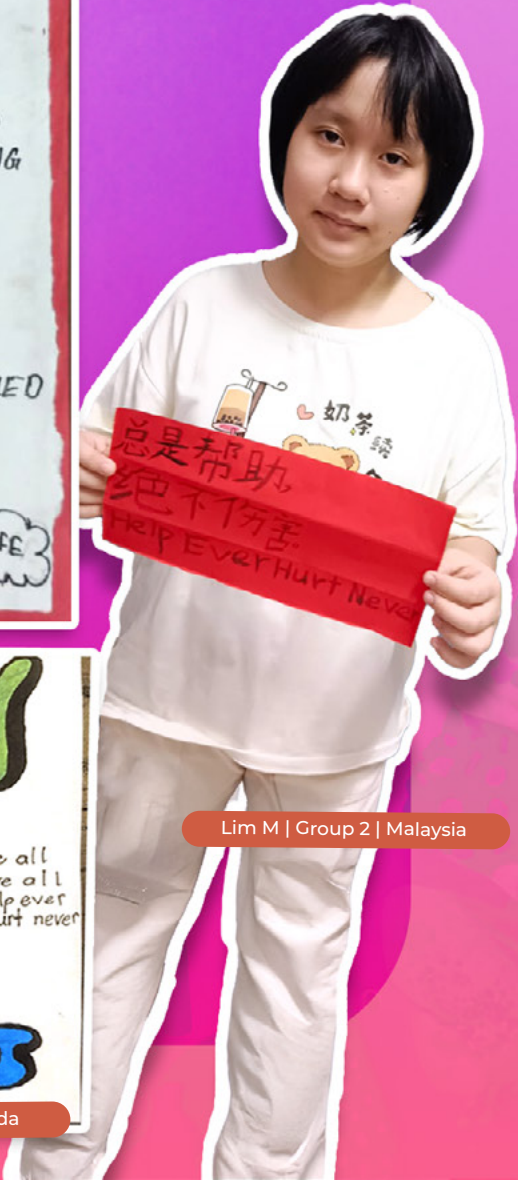
Ashvik D | Group 1 | USA



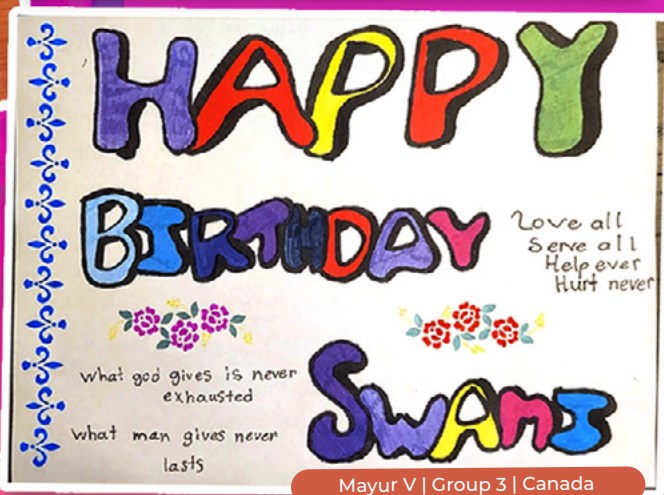
Rishita V | Group 2 | India



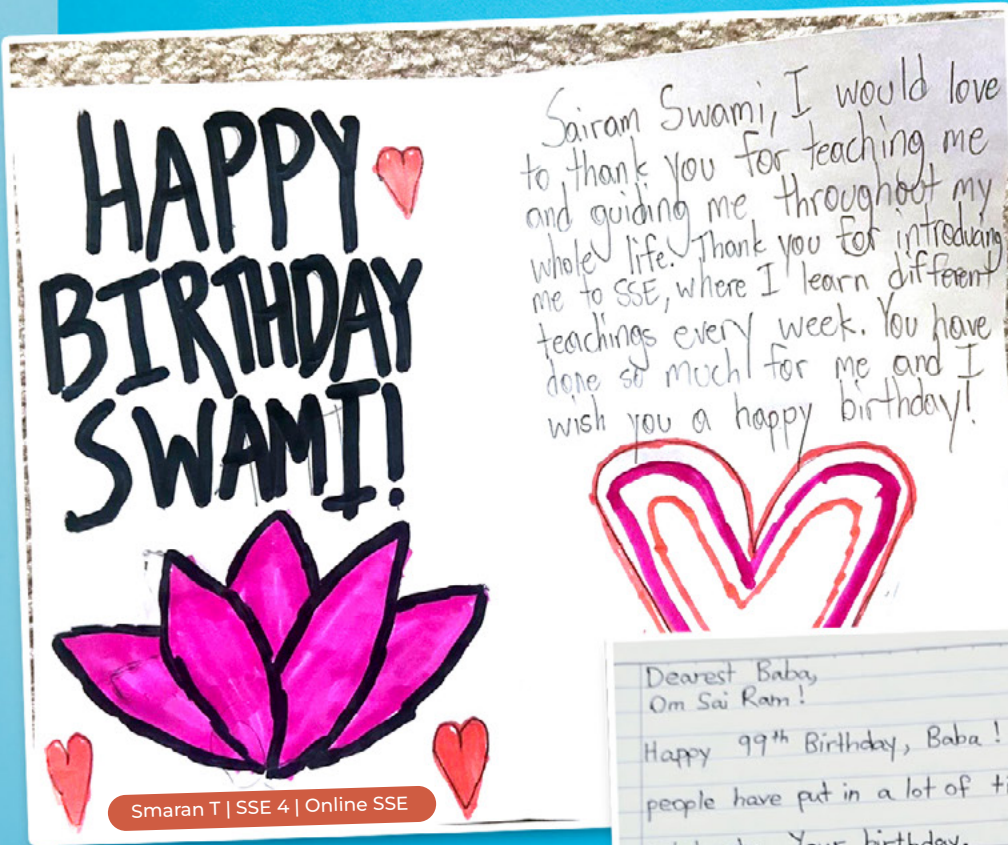
Tilen S | Group 1 | Slovenia



Lim M | Group 2 | Malaysia



Mayur V | Group 3 | Canada



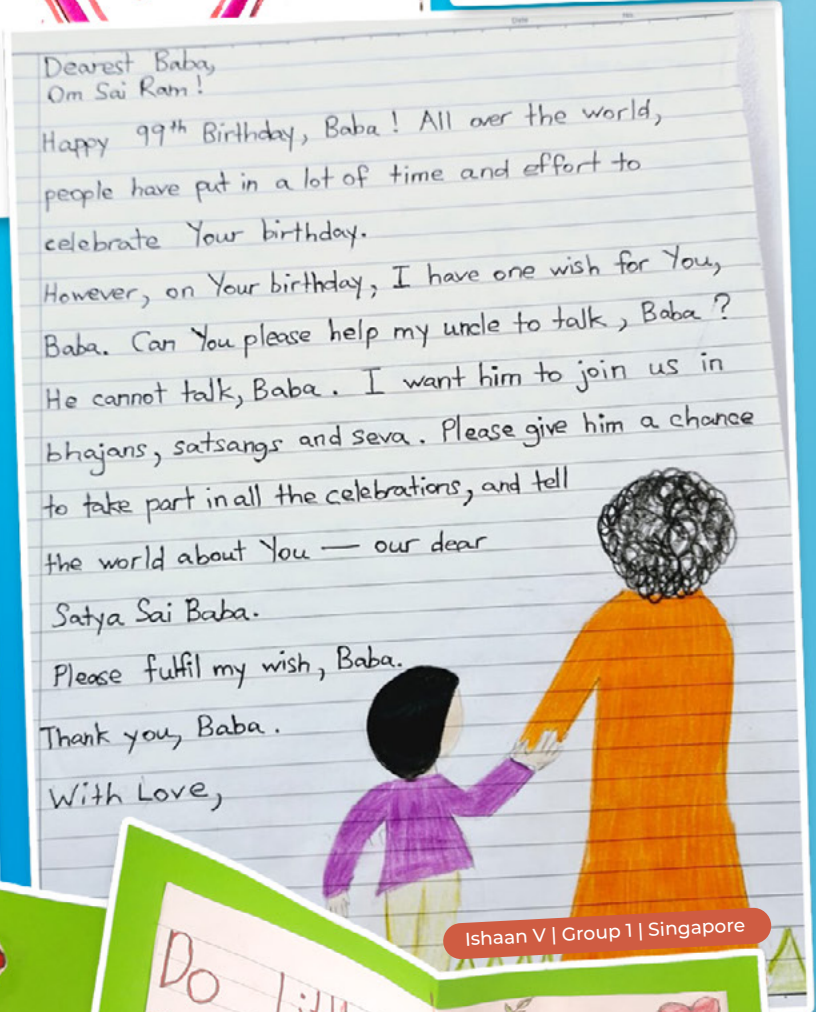
Smaran T | SSE 4 | Online SSE



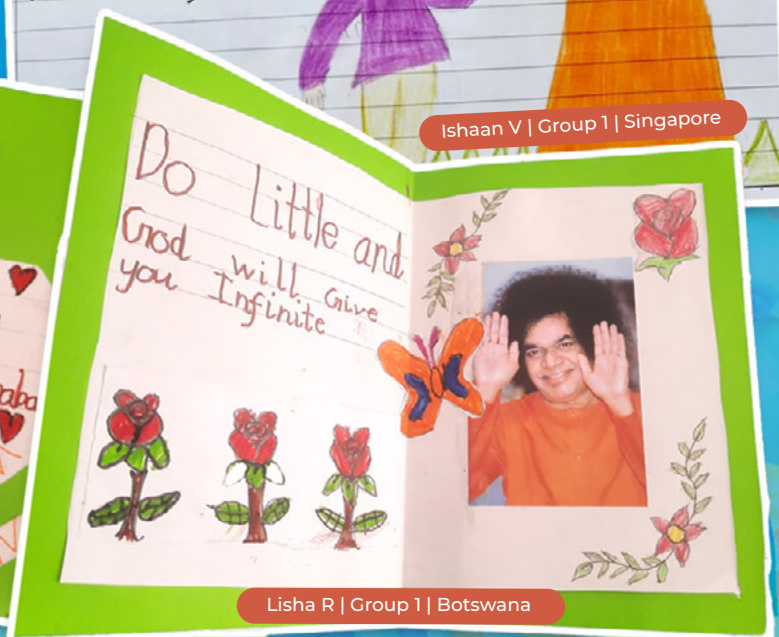
Aanya V | Group 2 | Zimbabwe



Ariana B | Group 2 | Panama



Ishaan V | Group 1 | Singapore



Lisha R | Group 1 | Botswana

Upcoming SSSIO Events

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

Date of Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
November 9-10, 2024	Saturday-Sunday	Worldwide Akhanda Bhajan
November 23, 2024	Saturday	99th Birthday of Sri Sathya Sai Baba
December 14-15, 2024	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri
December 25, 2024	Wednesday	Christmas
January 29, 2025	Wednesday	Chinese New Year



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.**



Facebook



Instagram



WhatsApp



X (Twitter)



YouTube



Spotify



Telegram



Threads



Google Books



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 [🔗](#)



Akhanda Bhajan (nonstop twenty-four-hour devotional singing by Sai devotees all over the world) is done not for the sake of one individual, one nation or one community. It is for the welfare of humanity as a whole. The bhajans that are sung permeate the ether in the form of sound waves and fill the entire atmosphere. Thereby the whole environment gets purified. Breathing in this purified atmosphere, our hearts get purified. Reciting the Lord's name is a process of give and take. Singing the Lord's name should become an exercise in mutual sharing of joy and holiness. It should be remembered that the sounds we produce reverberate in the atmosphere. They remain permanently in the ether as waves and outlast the individual uttering the sounds.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
November 8, 1986



sathyasai.org

Love All • Serve All
Help Ever • Hurt Never

