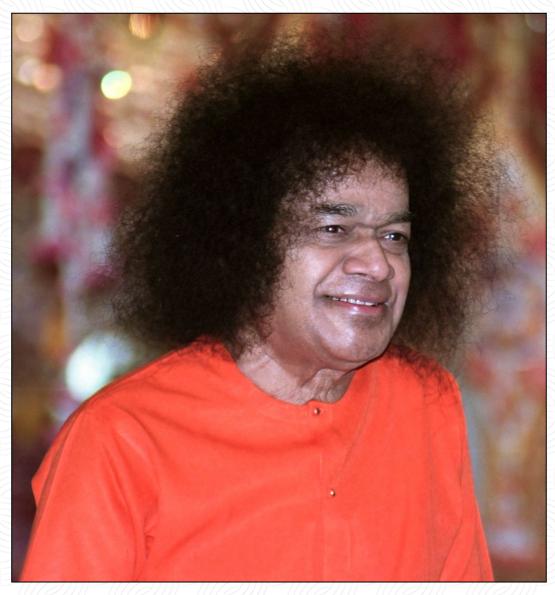


A PUBLICATION OF THE SRI SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Make a firm resolve to purify your heart. The past is past. It cannot be brought back. When you are walking on the road, you should look at the path ahead of you. What is the point in looking behind? Likewise, there is no point in brooding over the past. The future is not certain. What is the guarantee that you will be alive until tomorrow? So, don't worry about your future. Live in the present. It is not an ordinary present. It is omnipresent, meaning the past as well as the future are contained in it. So, when you make proper use of the present, you can be rest assured that your future is safe and secure.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba April 13, 2002



DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO

BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA





Volume 3 • Issue 4 • April 2024

ISSN 2831-6908 (Online) ISSN 2831-6916 (Print)

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Editor: Dr. Narendranath Reddy Published by: Sri Sathya Sai International Organization

sathyasai.org

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GBE FREE: TRANSCEND THE CYCLE OF GBIRTH AND DEATH

BHAJA GOVINDAM-PART 3

We are blessed and fortunate to be the contemporaries of the *Paripurna* Avatar (perfect manifestation of God in human form) of the Kali Yuga (the present period, "dark age" characterized by ignorance), Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. His descent is for the ascent of man to realize one's innate divinity. In His infinite compassion, He has taken a beautiful form with a sweet name and revels in divine sport (leela) so that we can interact with the divinity that is beyond name, form, space, time, attributes, and causation.

As we observe Aradhana Mahotsavam (celebration of the earthly sojourn of Baba) in April 2024 at all Sri Sathya Sai Centers around the world, let us express our gratitude to Bhagawan for showering us with His love, grace, blessings, and guidance. He is our Eternal Companion, who has blessed us with gifts for our redemption:

- **His Sweet Name:** Chanting His sweet divine name gives joy to devotees and verily sanctifies their lives.
- **His Beautiful Form:** Contemplating on His unparalleled, beautiful form gives bliss and takes us toward liberation.

- His Amazing Leelas: Hearing the stories of His divine leelas (Sai Bhagavatam) makes one forget bodily awareness and live in divine consciousness.
- His Universal Teachings: His eternal and universal message of unconditional love, the essence of all religions, applies to everyone, irrespective of race, religion, creed, ethnicity, language, and culture.
- His Compassionate Works: He has established educational institutions, medical institutions, and many magnanimous humanitarian services, providing food, water, and other necessities to alleviate distress.

Through all of these, He confers the greatest gift-relieving mankind of the ignorance of mistaken identification with the body, mind, and intellect and urging identification with one's true identity, the Self or Atma. The Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO), founded, guided, and nurtured by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba since 1969, continues to provide opportunities for various spiritual, devotional, and service activities in 115 countries around the world based on Swami's teachings.

Overcoming the Cycle of Birth and Death

The great Advaitic master, Adi Shankaracharya, has gifted us with the wonderful work, Bhaja Govindam, which outlines the path of spiritual and devotional practices to attain liberation. Our beloved Swami has given a series of discourses expanding on several of these verses in 1973. Earlier, in Part 1 of the editorial in the January 2024 issue, we discussed how Swami explained that good company is a ladder to liberation. In Part 2, in the February 2024 issue, we shared how

one can realize Brahman (ultimate reality) through self-inquiry with equal-mindedness and divine vision. In Part 3, we will now focus on how to transcend the cycle of birth and death.

The reason one takes birth is because of past *karmas* (actions in thought, word, and deed). While leading a human life, one accumulates *karma*. The *karmic* balance is not nullified on death, and thus, due to the effect of the unresolved *karmas*, one is reborn again and again. Adi Shankaracharya puts this very poetically:

Bhagawan writes the original Sanskrit shloka in Telugu script and also composes a shloka in Telugu with the same meaning. Both have been presented here in His Divine handwriting.

punarapi jananam punarapi maranam punarapi janani jathare shayanam, iha samsare bahudustare kripaya'pare pahi murare వుణంచిమునను ఇ హోనక్షిప్తు డెంగుప్రిన్నాలు ఇంపురముకుంచార్పు ఆమెక్ట్ కొల్లోతాలో వాడ్డికి తాత్తుల వాత్రకొత్తుత్తాలో వాడ్డికి తాత్తుల

Mallee Puttuta, Mallee Gittuta Amma Kadupulo Anagi-vunduta Anthu-leni Samsaramu Dayatho Datimpumu Nanu Dabbuna Deva

We are born again to die again and lie in the mother's womb repeatedly-this samsara (worldly life) is extremely difficult to cross. O Murari (Lord Vishnu)! The destroyer of the demon Mura, save me through your infinite compassion.

We are all born into this world because of the consequences of our previous *karmas*, which is the cause of our birth. Krishna clearly proclaims this in the Bhagavad Gita,

jatasya hi dhruvo mṛityur dhruvam janma mṛitasya cha tasmad apariharye 'rthe na tvam shochitum arhasi

Bhagavad Gita 2:27

(Death is certain for one who is born, and rebirth is inevitable for one who dies. Therefore, you should not lament over the inevitable.)

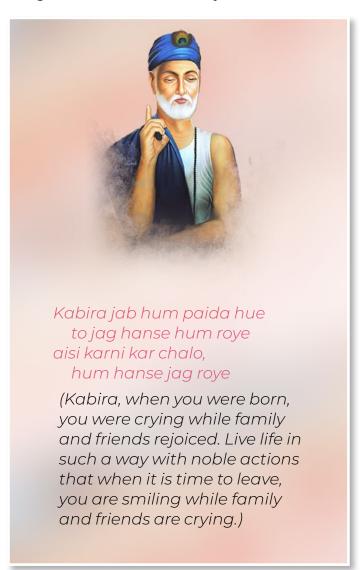
This cycle of birth and death characterizes two aspects of this world-impermanence and grief. Anityam Asukham Lokam Imam Prapya Bhajasva Maam means that one should worship the Lord for redemption because the world is temporary and offers no joy. Krishna also says that the world is Dukhalayam Ashashwatham (temple of sorrow and impermanence).

Lord Buddha, after intense penance, came up with the four noble truths, the first of which recognizes this very aspect of the world.

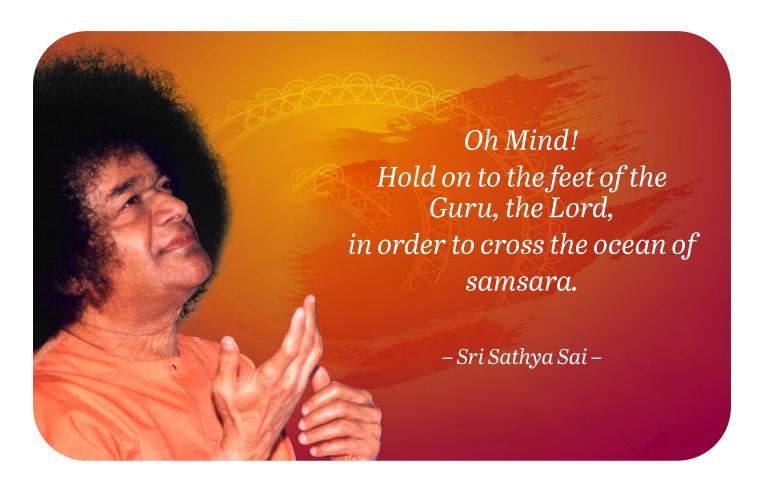
- The world is full of suffering.
- Suffering is caused by 'Tanha' or desire, ignorance, and attachment.
- Suffering can be avoided by destroying the cause.
- Suffering can be ended by knowing and practicing the Eightfold Path of right mindfulness, right vision, right speech, right action, right concentration, right effort, right livelihood, and right understanding.

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba also emphasizes following the Eightfold Path to attain peace and bliss.

The great saint Kabirdas says,



Death is inevitable for all beings that are born. This may happen in childhood, youth, middle age, or old age. One should be alert and ready to face death at any time by leading a divine life. Swami says that one should pray to God, not merely for a long life but for a divine life. We are born because of our previous *karmas*—the good ones giving good results and the bad ones giving bad results. As we sow, so we reap. We are all born, and our only goal should be not to be born again!



Breaking The Vicious Cycle

Thus, we are architects of our own destiny. Whenever the fruits of the actions are good, one enjoys pleasure. Conversely, one undergoes pain due to the effect of negative karmas. That is why life is a mixture of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. To transcend this cycle of birth and death, the Lord has given us six clear solutions.

Selfless Service

Whenever we are involved in action, we should do Nishkama Karma, action without attachment. We should dedicate our actions and the fruits thereof to the Lord, being convinced that He is the doer. When we do action this way, the same actions that otherwise cause bondage will not bind us anymore, and we will be free. Then, we will no longer be subject to the cycle of birth and death.

In this issue, we share a beautiful service project, Tiny Homes. Initiated to serve people without homes in Seattle, USA, this project is now being implemented in 20 cities across the USA and continues to expand.

Spreading Swami's message in communities through Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) is another outstanding service. The most recent example is the inauguration of a Sathya Sai School in Paraguay in February 2024. This has been the fulfillment of a grand dream through the tireless and loving efforts of the devotees.

We also have the inspiring story of another monument of divine love brought into reality by the tireless efforts of devotees-Sai Prema Nilayam (Abode of Sai's Divine Love) in Riverside, California. It completed one year of service as a spiritual center from which many devotional, educational, and service activities are conducted at regional, national,

and international levels. The story of Sai Prema Nilayam illustrates that the sincere and loving efforts of devotees are always crowned with success by the blessings and abundant grace of Bhagawan Baba.

Divine Knowledge

This is another solution for our liberation that the Lord has blessed. He states:

yasya sarve samarambhah kama-sankalpa-varjitah inanagni-dagdha-karmanam tam ahuh panditam budhah

Bhagavad Gita 4:19

(The enlightened sages call those persons wise, whose every action is free from the desire for material pleasures and in whom the reactions of work have been burnt in the fire of divine knowledge.)

In this issue, we revisit a divine discourse that Swami delivered in 1974, revealing various aspects of His true nature, His unfathomable divinity, His unsurpassed glory, and His divine mission for humanity. It is beautiful and touching to experience Him revealing inner secrets about Himself, along with the significance of His name and works, with profound prophecies about the future. In this discourse, He proclaimed in 1974 itself that great works would happen in the future, and to the amazement of all, major projects like super-specialty hospitals, a university with three campuses, and massive water projects serving millions were launched by Bhagawan.

The issue also contains a precious letter written by Bhagawan to a Western devotee, Charles Penn of the USA, where He proclaims that He has come for the entire world and is not confined to any particular place. Swami also outlines the path for the spiritual seeker to reach the highest goal by practicing the two qualities of discrimination

(viveka) and dispassion for material objects (vairagya) with intense longing for God and sadhana.

Love for God and Complete Surrender

Lord Sri Krishna proclaims in Bhagavad Gita:

sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja aham tvam sarva-papebhyo mokshayishyami ma shuchah Bhagavad Gita 18:66

(Abandoning all dharmas, surrender to Me alone. I shall give you liberation and relieve you from sins and grief.)

This is the way we get freed from all our sins and sorrows. We must make human effort sincerely by following the path of selfless service, developing pure love for God, and embarking on Self-enquiry to find out who we are. Ultimately, we need God's grace for liberation. That is why, in the Bhaja Govindam poem, it is said that one should pray to Lord Murari (slayer of the demon Mura) to get out of the cycle of birth and death.

Swami, in His first message to humanity, says in His first bhajan,

Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam Dusthara Bhava Sagara Taranam

(Oh Mind! Hold on to the feet of the Guru, the Lord, in order to cross the ocean of samsara.)

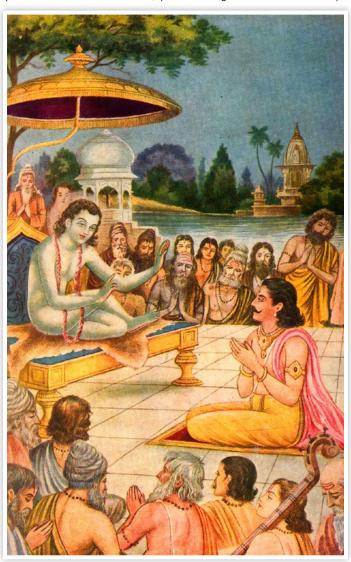
Complete commitment to God, holding on to Him, and surrendering to Him are important. In this poem, 'Mura' also refers to demonic qualities, like anger, greed, pride, pomp, darkness, negativity, and temptations. So, the Lord removes all these demonic qualities in order to confer bliss on us. Swami says beautifully that people take medicine to cure themselves of diseases. However, one should take the medicine as prescribed so

that one does not have to repeat it. Similarly, an individual having taken birth should try not to be reborn.

Swami always advises us to start early, drive slowly, and reach safely in this journey of life. That is why, in this issue, we celebrate young adults who have 'started early.' They share reflections on being resilient in the face of adversity and challenges by surrendering to God and having a positive mindset.

Listening to Stories of God (Shravanam)

Swami gives the example of King Parikshit, who attained liberation in only seven days by intensely listening to Srimad Bhagavatam (Stories of the Lord, primarily Lord Krishna).



Another saintly king named Khatvanga attained liberation in less than an hour by one-pointed, intense contemplation on the Lord. Bhagawan Baba, even in His previous incarnation as Shirdi Sai, emphasized that just listening to the stories and glories of the Lord in itself is a wonderful sadhana to attain liberation.

This issue is also replete with stories of God, showing how Swami protects and transforms our lives. Ms. Creta Schierman (an officer in the SSSIO) shares her beautiful experiences with Swami, emphasizing the transition from form to formless, which is apt for Aradhana Mahotsavam.

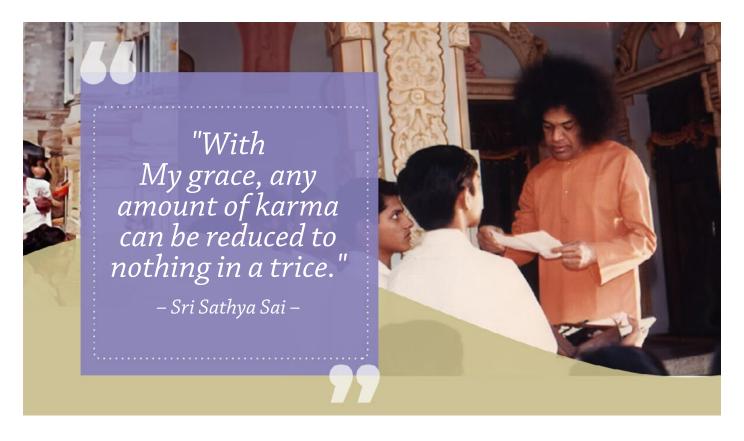
Then, there is the experience of a long-standing devotee and educator, Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai, who narrates how he and his family were protected by Baba during the Second World War from bombings, even before he came to know Swami! This clearly shows that Swami is our eternal companion who was, is, and will be with us, guiding and guarding us.

The sharing of another devotee, Mr. Maarten Wagener, relates how he experienced Swami's presence even before seeing Him and how He guided and protected Him. Today, he feels Swami's constant presence and guidance, which inspires him to play a role in the SSSIO.

Four-fold Sadhana

Swami explains in the Sutra Vahini that to get out of the cycle of birth and death, one should follow the *Sadhana Chatushtayam* (the fourfold Sadhana) of:

- Viveka (Discrimination between real and unreal)
- Vairagya (Dispassion towards the worldly and temporary)



- Shadsampatti (Six Virtues of Sama or mind control, Dama or control of body and senses, *Uparathi* or withdrawal from the external), Titiksha or forbearance, Shraddha or unwavering faith, and Samadhana or equanimity.)
- Mumukshatwam (Intense Hunger for Liberation)

That is why one should be engaged constantly in good action, in thought, word, and deed, all the time. Swami makes it clear with an insightful Chinna Katha (small story).

A king used to ask three questions of all people who met him:

- Who is the **best among people?**
- What is the **best of times?**
- What is the best of all actions?

The king was very anxious to know the answers to these questions, but he was never satisfied with the answers he received from various people.

One day, he went to the forest for recreation. He was moving about the hills and plains and became very tired. He saw an ashram and wanted to rest there. By the time the king reached the ashram, a sadhu (holy person) was watering some plants. The sadhu noticed that the king was exhausted. He stopped watering the plants, ran to the king, and gave him delicious fruits and cool water. At that time, an individual wounded all over the body was brought to the ashram by another sadhu. As soon as the sadhu saw this, he went to help the individual, cleaned his wounds, and gave him some herbs to cure the wounds. He also comforted and consoled him with sweet words. The king then came to the sadhu and wanted to express his gratitude and take leave. The sadhu blessed the king, but the king still wanted answers to his three questions and enquired if the sadhu could enlighten him. The sadhu responded that the answers to the three questions could be surmised from

the actions the king had just witnessed in the *ashram*. The king requested the *sadhu* to elucidate further.

The sadhu said that when the king came to the ashram, he was watering the plants, and that was his duty. At that time, upon seeing the king, he had given up his duty. He came to the king and served him water and fruit. This was done following proper tradition, as the king was his guest. While relieving the king of his thirst and hunger, another injured individual entered the ashram. Therefore, he gave up his duty of serving the king and went to the other visitor to serve him. So, the king received the answers to his three questions.

Whoever comes seeking service from you is the best of individuals at that time. Whatever satisfaction you can give him by serving him is your duty, and this is the best work that you can do at that time. The best time is the present, when you can do something. You cannot predict the future as it is a mystery. The past is history, and you can do nothing about it. Thus, the present time in which you can fulfill your duty, the service you can render to the person who seeks your service are the three best things in answer to the king's three questions.

Thus, if we live in the present moment doing selfless service to everyone, our lives will be redeemed.

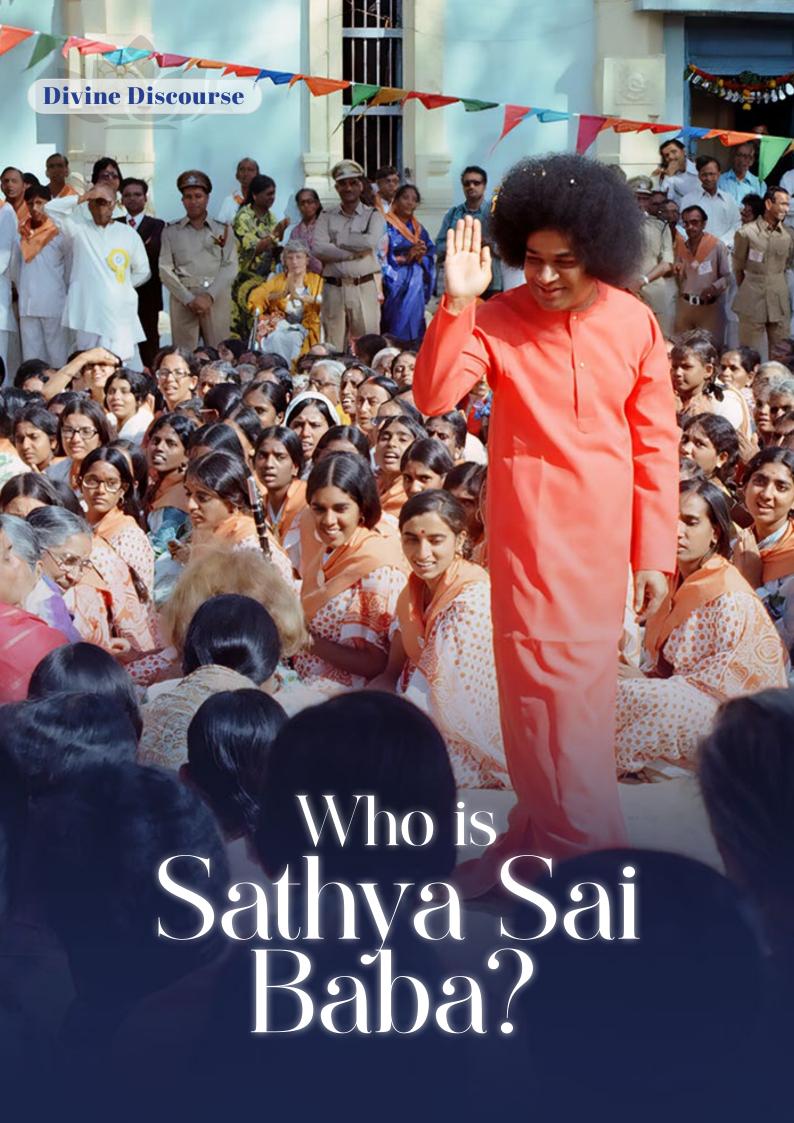
Grace of God

The Shirdi Sai Satcharitra records the story of Dr. Pillay, whom Shirdi Sai Baba was very fond of. At one time, the doctor had a severe case of parasitic infestation with Guinea worm. Unable to bear the pain, the doctor prayed, "The pain is most excruciating and unbearable. I prefer death to it. Please stop the pain and distribute the burden of my past *karma* to ten future births of mine." But Baba, in His infinite compassion, responded, "Why should he suffer for ten births? In ten days, he can work out the sufferings and consequences of his past *karma*." So it happened that in ten days, Dr. Pillay was completely cured. That is how divine grace burns away the consequences of *karma*.

I want to conclude with a profound revelation from our dear Swami. On one occasion, when our family had a major crisis, we prayed to Swami intensely and, by His grace, came out of it. At that moment, I said, "We had no choice but to go through the karma. However, Swami helps." Subsequently, when Swami called us for an interview, He rebuked me, saying, "What you said is not correct. With My grace, any amount of karma can be reduced to nothing in a trice." He further illustrated the point with an example of a mountain of cotton that could be burned to ashes with just a single matchstick. We must have divine grace to redeem our lives. In His discourse on May 17, 1968, Swami says that the best way to get His grace is to implicitly, completely, and immediately follow His teachings. We should live in love all the time.

Finally, Love is the ultimate cure for the bhava roga (disease of worldliness). If we live life in this manner with Love for God and Service to All, every moment gets sanctified, and we can avoid repeating the cycle of birth and death.

Jai Sai Ram



Part 1

(32nd Discourse of Summer Showers, May 1974)

No one can recognize the divinity of this young Sathya Sai, who is verily bliss personified. His inherent beauty and attractiveness are obvious in His singing and divine plays. These are the aspects of Shiva-Shakti that are embodied in Him. His unique hair, the lack of vermillion (bottu) on His forehead, His momentous birth, His heavenly gliding walk, and the types of robes He wears are all unique and beautiful.

Embodiments of the Sacred Atma (Pavitratma Swarupulara), Students, Boys and Girls!

During the past month, you learned the inner significance of the word 'Bharata' by exploring the doctrine of Brahman (Brahma Tatwa), which is the basis for creation, in the forms of Brahma (creator) and Saraswathi (the goddess of speech), and aspects of Brihaspati (Guru of Gods), Prajapati (Lord of all beings), and Hiranyagarbha (source of creation). The Vedas proclaim, "I know this great Purusha (Supreme Being or pure consciousness), effulgent as the sun, who is beyond all darkness" (Vedahametam Purusham Mahantam, Aditya Varnam Tamasah Parastat). From ancient times, inquiries and investigations into the powers and attributes of God have been made, along with discussions and arguments about such inquiries.

There are answers to these questions. Many sages (Maharshis) conducted inquiries into such questions and realized that the effulgent and all-powerful God is very much present in their own hearts in the form of Prajnana (knowledge or wisdom). Realizing this truth, the sages declared, "The Lord, who is effulgent as the sun, is

beyond all darkness."

A True Human Being Enjoys True Bliss

By using one's external vision, one can recognize the external aspect of divinity. By using the inner vision, one can realize Him as the essence of *atma* (Self) and a form of inner bliss. God has given the sages the power and capacity to recognize divinity this way.

The two words that are used in this connection are charma and sharma. You should know the essential difference between these two words: sharma stands for ananda, inner bliss, and happiness. Whereas charma is an outer cover, the skin that covers the body. The physical body is not meant for just living a life as a human being, wasting time. It is given to realize inner bliss. Whoever recognizes that the human body is an instrument given to realize the inner aspect of sharma or bliss, that person only deserves to be called 'manusha' (Human being). We have already learned how we can obtain such bliss and happiness.

With mere knowledge, we cannot acquire this bliss. It is only when we put such knowledge into practice that we can acquire such bliss. If you want to find precious stones, you have to look for them in the earth. If Everything is God, and every aspect of creation is a facet of God. God is present everywhere. While proclaiming that God is present everywhere, looking for Him in some specific place is not correct. It is meaningless.

you search for precious stones in the air or sky, you are not going to find them. In this body, which is made up of earth, we can get a vision of the precious gem of atma as the very form of happiness. Thus, one's duty is to strive to see the divine atma (Paramatma) in this sacred body itself.

We are using this sacred body to derive worldly pleasures by expending our merits acquired by good deeds. That is just like burning precious sandalwood to cook worthless items in a golden vessel studded with precious stones. Is it not foolish to use a golden plow to till a fertile land and plant useless weeds in it? Is it not madness to go around the city begging for food when there is a delicious, sweet rice pudding available at home? In the same manner, while sacred supreme peace and happiness are present in one's own heart, is there any meaning in going in search of them elsewhere in the name of God, encountering challenges, and enduring difficulties?

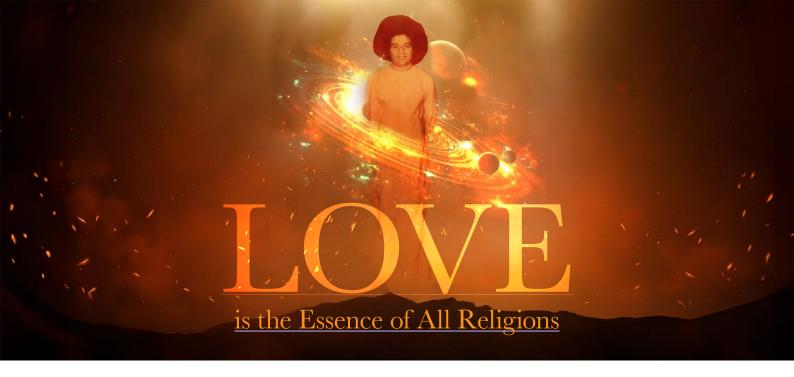
The omniscient One, whom we consider the supreme soul; the omnipresent One, whom we think of as the supreme God; the omnipotent and supreme being, whom we consider as God-that supreme God resides in our hearts. It is the first sign of ignorance to seek the divine outside instead of seeing the divinity residing in our hearts.

Though the Puranas (sacred religious texts) describe the nature of the Supreme God and though learned and experienced

scholars preach about divine qualities and attributes, all that they describe is merely their delusion. There are very few people who can describe the real nature of the Lord. Who has the authority to decide and limit a Lord who is omnipotent and who is omnipresent? Everything is God, and every aspect of creation is a facet of God. God is present everywhere. While proclaiming that God is present everywhere, looking for Him in some specific place is not correct. It is meaningless. However, all these statements depend on people's own ideas, their strengths and weaknesses, and their likes and dislikes. They have been giving various descriptions of the Lord, depending on their whims and fancies.

God is Beyond Attributes (gunas)

There are people who spread the teachings of God depending on their experiences with material objects in the outside world. However, those who have wholeheartedly acquired the inner vision of the divine and realized the true aspect of God will be silent and not overenthusiastic to teach others. Regarding matters about God, it can be said with emphasis that good or bad depends on the feelings of the individual, and it is not the truth. One who understands the meaning of the word 'gunatita' (one beyond attributes) well and one who recognizes the omnipresent truth explains divinity well. There is nothing wrong in believing their words. When an individ-



ual is himself subservient to gunas, how is he going to recognize the Lord who is above gunas and give a description of Him? Such teachings are not based on one's own experience but based on bookish knowledge and are mere words.

The ocean is very deep, vast, and infinite. From this ocean, an individual can draw water to the extent of the size of the pot which he carries and nothing more. Different religions have established boundaries for practicing their faith. They are under the delusion that the boundaries they have set are true and universal. All these artificial limits set by the various religions apply to their own faith and do not reveal the infinite divinity that is beyond limits and present everywhere.

The devotees of Vishnu proclaim that Lord Vishnu is the greatest of all.

The devotees of Shiva proclaim that the aspect of Shiva is the greatest.

The devotees of Ganapati say that Ganapati is the greatest of all deities.

The devotees of Sarada vouchsafe that She represents the best aspect of God.

The devotees of Allah proclaim that He is the greatest and the mightiest.

The devotees of Shakti say She is the only goddess for them.
Some say that all are the same,
Which one is the truth among these?

(Telugu Poem)

Love is the Essence of All Religions

I wish to share a nice example to illustrate this. A few blind people approached a big elephant, like our Sai Geetha. One of them touched its leg and based on his perception, said, "Yes, I saw an elephant; it is just like a pillar." Another person touched the ear of the elephant and described it as merely a large fan. A third person touched the tail of the elephant and concluded that the elephant was like a rope. Another person touched the belly of the elephant and decided that the elephant was like a big wall. In this manner, each of the blind men touched and felt a particular part of the elephant and came to his own conclusion. Each one concluded that the particular part of the elephant that he touched was the total form of the elephant. They described correctly and completely the particular part of the elephant that they touched, but a single part can never represent the totality of the elephant. It is meaningful to call it an elephant only when all parts are seen together.

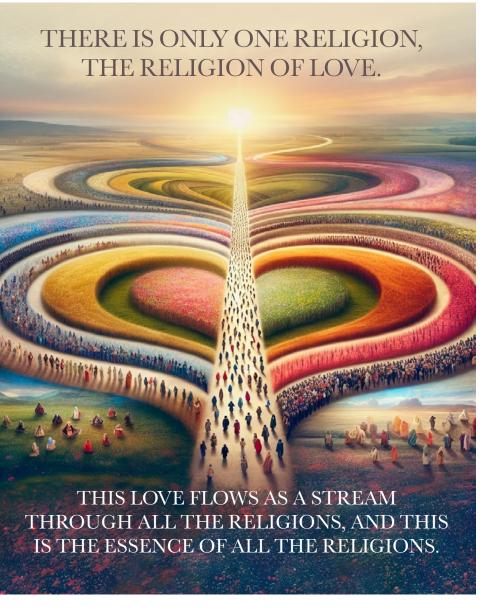
Similarly, people take one specific aspect of the universal religion and try to prove that particular aspect as the entire religion. However, this is akin to blindness. Universal religion is the integration of all religions of the world. Just as the same blood flows in every organ of the body, the same principle of love is present in all religions, thus showing the best form of oneness and unity. It is true to say that prema or love is the pure blood that flows through the veins of all the religions of the world. There is only one religion, the religion of love. This love flows as a stream through all the religions, and this is the essence of all the religions.

Without recognizing this essential stream of love contained in all religions and by paying attention to only the external forms and rituals, people have been quarreling with each other about the greatness of their own religion-the proclamations of those who have external vision and nurture hatred are not true.

Glory of the Sai Avatar

In the same manner, regarding the nature of Sai, different people are formulating opinions based only on external appearances. They do not make any attempt to

> recognize the true nature of Sai, which is sacred and good. All powers are under the control of Sai. Unfortunately, many educated people, people in high positions, those who claim to be yogis, Jnanis, good people, great scholars, and people who have all kinds of qualifications are only focusing on insignificant simple miracles and not trying to realize the true nature of Sai. Today, many people who egoistically proclaim themselves as educated and who are proud of the kind of knowledge they gained propagate and lecture about the sacred scriptures such as Vedas, Upanishads, Itihasas, and Puranas without realizing the divinity that is the basis of all knowledge. They do not realize that the very basis of all that they talk about is present here in Brindavan (ashram near Bengaluru) and that they must just come here to witness



divinity and have *darshan* of the absolute truth. These ignorant minds are not even attempting to form a relationship

with such divinity, which is the very source of all knowledge. They give more importance to their knowledge and are happy to have a few chances to speak here. I do not see people who realize that they are in the presence of the real source of knowledge and want to get darshan of that highest, true source. But they are more anxious to exhibit their

knowledge.

the reason.

When seen in this light, it becomes clear that they do not have any experience of true divinity in their hearts. It is shameful to say that these people have acquired knowledge as they have only acquaintance with books. It is shameful to call it 'knowledge'; in truth, this can only be called an 'allergy.' So, it is not possible for anyone to recognize true divinity. From ancient times to the present, although God appeared right amidst the people, even though people were contemporaries of the Avatars, people who lived close to and with the Avatars were unable to know or understand God. What is the reason for this? Not having good fortune is

There is no limitation to My power. There are no rules and conditions to My real nature. Infinite power, infinite supreme reality,

are present in My very hand. To state these things about Myself becomes necessary sometimes. There is no use telling people who refuse to know.

For people who know, there

and infinite divine personality

is no need to tell them. But for people who know and yet do not know, it becomes necessary to present what I call 'My visiting card.' Therefore, if today I venture to tell you about Myself, it is with a view of presenting you with 'My visiting card' and not for any other purpose that you may imagine.

In our entire spiritual history, we find that only Lord Krishna had proclaimed His divinity clearly in this manner. Even in the Avatar of Krishna, there were some apparent setbacks and difficulties at certain times. But this is nothing unusual. It is not divine will. It is only a divine play, a make-believe, and it is part and parcel of the divine drama. Such setbacks are contrived so that people know that an attempt was made, but it was futile; both are His will.

During the time of the Krishna Avatar, many kings asked Krishna, "Lord, with you being amid Kauravas and Pandavas, why then must this terri-



My main objective is to establish unity in mankind, reveal to them the aspect of divinity, which is Brahman, and put them on the path of realizing divinity.

ble war take place? Can't you negotiate with Kauravas to stop this war?" Krishna replied that He tried but didn't succeed in the negotiations. This should not be interpreted as Krishna does not have the power or capability to prevent the war. This is according to the divine plan which Krishna Himself conceived. He wanted the world to see and know that despite all His efforts, the wicked Kauravas would not heed His advice. This way, the people would also be convinced that efforts had been made. but the Kauravas were wicked and did not listen to Krishna. Thus, He conducted negotiations and played the drama with the full intent to kill the evil Kauravas.

Depending on the time, place, circumstances, and people, it becomes necessary for incarnations of God to enact such dramas. But, in this Avatar of Sai, there is no room for such pretentious dramas or room for failures.

Mission of the Sai Avatar

What I will, surely comes to fruition, and there is no need to will it. My sankalpa (divine will) depends on how the devotees conduct themselves, their faith, and desires. I do not will something on My own. My bounden duty is dependent on the intensity of devotion of My devotees. Just because I behave like an ordinary individual, playing, singing, walking, and moving about with you, it is impossible even for the strongest of minds to comprehend My true nature. My main objective is to establish unity in mankind, reveal to them the aspect of divinity, which is Brahman, and put them on the path of realizing divinity. It is My duty to make you realize the kind of relationship that should exist between one human being and another. It is also My duty to make humanity realize and experience the truth that divinity is present and latent in all human beings.

The mere recitation of verses, or loud chanting of Vedas, and making captivating speeches in a very flamboyant manner doesn't make one great. I am not any less for not resorting to such practices. I am capable of solving even the most difficult problem in a trice. But simply because I pretend not to have such capabilities, people are foolish to think that they are great and I am just performing miracles.

These miracles are insignificant when compared to My powers and My totality, just like a mosquito perched on the body of an elephant.

Sometimes, I am amused by this ignorance and laugh within Myself. Who can understand it even if I explain? No one can understand. Therefore, I laugh to Myself.

Why? Because, when My divinity is limitless, you are impressed by these limited miracles and try to explain My nature, which is like giving importance to a mosquito sitting on an elephant. How humans understand My reality is based on their limited vision and ignorance. My power is inestimable. It is beyond any measure; it cannot be recognized or

proved by any experiment. It is pure love, and there is nothing higher than this love in this world. You cannot find such love anywhere. Only those who recognize this love and experience it can realize Me very easily.

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

To be concluded in the next issue...

Having enlightened us on the glory and mission of the Sai Avatar in the discourse so far, in the concluding portion, Swami makes it clear that vision of the divine can be achieved only with a heart full of love and the eye of wisdom. Though He exhorts everyone to rise above the physical gifts and materializations that He confers, Swami adds that such signs of grace are necessary in some cases. He, Himself, shares two astounding and mind-boggling miracles where He rushed to the aid of devotees in the USA and in the UK. Bhagawan states in the most touching manner that He is the mother and father for all, theists and atheists alike! Swami concludes with the advice that one should focus on filling the heart with love rather than the head with scholarship.





MY GREAT ADVENTURE STARTED

IN 1940 when I was born in Bangkok, Thailand, at the beginning of the Second World War. My parents' home at that time was in a military area surrounded by military barracks and supply depots. Japanese soldiers soon occupied the country. The Allies were bombing the military installations, and the area surrounding our house was among the main targets. My mother related to me that one day, someone dressed in a yellow-orange robe like a Buddhist monk came and knocked on the door of our house. My mother did not know who this person was. The monk then gave a packet of fine sand and instructed her to spread the sand over the roof. He said that the house would then be safe from bombing. My mother did as instructed, but when she came back to thank the monk, he was gone. Only a few days later, there was a heavy bombardment of the area, which destroyed all the buildings around us. But our house remained unscathed! Decades later, during the Summer

Course in Brindavan (1990), when I narrated this incident, Swami said to a few devotees sitting around Him that He gave vibhuti, and not sand, to my mother!

My Eternal Companion

So, it was only by Bhagawan's grace that I survived the war. In my young days, I became very naughty and was also a good boxer. Having learned Thai boxing, I was able to compete and, on occasion, beat my school friends. Soon, I also became a champion boxer

"I thought that if He was so great, He should call me. As the thought entered my mind, a strange thing happened. I felt a strong surge of energy enter my body, so I shivered and shook. Tears rolled down from my eyes, and I started to cry with joy for no apparent reason."

in the boxing ring. By then, I was transformed by His grace!

When I was a 15-yearold boy studying in an English public school, I woke up in the middle of the night

in my dormitory, where many boys were also sleeping. I heard a resounding voice, "Art-Ong, Art-Ong, Art-Ong–why are you doing this?" There was also a bright light shining everywhere. I became very frightened as I thought that it was a ghost. This was repeated the next night and the night after that. Slowly, my fear transformed into introspection. I realized that it was my conscience, God within me, correcting me. I became determined to change my life. I took up meditation and started to study the holy scriptures. I read about the Gurus of India and prayed that I may meet my Guru. I prayed and lamented, asking God why I was not born at the time of Lord Buddha or Jesus.

Finally, in my dreams, I received the answer from an unknown saint dressed in a white robe sitting under a big tree. He told me to be patient and that I would soon meet my Guru. However, I was restless and continued the search by studying the teachings of Paramahamsa Yogananda, Sri Ramakrishna



Paramahamsa, and Swami Vivekananda, as well as by meeting leaders of various religious organizations in England at that time.

Despite my sincere efforts, there was

always something that kept eluding me. I was not satisfied, and the search continued. After completing my studies in England, I returned to Thailand and worked professionally as an educator, a scientist, an engineer, and finally, a businessman. There were many ups and downs in my life's journey, but somehow, I felt a strong, invisible hand guiding and saving me whenever I was about to fall. Thus, 42 years of my life passed.

When I Went to Sai...

One day, in 1982, a friend asked me if I would like to go and see Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I had heard about the miracle man called Sai Baba. So, I thought that if He was so great, He should call me. As the thought entered my mind, a strange thing happened. I felt a strong surge of energy enter my body, so I shivered and shook. Tears rolled down from my eyes, and I started to cry with joy for no apparent reason. I surmised that this was His call! So, I decided to join my friend and go and see Bhagawan immediately.

We traveled from Thailand together as a group of five, including my mother. We finally arrived in Puttaparthi on November 21, 1982. There was a crowd of about 250,000 people as it was the time of Swami's Birthday celebrations. We joined the crowd. Then, a figure dressed in an orange robe appeared at a distance and started walking toward us. My body was shivering and shaking again, and I was in tears. It was the very same experience as the call from Him! I was full of joy because I knew then and there that this was the moment I had been waiting for all my life. I knew this was verily the Guru that I had been searching for.



The search ended, but the great adventure had only just begun!

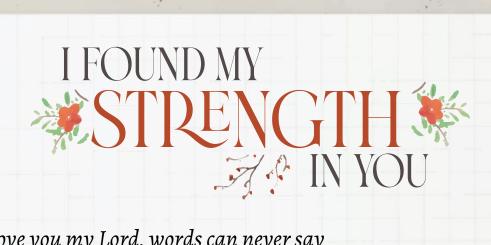




Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai has been a devotee of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for over four decades. He obtained his M.A. in Mechanical Sciences from Cambridge University and D.I.C. and Ph.D. in Communications from London University in the U.K. He also holds a Ph.D. in Education from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. He has been elected three times as a Member of Parliament and was a Member of the House of Senate. Dr. Jumsai has received royal decorations and distinguished awards in Thailand as a scientist, philosopher, and teacher. He has authored several books on human values. He is the Director of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education and the C.E.O. of the Sri Sathya Sai School in Thailand.

od is the refuge for the poor and the forlorn. He is always with them through all the vicissitudes of life. Do not think that God is in some distant land. God is by your side always. In fact, He is present in the inner recesses of your heart. Never think that God is away from you at any point of time. Neither friends nor relatives can come to your rescue. God is your sole refuge. He will protect you under all circumstances.

> Sri Sathya Sai Baba August 23, 2004



I love you my Lord, words can never say
How I feel for you with each passing day.
I drop on my knees and kiss your feet
Only to wish that one day we would meet.
Then you rest your hands gently on my
head and remind me,
'My dear child, Your Heart Is My Seat'.

Oh Lord, tears flow as I pray,

'You have taken good care of me;

You have been my father in every sense of the way'

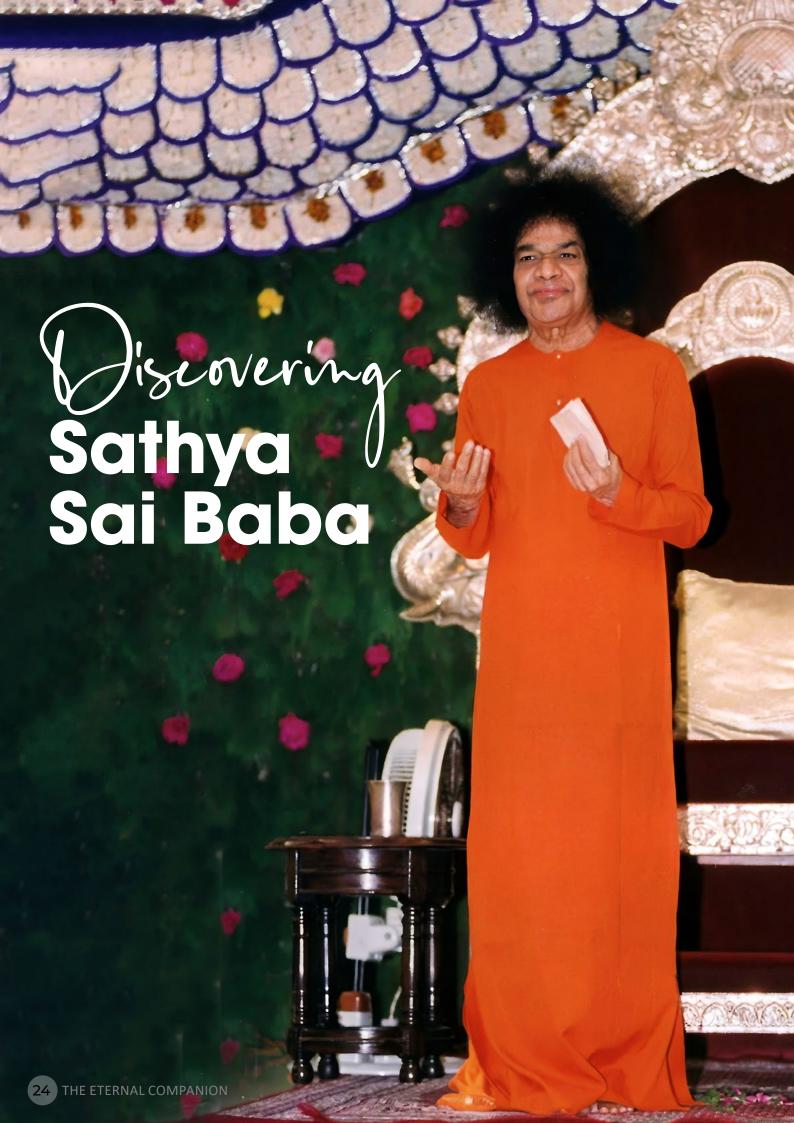
You have shown me a love that

I have never found in anyone so pure, so

constant, non-judgmental, unconditional and true.

Maybe one day I may shine as true as you.





IT'S NOTHING SHORT OF A MIRACLE HOW SRI SATHYA SAI BABA has reached people from all walks of life in the farthest corners of our planet. Growing up in a suburb of Amsterdam in the Netherlands and moving to Santa Barbara, California, for studies, I became one of those people "in the farthest corners of our planet" to be captivated by His miracles, His teachings, and His unconditional Love.

Two Significant Dreams

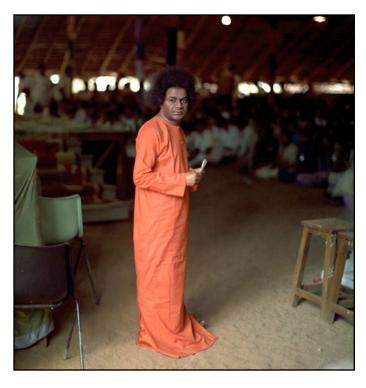
The mother of my very close friend and college roommate, Greg Slee, first introduced us to Sri Sathya Sai Baba and His teachings. Newly arrived in sunny Santa Barbara, spiritual matters were not on my mind at all and I was very skeptical about the existence of God in human form living in faraway India. However, Swami quickly transformed me by appearing in my dreams with profound experiences, messages, and guidance. These dreams led me to explore and put His teachings into practice. The first sign of His presence was the distinct fragrance of jasmine flowers that sometimes emerged when thinking about doing service.

In my first dream with Baba, which felt more real than reality itself, He appeared before me, holding His hand, palm up, right before my eyes. All of a sudden, the most stunning red, blue, green, and diamond-like crystal clear stones appeared out of nowhere in the palm of His open hand. As these stones materialized in my dream, I could hear the most beautiful celestial chimes. The brightness and colors of those stones and the sound of those chimes were out of this world and beyond anything I had ever seen or heard before! Indescribable! I fell to the ground, full length, face down, prostrating before Him, exclaiming fervently: "YOU ARE GOD, YOU ARE GOD, YOU ARE GOD!"

Through these profound experiences, I grew increasingly interested in Him and His teach-

ings. I started doing volunteer work and eventually visited the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center of Santa Barbara. After my initial visit to the Sai Center, I felt conflicted as worshipping God in this way felt foreign to me. The following day, as I came to a stop at a traffic light while driving, I ended up reflecting on the night before at the Sai Center, thinking to myself that "maybe this stuff with Sai Baba and God is not for me..." That very instant, I noticed the car's license plate in front of me. It read: "GOD IS 4 U," a direct response to my thoughts.

The picture below depicts the exact setting of a subsequent 'Baba dream.' A large crowd surrounded us.



In the dream, when Swami looked at me, I mentally asked Him what it's like to be in heaven. He stretched out His hand, and when I reached out and held His hand, what I experienced was truly indescribable. Labeling it as an "experience" doesn't do it justice. It was beyond what we refer to as "experience." Although I knew it happened, and I felt the experience, it was erased instantly from my awareness upon waking up, making it that much more difficult to describe. Eventually, I realized that if this "experience" had not

been erased from my awareness, it might have been challenging for me to have any interest in worldly life, so the removal of this experience from my awareness was for my own protection. I realized that this "experience" could only have come from God.

"Man has to be Unmade and Remade"

As I continued to grow closer to Swami, different aspects of my life started to unwind! Among other things, suddenly, orders for the business I had started years earlier began drying up. Big orders that had seemed secure somehow ended up falling through. Things became dire. I had to sell my car and ended up riding a bicycle given to me by a friend who felt sorry for me. I'd ride this bike to the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission to teach English and Math to homeless kids. I sometimes had fleeting thoughts like, "What on earth am I doing here? I should be working on my business..." But somehow, I sensed that Swami had my back. I could sense the importance of sticking to His teachings and doing seva as much as possible. He instilled confidence in me that no matter what, all would turn out OK. And eventually, it did.

But first, I still had some more unmaking to go through. In 1995, a massive rainstorm flooded whole sections of Santa Barbara, and most of the contents in my office ended up submerged under water. I remember wading through waist-deep water on my way to my office, attempting to salvage whatever I could. I said to Swami, "OK, Lord, I am all Yours. Thy Will be done. Do with me as You please." It was a surrender that left me feeling free and relieved, and I was happy to surrender to Him! It was at that point that things turned around. Not long after that rainstorm, I ended up moving to Los Angeles for a work opportunity. This brought me close to the Sri Sathya Sai Center of Hollywood, which became the Sai Center where I took a more active role as part of the SSSIO.





With Swami during 75th Birthday Celebrations. Author is wearing eyeglasses.

"I have come for all. Those who stray away will come again to Me; do not doubt this. I shall beckon them back to Me... If you cut this contact and get away, a time will come when you will weep outside the gates clamoring for entry."

First Darshan and Many More

I first visited Prasanthi Nilayam in 1997 for His darshan and to participate in the first-ever Young Adult World Conference. This was followed by numerous trips with the Sai Center of Hollywood. It would be impossible to share everything that transpired during those wonderful trips, but let me share just a couple of relevant and significant experiences.

In 2000, members of the Sai Center of Hollywood were blessed to receive several interviews with Swami. One day, Swami informed us that He would see us the following day, so I had the chance to prepare a list of questions. At the start of our first interview the following morning, Swami pointed at me seated in the back, and without me having said a word, He answered the very first question on my list in such a way that no one else in the interview room understood the nature of my somewhat personal question! During the interview, Swami materialized several items for different people, including a relatively large cup filled with vibuthi. Then He gestured to me to come forward and sit at His feet. He started waving His hand, and a beautiful Navaratna (nine gems) ring decked with nine beautifully colored stones popped from His hand. It included the same stunning stones I had seen Him materialize in my first Baba dream. Before placing the ring on my finger, He said, "Perfect fit!" And it turned out to be precisely that. Only God can know the size of my ring finger like that! Then, He explained that the ring is "protection from the negative influences of the nine planets!" It felt like having come full circle since that first Baba dream I had more than ten years ago.

At another point during the interview, Swami stood up, looked at me, and asked, "Do you want marriage?" I replied, "Whatever is Your will, Swami." Then, after a brief pause, He again asked, more sternly this time and pointing His finger at me: "No, but do YOU want marriage?!" To which I blurted out something along the lines of "I think that would be a good thing at some point, Swami...." Approximately one year later, my future wife, Tarini, started attending the Sai Center of Hollywood. She had a dream in which Swami showered us with Vibhuti, which was her experience of Him blessing our marriage. Shortly thereafter, in 2002, I went to India, and He took my letter asking Him to bless our marriage. Later, in 2002, we got married in the Shiva temple where Swami was born, and we have two kids.

At the end of a subsequent interview during that same trip in 2000, I said to Him, "Swami, I have so many questions..." He looked at me and sweetly replied: "ASK!" Of all the questions I had, I began describing the dream about Heaven (described earlier) to confirm the authenticity of my experience in that dream. As I was struggling to describe the dream, He interrupted me and asked, "Where's heaven?" When I was not able to answer, He said, "Heaven is in the head." He proceeded to add, "Hell is in the head." Even though He did not directly address the

dream itself, I realized there was no need for Him to affirm the dream as I knew in my heart of hearts the significance, meaning, and value of that dream. I found His answer to be so profound and meaningful that nothing more needed to be said.

The Greatest Blessing of Working for Swami

When I first started discovering Swami, I remember reading the following quote from Him: "...I have come for all. Those who stray away will come again to Me; do not doubt this. I shall beckon them back to Me. ...If you cut this contact and get away, a time will come when you will weep outside the gates clamoring for entry." Years later, during a busy festival day in Prasanthi, I found myself outside the *mandir*, seeing Swami seated before the massive crowds inside the mandir. All the entryways had been closed, and no one else could get inside. Large crowds had gathered outside the walls surrounding the mandir, and I was among them.

I remember thinking, "Oh my goodness, Swami! I'm standing outside the gates, clamoring for entry!" I felt so disillusioned, and I felt crushed. Then, out of the blue, someone tapped me on my left shoulder. I looked to my left and noticed that the person who had tapped me on my shoulder was a sevadal, someone I had never seen before. He motioned for me to follow him, which I did. Through the large crowds, he guided me to the side entry, where the VIPs enter the mandir. He walked me right through that entry and motioned me to sit wherever I wanted inside the mandir. Then he walked off and disappeared into the crowds outside. This surreal loving gesture by our all-knowing Lord left me standing there, stunned, amazed, and overwhelmed with gratitude. After the license plate experience described earlier, this was the second time a mere thought led to an instant response from Him.

Baba has said that it takes tremendous effort, penance, and grace over countless lifetimes to be born during the advent of the Poorna Avatar. It takes even more effort, penance, and grace over many more lifetimes to hear His name mentioned just once. Imagine the grace bestowed upon us, being immersed in His teachings and being part of His mission daily! Swami has said that this triple Incarnation of Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai, and Prema Sai has never happened before and will never happen again. We, indeed, are the most fortunate, blessed souls ever to have incarnated. Thank You, my dearest Swami, for all Thy grace!!!





Mr. Maarten Wagener was first introduced to the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the late eighties. Swami's presence, teachings, and unconditional love have been the guiding light in his personal, professional and spiritual journey and the foundation of Maarten's life ever since. Maarten has made numerous trips to Prasanthi Nilayam. In the USA, he became involved with the Young Adults program and with the Sathya Sai Baba Center of Hollywood where he served as President (1999-2003) and in other leadership roles. Currently Maarten serves as the YA advisor for the SSSIO-USA, Region 8 Young Adults. Maarten Wagener is a real estate investor by profession.





SRI SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

INTERNATIONAL CONFERNATIONAL

NAIROBI, KENYA | JUNE 28 - JULY 01

SERVICE

ADORATION

LLUMINATION



I Have Come for the Whole World

Prasanthi Nilayam 11-8-65

Blessings to you and to all the Sadhaka friends of yours, Bob Mrs Bob and others. Carry on with steady faith the spiritual discipline; do not hurry or expect too quick results; slow maturing makes the fruit sweeter.

Remember you are but an instrument in the hands of the Lord. But, you are not Jada or inert. You have Intelligence, Discrimination and the power to detach yourself from the world. Thesethree are called Viveka, Vichakshana and Vairagyam. The more you develop these the better instruments you will be. Intelligence must be able to subdue the senses; discrimination must show the path to attain the eternal and the absolute; Vairagyam must attach you only to the higher goals.

When a person walks along the road, his shadow falls on the heaps and hollows, the thorns and dirt that happen to be, by the side of the road; but, he is not affected, by what happe pens to his shadow. You are the substance, not the shadow. You are the Divine Spark that is encased in the body, not the body.

Imagine a palm tree. standing on the ground; its shadow stretches along the ground. The shadow is the world; the tree is the Reality. Climb the tree and reach the fruits on top; your shadow too reaches the shadow fruits. That is to say, do Sadhana and attain its goal; you will thereby attain worldly happiness and peace also.

If you lift the hand to serve, to help, to console, to encourage, another man--you are lifting it for God.Because, in every man, there is God. The body is the temple of the individual soul; the world is the temple of the Universal Soul. Use all your talents for serving others; that is the best way of serving yourself. For, they and you are one Entity.

The time is fast approaching when all your yearning will bear fruit. I do not belong to any particular place. I have come for the whole world; all men are mine. The Hospital has my blessings, wherever it is built.

The book will be sent to you with the meanings of non-English words. Also, photos.

With Blessings

Son Sallya Son Baba.

30 THE ETERNAL COMPANION





HUGE HOPES THROUGH TINY HOMES

"Service should be rendered to those who are worse off than us and who are neglected by the world. It is the weak, the destitute, and the helpless who need to be served."

> Sri Sathya Sai Baba, November 19, 1987



The Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO) is constantly looking for opportunities to serve society and the needy by emulating Swami's model of service. One such innovative venture is the Tiny Homes Project in the USA.

An Elegant Solution to a Rising Problem

Homelessness is a growing crisis across the USA, impacting more than half a million people. An estimated 60% of the homeless live in temporary shelters and transitional housing, and the rest remain homeless, taking shelter on the streets, under bridges, in abandoned buildings, tents, and makeshift cardboard boxes! In the Seattle area alone, over 7,000 individuals are homeless. Despite the best efforts of the government over the years, not much progress has been made to bring relief from this sad state of affairs.

A shelter not only protects people from the elements but, more importantly, gives them dignity and hope for a new beginning. Since 2021, SSSIO members have volunteered more than 1,500 hours in collaboration with a local organization, Sound Foundations Northwest, to build 'Tiny Homes' for the homeless in Seattle, Washington. Guided by coordinators with knowledge of construction, the volunteers construct 8' X 12' tiny homes in a large warehouse using power tools to cut the wood. They then assemble the house, build the roof and inner walls, apply caulking, and finally paint the house. Once the houses are built, they are handed over to another non-profit organization, the Low Income Housing Institute, which puts together about 40 homes in a village. Each house serves as a transitional home for an individual for four months, which is sufficient time to transition to perma-





"I do not mean houses of brick and mortar, but houses of good thoughts, good words, good deeds, and good company, where you could live calm and collected."

–Sri Sathya Sai Baba

nent housing. Thus, it serves as a home for three people each year.

Their Beaming Faces Say It All The beaming smile that blossoms on the faces of the beneficiaries as they walk into their little sanctuary of safety, security, and serenity is the best feedback on the success of this innovative service venture. Tiny homes cost about \$4,200 each to build, and they offer tremendous benefits. They are habitable, safe, weatherproof, and secure. Each house has basic amenities and conveniences, including electricity, overhead light, insulation, and a heater. These tiny homes, along with shared kitchens, bathrooms, and laundry facilities, form villages for the members of the homeless communities. The villages help the homeless start on a path to permanent housing, employment, and connection to supportive services. Above all, it provides a sense of dignity that boosts their confidence, enabling them to become productive members of society.

The project, therefore, is much more than an escape from homelessness. It is a pathway toward a better life!

Meanwhile, it is not just the faces of the recipients that are lit with smiles. The volunteers, too, are beaming with joy, and it becomes hard to distinguish between the 'giver' and the 'receiver!' Isn't that the true spirit of seva (service)? As a side benefit, the volunteers have learned various skills that come in handy at their own homes. When we serve, we are actually serving ourselves.

Project Expansion and Swami's 100th Birthday Celebrations

A member involved in this project says, "Since moving to Seattle in 2019, I have been actively involved in Sai service activities. In general, there are three basic needs for all people-food, clothing, and shelter. Even though I was able to participate in services involving feeding the needy and in clothing drives, building a



shelter for someone in need seemed like an impossible dream. When it came to homelessness, I felt that it was a problem beyond my capacity to solve. I am truly fortunate to have come across this project and become a volunteer in constructing Tiny Homes. I had the desire but felt I lacked the necessary skills to contribute. The coordinator at the warehouse has set up a very user-friendly process so that anyone, even those with no prior experience, may learn the skills needed to construct a tiny home. Every time I participated, it boosted my self-confidence, and there was a great sense of accomplishment. It is gratifying to know that every time I nail the wood or paint a wall, I am helping to provide a roof over someone's head."

The goal of the project is to eliminate homelessness in the Seattle area by 2025, which aligns well with Swami's 100th Birthday Celebrations! This innovative and progressive housing model is now being adopted in 20 other cities, and, as always, the SSSIO is spearheading the volunteering efforts through the heartfelt involvement of its volunteers.

A Home Rather Than a Mere House

While performing the *Gruhapravesham* (ceremonial inaugural entrance into a new home) for a devotee in Trichy (Tamil Nadu, India) on February 2, 1964, Swami said,

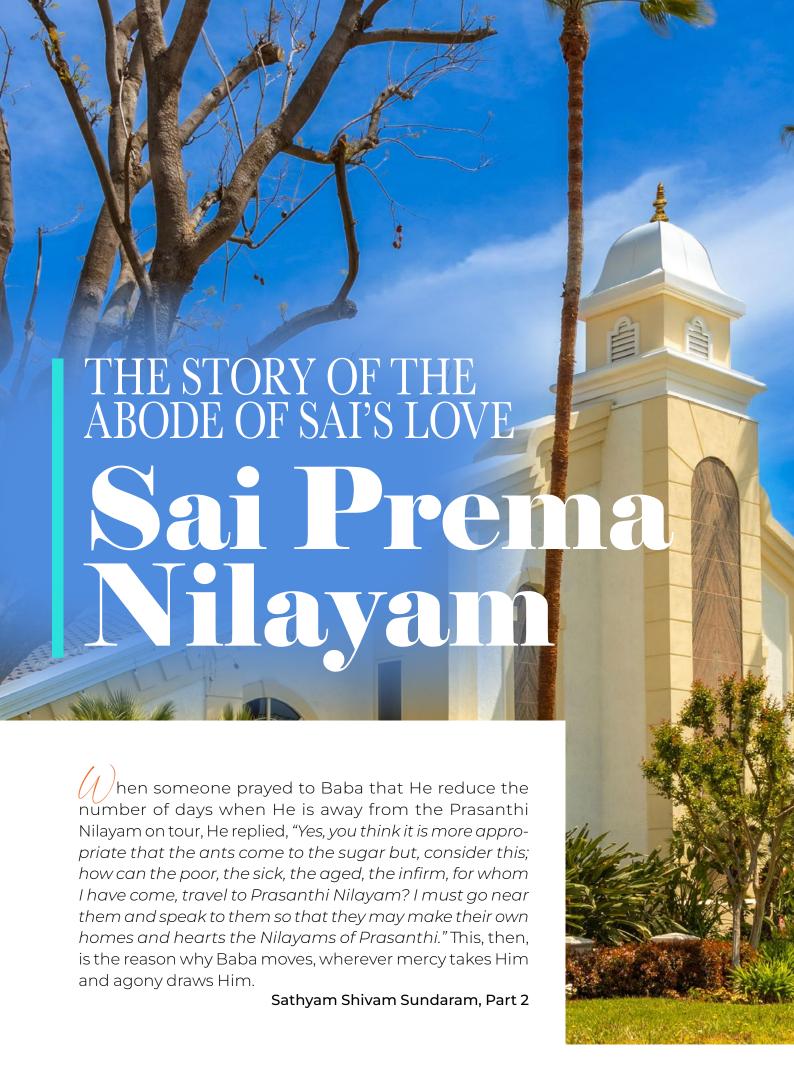
"I want you all to build new houses for happy living and install the Lord therein. I do not mean houses of brick and mortar, but houses of good thoughts, good words, good deeds, and good company, where you could live calm and collected. Invite Me for the Gruhapravesham of such houses, and I shall most readily agree. Then, the house is Mine already, and I do not even need an invitation to come and enter it. These houses are for worldly comfort; that house is for spiritual joy. And My place of residence is the pure, aspiring heart."

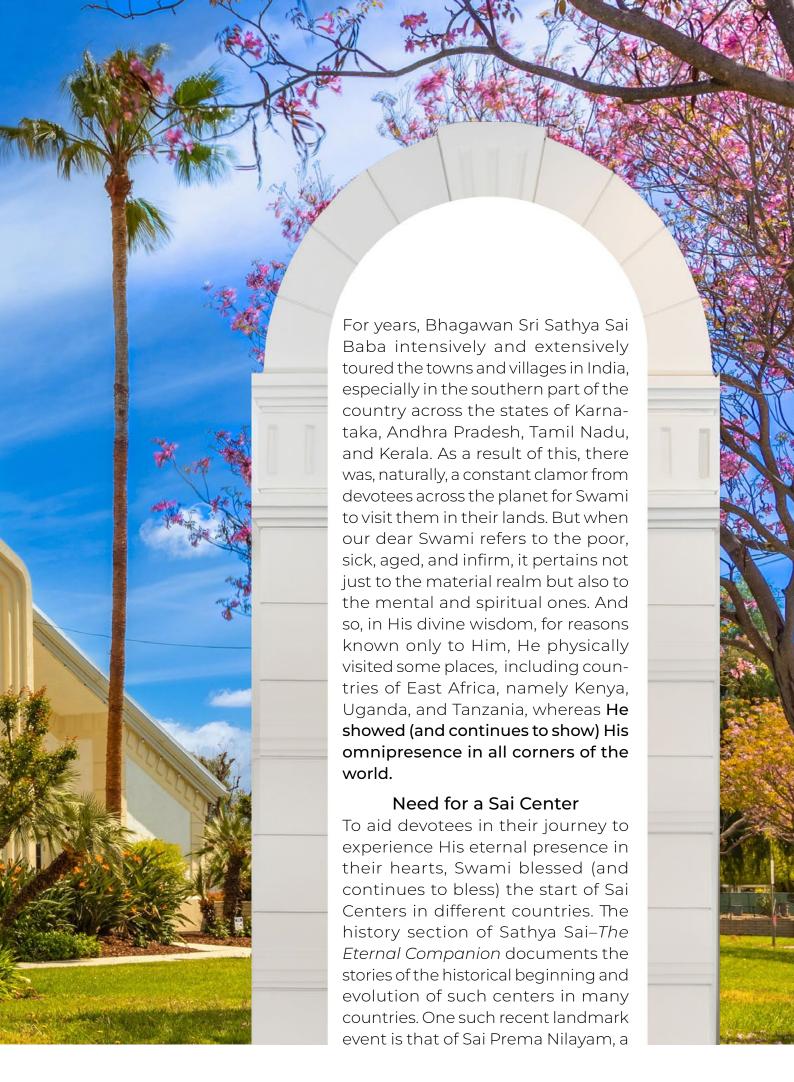
There are many future possibilities for the Tiny Homes project. Introducing the residents to human values and a better life is another service that could be performed. Thus, the Tiny Homes in the physical realm also plant the seeds for huge hopes in the realms of the mind and spirit!











my Sat	SATHYA SAI BABA, hereby consent to the use and to the registration of name, SATHYA SAI BABA, sometimes referred to as Sathya Sai, by the hya Sai Society of America for any and all trademark applications mitted to the United States Patent and Trademark Office.
Date	ed: Sni Sulf. Sei Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Center opened in Riverside, California, in the United States.

Historically, California has been home to a large number of ardent devotees of Bhagawan. Some of those devotees have passed on and have made significant contributions to the Sai movement in the USA and across the world, and they have inspired many by sharing Swami's love and teachings. They include Dr. John Hislop, Mr. Walter Cowan, Mrs. Elsie Cowan, Mrs. Phyllis Crystal and Mr. Sidney Crystal, Mrs. Diana Baskin, Mr. Charles Penn, Mrs. Faith Penn, Mr. John Svenson and Mrs. Camille Svenson. Devotees and officers from Southern California have been looking for decades for a permanent place where they could conduct devotional, education, and service activities at the regional, national, and international levels. However, in 2004, when the devotees from the region identified a property in the Los Angeles area and approached Swami with a proposal to acquire a property, Swami advised them to wait.

The devotees understood that the right property and right time hadn't arrived because God's delays are never His denials. The devotees patiently persevered in their search for a dedicated building in Southern California.

Sathya Sai Society of America

The Sathya Sai Society of America is the first official charitable Sai organization in

the United States, established in 1969 with Swami's express permission and blessings. Its mission is to disseminate the spiritual teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and to assist with educational and humanitarian services following His teachings. Funds received by the Sathya Sai Society of America are used for educational, medical, disaster relief, and other humanitarian projects carried out by the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO). The directors of the Sathya Sai Society of America volunteer their time and receive no remuneration. All donations received are used exclusively for charitable purposes, respecting the wishes of the donors. Most importantly, funds are never solicited by the Sathya Sai Society of America from anyone, through any medium, or by any individual. The fact that Swami signed the Sathya Sai Society of America registration document and gave written permission to copyright His divine name (as shown above) is proof of His faith in the organization.

Purchasing land and constructing a building would be challenging, requiring various permits from local, regional, state, and federal government authorities. The best solution would be to purchase an existing religious place (the most common one in the USA is a church) for the Sai Center.

The search team of the Sathya Sai Society of America, with the support of devotees,



The search team fell in love with the property, which had been a place of worship of God since the early 1990s. It had wonderful spiritual vibrations and natural scenic beauty.

continued to search for a suitable property, which had many starts and stops over the last couple of decades. It finally culminated in 2019 with the offer to purchase a Church in Riverside, California. The Church of the Latter Day Saints (LDS), belonging to the Mormon faith of Christianity, was a magnificent 6.76-acre property with a 16,000-square-foot building in superb condition. The search team fell in love with the property, which had been a place of worship of God since the early 1990s. It had wonderful spiritual vibrations and natural scenic beauty in a quiet neighborhood.

But the sellers had two conditions for the sale...

Contingencies Disguised as Blessings

"If you choose to use the building as is, there should be no alcohol consumed inside it. If you cannot agree to that condition, the building must be demolished and rebuilt..."

This item was easy to comply with since alcohol, non-vegetarian food, and tobacco use are prohibited in Sai Centers.

"Any resources found underneath the ground-oil, precious metals, water, etc. - will belong to the church..."

This condition had some complications. What if some resource was found, and the church chose to conduct drilling or mining?





It would disturb the spiritual ambiance and structure on the ground.

The offer to buy the property was abandoned because of this new roadblock. Then, the global COVID-19 pandemic broke out, and everything came to a standstill.

Two years later, the devotees realized in retrospect that Swami had saved them from unnecessarily paying for a building that could anyway not be used during the lockdown. Also, by now, the world has changed in many ways. In the middle of 2021, a benefactor who was helping with the original purchase offer informed the team that the church was still up for sale. The second time around, the seller agreed not to impose conditions for resources under the 6.76acre property and also reduced the price by about 10 percent! Since the property would have remained relatively unused because of the pandemic situation, in a way, the devotees saved maintenance costs for two years, including utility bills, property taxes, water bills, gardening, etc. Swami had gifted the devotees with the perfect property at an unbelievable price since the cost of new construction of such a building would be more than double the purchase price. The

The Lord's Timing is Always Perfect

The team unanimously decided that no money would be used from existing funds of the Sathya Sai Society of America or SSSIO, which are earmarked for service and humanitarian projects across the world. At the same time, it was also agreed that such a purchase should not be made with mortgage loans. With the two conditions resolved–16 families came forward voluntarily and enthusiastically to contribute toward purchasing the 'temple of love' for Swami!

Anyone who enters the hall will be awestruck at the grandeur of the altar.

The nobility and selflessness of their intent powered the divine deal and the **property** was registered on the sacred Avatarhood Declaration Day–October 20, 2021. The Lord had indeed 'declared' the temple as His abode of Pure Love!

A Transformation Supreme

The next phase involved interior work to transform the altar of the church into the abode of Sri Sathya Sai, who embodies all forms and all names of the one and only God. A dedicated team of nearly ten devotees with skills and passion for the design and remodeling of the altar earnestly started working in the Fall of 2021. Architects, engineers, and interior designers developed a final altar design, and the work began to reconfigure the church altar with new marble slabs and tiles, wood paneling, flooring, etc.

The altar was initially designed

to be beautifully adorned

with three idols. Lord

wan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. In late 2021, a small team of devotees visited the workshop of a renowned sculptor in Jaipur, India, to select the three idols. However, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's idol remained an unrealized dream despite the best efforts of the team and the sculptor, as it was impossible to capture His unparalleled, enigmatic, and bewitching beauty to the satisfaction of many who had seen Him. In the end, the idea of Swami's idol was dropped in favor of Swami's chair on one side of the altar, the beautiful idol of Shirdi Sai Baba on the other, and Lord Ganesha's idol in the center to ward off all obstacles. The idols of Lord Ganesha and Shirdi Baba were transported from India by sea and arrived on-site during the Summer of 2022.

Ganesha, Sri Shirdi Sai Baba, and Bhaga-

The second part of the altar design was to design the grand, inspiring, regal *Makarathoranam*(a decorative golden arch) to adorn the Shirdi Sai



through the marble-covered back wall, gazing directly at anyone and everyone present in the sanctum sanctorum with love and compassion, as only He can. It was Swami's blessed plan to have the traditional "Prana Prathista ceremony" of the idols and altar before the inauguration, with Vedic rituals as Swami would do. The ceremony of Kumbha Abhishekam (consecration ceremony) was conducted with the chanting of Vedic hymns and performing the prescribed rituals.

It was another 'Saincidence' that the Lord's home (Nilayam) was ready for a Grand Opening by the time of Aradhana Mahotsavam, April 24, 2023! Since Bhagawan is best described as prema (supreme love), His home was christened SAI PREMA NILAYAM (Abode of Sai's Divine Love). With Bhagawan's blessings and grace, the main altar with the area for the congregation was named Yajur Mandir, as Swami resides there eternally.

The International Conference on Love and Service

Coinciding with the grand inauguration of Sai Prema Nilayam was the 'SSSIO International Conference on Love and Service' held in April 2023. Like travelers in a desert longing for the thirst-quenching waters of the oasis, several hundred devotees from 35 countries converged on Sai Prema Nilayam to have their souls nourished and spirits uplifted by sharing Swami's love, His message, and His works with fellow devotees around the world.

Beginning with an interfaith panel discussion with all major faith leaders, the Conference was a harmonious and rejuvenating blend of panel discussions, workshops, talks, satsangs, musical programs, cultural events, and service. Young Adults partici-

Baba idol and Swami's chair. The two large Makarathoranams on either side of the altar, the gold-covered metal canopy over Shirdi Sai Baba's seat, and the lions adorning either

side were all made by a talented devotee from Chennai. The team provided input and supervised design. The Makarathoranams were hand-made from copper and goldplated using the latest technology for the best

finish and longevity.

Anyone who enters the hall will be awestruck at the grandeur of the altar. They will enjoy the results of long hours of loving work by devotees who spent months enhancing His black and white photo, coloring it, and finally printing and installing it. Devotees experience overwhelming joy when Swami is looking at them and walking toward them.

The crowning part of the magnificent altar was the 12-feet two-dimensional, colorful, lifelike cut-out figure of Swami striding pated joyfully and with dedication, exemplifying that they were an integral and essential component of the divine mission. The stalwarts of SSSIO who had contributed more than 40 years of their life serving in Swami's mission were honored in the magnificent temple of worship, and many of them had tears of love and gratitude as the whole hall resounded with standing ovations.

From the heart of Swami's Home, the ambitious SAI-100 program was officially launched—a homage, an offering of love and gratitude to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for His 100th Birthday in 2025. If you wish to enjoy more than this brief glimpse of this unique Conference, please visit the June 2023 issue of Sathya Sai—The Eternal Companion and our website.

Happy and Holy First Birthday

Sai Prema Nilayam completes one year of service to Swami and His devotees in

April 2024. The 'International Conference' concluded on April 24, 2023, but 'Love and Service' continues at Sai Prema Nilayam.

The temple schedule begins with *Suprabhatam* in the morning and concludes with the *Arati* in the evening. Thursdays feature special *bhajans*, while the weekends are sanctified by special Veda chanting, *bhajans*, and inspiring talks by devotees. Preparing food for people in need is a regular activity. The devotees conduct study circles and serve in medical camps as the beautiful temple enters into the second year of its blessed existence.

At Sai Prema Nilayam, devotees are already working on plans to host another International Conference alongside the glorious and beautiful 100th Birthday Celebrations in November 2025.

As Sai continues to grace Sai Prema Nilayam, may we also let His love make our hearts His home, the abode of divine love.











I GREW UP IN A SMALL FARMING COMMUNITY IN THE

MIDWEST, USA. I knew nothing of the concept of "Avatar." I only knew about Jesus Christ and, at a young age I had an 'intense spiritual 'experience.' I don't know how else to explain it. I heard a divine voice that said, "I am a messenger from the Father in heaven. I have come because of your dedication to truth and love. I have come to bring you immortality."

It was startling, to say the least. I was sure nobody would believe me if I shared what I had experienced. So, I kept it all to myself. But I was totally convinced that it was time for the second coming of Christ. This would be the Father of Christ, and I felt that I had to find my Lord. I started my search by reading whatever spiritual books I could find. There were very few books back in those days! And then, it happened.

"Everything that has happened in my life-starting from the voice I heard as a youth till experiencing Swami's presence now in every moment of my life-has convinced me of the journey to liberation or God."

Somebody knew someone in California who sent a book to a friend in St. Louis, Missouri, where I lived, who gave it to me. It was *Dhyana Vahini* (a book on meditation) by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I opened it, read a couple of paragraphs, and then closed the book. "This is exactly who 'I've been looking for!" I said to myself, partly in excitement and partly in relief. I was so convinced that even before I physically saw Him, I became one of the founding members of the Sai Baba Center in St. Louis, Missouri in 1973!

Responding to His Call

I traveled to India all by myself in my 20s, in 1976, knowing only three names—a hotel, an ashram, and a driver! Even as I landed in India, Swami came in my dream exclaiming, "Oh! You have come!"

I had my first darshan in Brindavan (ashram near Bengaluru). Swami went back to Prasanthi Nilayam the very next day. While I was totally in love with Baba, I still wondered whether God would accept me and love me. Nothing happened for the first three days at Puttaparthi other than I got an upset stomach from the food. Swami didn't even come toward where the ladies were seated. He said later, "The ladies

are running; indiscipline!" The first lesson I learned was that discipline is essential to get closer to God.

The next darshan, He came near me and called me in for an interview, saying, "You! Go in..." I got up unsteadily and nervously, unsure whether the saree I had just learned to wrap around myself would stay in place. The first thing Swami did in the interview room was to switch on the fan. I felt that was how He switched on my spiritual journey, too! In the private inner interview room, He asked, "What do you want?" I just put my hands together in prayer. He said, "Don't worry. I will help you." He put His hand on my head, blessing me. Then, He revealed, "Your stomach is not good..." He knew my condition! But at a deeper level, I felt He indicated the region of my solar plexus, the seat of all emotions, as not being good. That also, He knew!

Finally, He said, "You stay for more days." Obeying His loving command, I stayed on. When He traveled to Brindavan, I followed Him and shifted base. During darshan, He came up to me and asked, "How are you?" Before I could reply, He continued, "Happy, happy, happy!" This was the message I received from Swami near the conclusion of my first trip.



His Vision for My Life Mission

It was after a period of intense Sadhana (spiritual practice) that I took a second trip to see Swami. Once, when I was out of the ashram to make some sundry purchases. a man walked up to me and said, "Tomorrow, Swami is going to call you and tell you about your life's 'work.'" I was taken aback. When I returned to my room, my roommate, who was a fellow teacher in the school where I taught, told me, "A man came here with a message that Swami wants to see you tomorrow morning at 8..."

Wow! That was no coincidence! Swami called us in for an interview the next day, and He asked me, "Oh! You are a teacher? Where do you teach?"

"Swami, East Saint Louis..."

"East Saint Louis! Teach about Jesus and spirituality."

"Bal Vikas, Swami?"

Swami did not respond to that but said that He would call us for an interview again. I wondered how on earth I was going to incorporate 'Jesus and spirituality' in my lesson plans. But when Swami gives a

task, He gives the strength and resources needed to accomplish it as well. With His grace, I became instrumental in introducing EHV (Education in Human Values) and 3HV (Unity of Head, Heart, and Hand) in my school.

Achieve Peace of Mind Before Seeking Liberation

We were blessed with a second interview in the afternoon of the same day.

During that session, with a wave of His hand, Swami materialized a medallion and put it around my neck. He also materialized a small 'calling card,' complete with His name and address! He said, "Keep this in your purse." Then, we were taken into the private interview room. Once inside, Swami lovingly held my folded palms and gently rocked them. He then asked me what I wanted. I replied that I wanted liberation. He seemed to brush aside my words with His hand and said, "First, find peace of mind. Liberation comes later." I was thinking how to get peace of mind, then I remembered what He told me in my first interview, "Stay away from anger. Stay away from desires. Stay away from doubt."

Continuing to hold my hand, He said, "I am going to come and give you darshan every Thursday." I sat dumbstruck, wondering how He would do that. Would He manifest Himself in the United States? Today, I know clearly in my heart that He is perfectly capable of doing that. But Swami's statement was also a reference to attending the Sai Center. It was a reminder to reconnect with Him every Thursday at the Center. That is what He used to say back in those days: "worship Me every Thursday." We have to do this till our devotion grows and we begin to connect with Him every day, till it happens every moment.

So, liberation, my ultimate goal, was conditional on achieving the goal of 'peace of mind.' It was a task He gave me, advised me on how to do it, and gifted me the means to achieve it. During another interview, Swami materialized a gold ring for me with three white diamonds. Later on, I noticed that it had a slight bend. But it was beautiful, and I was in love with it. I somehow felt that Swami would change it the next time I was in India. And amazingly, that is precisely what happened! In a couple of months, we were in Puttaparthi for Swami's Birthday when He called us in for an interview.

He asked me for my ring, and when I gave it to Him, He said, "It is bent!"

"Swami, it came out like that only when you materialized it for me!"

"Oh! Do you like this ring?" He asked.

"I like whatever You give me, Swami."

"Do you want green or white?"

"Swami, I want whatever You give me."

He passed the ring around the interview room. All those assembled there held the ring in their hands before passing it on. Finally, the ring went back to Swami. Now, He held it up and slowly brought it close toward His mouth. He blew on it thrice. And with the third breath, in everyone's plain sight, the ring changed, the setting changed, and the stone changed! It was now a green emerald ring, and it fit my finger perfectly.

"See, size perfect," Swami said.

"Yes! Sai's perfect," I played on His words.

He beamed a broad smile at me and said that the ring was for my peace of mind.

Wedding and Divine Experiences in the Interview Room

It was Swami who arranged my marriage in August 1983. I traveled to India for a Balvikas (Sathya Sai Education) conference in Puttaparthi. I was part of the group that came for teacher training. There was also a man in the group whom I knew from my Sai Center back in the USA, John Schiermann. We had not spoken much more than greeting each other with 'Sai Ram' or 'How are you' and 'Goodbye.' When Swami called the group in for an interview, He started talking to me about marriage. I knew He was serious about it when the same conversation continued in the private interview room, too. Even as I was coming to terms with what was happening, Swami shared some of His powerful energy to make sure that I understood that He was arranging this marriage.

Today, I know that my husband, too, experienced that same energy back then. This most incredible divine energy became stronger and stronger till neither of us could look at Swami anymore! He was the source of such incredible power that I could feel He was writing my life for me, and I was glad for that. I found myself absolutely calm and was in total acceptance of my marriage to this man about whom I knew almost nothing!

Years later, Swami called my husband and me for an interview in Brindavan. As we sat in the private interview room, Swami looked at me and then my husband and said, "See! Not mistake..." He was the proud father, happy that He had brought the two of us together. Sitting at His feet, we looked at His feet. His robe and dhoti had been specially arranged in what we felt was a divine formation. And then, it happened!

We could both see divine light emerging from that arrangement of His robe and His feet. Having enjoyed this special darshan, we walked out of the interview, exclaiming together, "Oh my goodness! Did you see that miracle?" Since that day, I have had a partner to walk along with me in my journey to liberation.

The Journey to Liberation

There have been many more interviews after that, with Swami being the constant and loving guide. He also took my son under His divine umbrella as a student in His educational institutions. He has further ensured that at all times, everywhere, we have been constantly evolving spiritually.

Everything that has happened in my lifestarting from the voice I heard as a youth till experiencing Swami's presence now in every moment of my life-has convinced me of the journey to liberation or God. It has been beautifully summarized by Swami in His words mentioned below.

The first stage is to be a messenger of God like Jesus was. This is the stage of "I am in the light." The second stage is to be the child of God, as Jesus said, "I am the Son of God." This is the stage of "The Light is in me." Then, we move to the final stage to become one with God or liberated. Jesus stated this as, "I and my Father are One." This is the stage of "I am the Light."

With Swami's grace and blessings, may we always be in the light and achieve our ultimate goal of being the light.

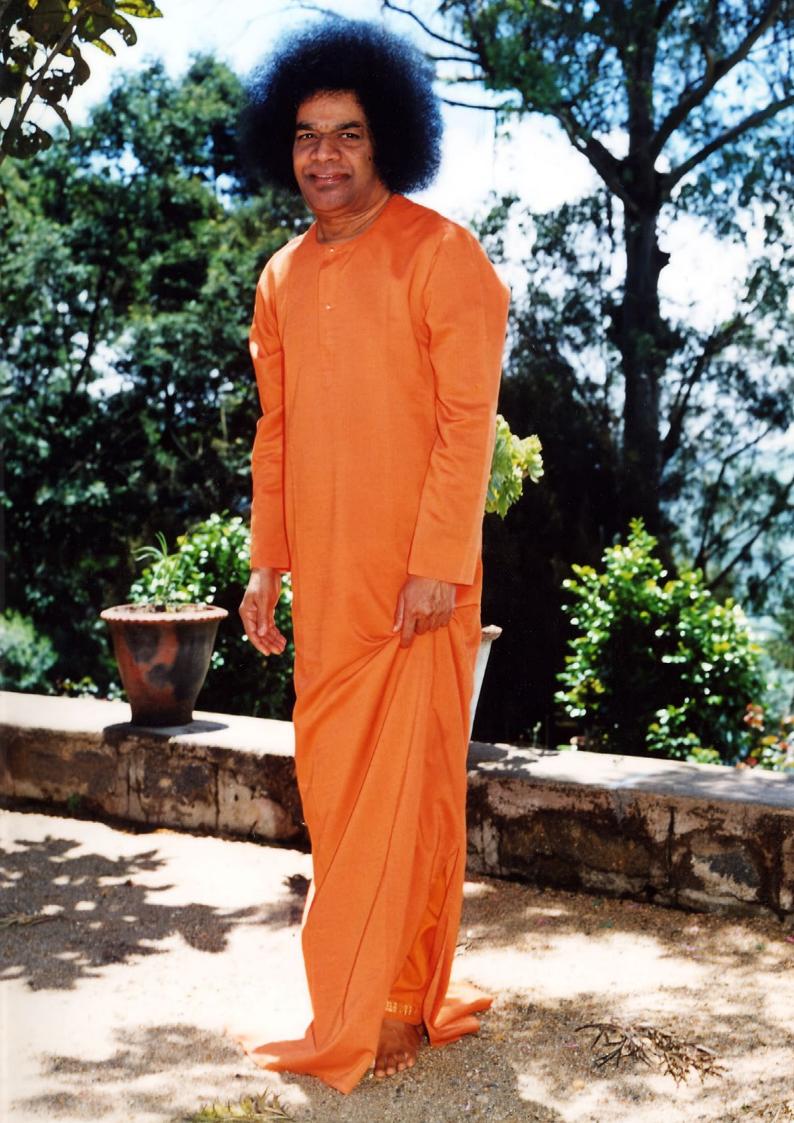
Ms. Creta Schiermann



Author and her son with Swami

Ms. Creta Schiermann is a nationally certified Family & Consumer Scientist. Retired with 40 years of teaching experience, she currently mentors middle and high school teachers for the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. She is a founding member of the Sri Sathya Sai Center of St. Louis, Missouri, in 1973. With her wealth of personal experiences with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, she initiated Sai Spiritual Education (Bal Vikas) programs in the USA in 1977.

She has served in the SSSIO-USA as the president of Region 4, regional SSE coordinator, and a teacher trainer. She is the coordinator for SSSIO-USA Region 4's adopted Community Envirocare project at the World Bird Sanctuary, Valley Park, Missouri, USA, which awarded the Marlin Perkins Award to the SSSIO-USA for outstanding Envirocare in 2020/2021.

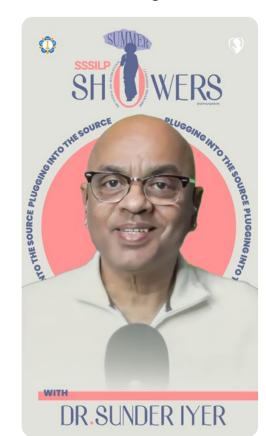




from the International Sai Young Adults

Summer Showers 2024

On February 26, the Sri Sathya Sai International Leadership (SSSILP) Subcommittee enthusiastically launched a limited series of the Summer Showers Program. This series comprises five engaging sessions tailored



to delve deeper into topics deemed critical based on feedback received from SSSILP alumni.

The series aims to foster personal and professional development, mental health awareness, and healthy relationships. Each session will follow a structured format. including sharing experiences and practical guidance on dealing with various life challenges. SSSILP Summer Showers 2024 aims to inspire YAs to better understand the purpose of spirituality in various aspects of their lives. By combining insightful speakers and engaging discussions, it is believed that this series generates concepts and solutions that will have a positive and lasting impact on the YA community. The program's goal is to make a meaningful difference in the lives of YAs.

The first session on self-love and personal growth took place on March 2, 2024, and

was presented by Mr. Sunder Iyer and the SSSILP Co-Lead, Mr. Raegan Moodley. We will share the exciting updates from the first session in the next issue of Sathya Sai-The Eternal Companion.

If you would like to know more about the upcoming sessions, please contact the SSSILP Committee at SSSILP@sathyasai.org.

AR UND THE WORLD

Projek Baca Baca

"Learning Poverty" is defined as the inability to read and understand age-appropriate text by the age of 10. Consequently, this results in failure to acquire the necessary skills

and knowledge to participate fully in society. To address Learning Poverty in the country, the Sai Young Adults of SSSIO Malaysia collaborated with students from Taylor's University School of Education to reach out to children in underserved communities struggling with education.

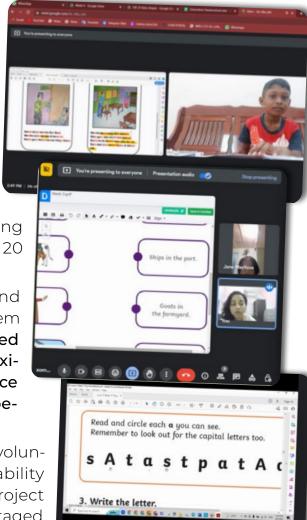
Known as "Projek Baca Baca" (Reading Project), this volunteer-based initiative offers personalized, one-on-one reading sessions in Malaysia's national language, Bahasa Melayu, and English.

This is offered to children aged six to nine, helping them attain grade-level reading proficiency in 20 weeks.

Coaches are trained to consistently motivate and encourage children who struggle with low self-esteem or shyness. The initiative has resulted in improved reading proficiency in both languages for approximately 150 children, leading to increased confidence and active participation in public speaking competitions.

Positive testimonials received from parents and volunteers about the children's progress in reading ability shows the project's impact on also the adults. Project Baca Baca has shed light on the plight of disadvantaged children, emphasizing the civic responsibility to help them overcome Learning Poverty.

The Young Adults' goal to empower local communities, promote reading, and teach children in schools and other public spaces is progressing well by the grace of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.





Ms. Radha Kanini Measuria



The Most Blissful Place

As one of the Young Adults (YAs) from the UK, I am excited to share my experience of the Sai Young Adults European Camp, which takes place annually at Sai Prema in Greece. I first attended the camp two years ago, and all I can say is it was the most blissful place I have been since Prasanthi Nilayam. Having attended this camp right after COVID-19, it was just what I needed.

Sai Prema is a unique place that inspires you to open yourself up, whether retreating to areas of Sai Prema to collect your thoughts and enjoy nature or engaging in discussions with like-minded people, which, for me, was the best part. After so long, I was interacting with other YAs, and for the first time, I enjoyed those interactions with YAs from all over Europe, which is something entirely new for me. On top of that, the atmosphere inside Sai Prema, the accommodation, the Mandir, the joy of visiting Athens and being shown around by the loving Greek YAs, and the delicious food cooked by the Italian devotees-all I can say is, I am super excited to welcome you all to the Sai Young Adults Leaders Retreat. You are going to have the best time whether you want to meet new people, engage in deep discussions, or retreat to find yourself and reconnect with Swami at a deeper level. It's all there for you at Sai Prema.



InSAlde Scoop Podcast Series

Series 2022, Episode 5:

"How Do I Stay Resilient In the Face of Challenges?"

featuring Mr. Vishal Teckwani

In this conversation, Mr. Vishal Teckwani from Indonesia shares a transformative experience. After witnessing the devastating impact of a natural disaster, he met a woman who had lost everything and yet displayed remarkable resilience. Her strength stemmed from surrendering to a higher power and embracing life positively despite her challenges. Vishal was deeply moved by her perspective, realizing that resilience is not about what is lost but how one chooses to move forward with what remains.

The dialogue underscores the power of surrendering to a higher purpose and adopting a positive mindset in the face of adversity. The woman's ability to find strength through faith and her commitment to living life fully despite her losses left a lasting impact on Vishal. This encoun-



ter shifted his perspective on challenges, emphasizing the importance of resilience and the belief that everything happens for a reason.

The episode concludes by reflecting on the resilience they observed in the people of Indonesia. Despite facing numerous challenges, the locals demonstrate an inspiring ability to bounce back with determination and a positive spirit. The conversation emphasizes the universal lessons one can draw from such experiences and the importance of embracing challenges with a mindset focused on growth and positivity

You can listen to the full episode here:

InSAIde Scoop Episode 5-YouTube



Sathya Sai School in Asuncion, Paraguay

Inauguration of Sai Kindergarten

On February 23, 2024, Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay, witnessed a momentous occasion as Swami's divine grace brought a long-cherished dream to fruition with the inauguration of the Sai Kindergarten, 'Espacio de Desarrollo Infantil Sathya Sai-EDISS' (Sathya Sai Child Development Space). The event, graced by 90 parents, guests, and authorities from the Ministry of Education, commenced at 11 am.

Ms. Florencia Bogado is a retired teacher who has been collaborating voluntarily for seven years at the Institute of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE). Having toiled for five years for the Sathya Sai School of Paraguay, she said, "Convinced of the success of Sai Schools around the world, and based on my experience, I wanted the boys and girls of my country also to have the opportunity to receive a quality education based on human values. That is why I made a personal and loving commitment to do everything possible to launch the first Sathya Sai School in Paraguay."

The ceremony opened with the national anthem of Paraguay, followed by a hearty welcome by Ms. Sanjana Chandiramani, Human Values Program Coordinator, and Ms. Bogado, Pedagogical Coordinator. Mr. Sergio Espindola, Chairman of SSSIO Zone 2B (Countries of South America), delivered an inspiring speech, setting the tone for the day. A cultural showcase commenced, including a traditional Paraguayan dance and enchanting melodies by a local singer. Then, 25 children, just four years of age, displayed enthusiasm and confidence as they greeted all guests with a song in the native Guarani Language.

"We opened registration in September 2023. By December, we already had 14 children registered for a completely free holiday camp, which was much appreciated by the community. By February 2024, we had 25 students enrolled, and we officially started classes with much love and optimism on February 14. Today, we have local

and international representatives in our midst!" said a joyful Ms. Florencia Bogado.

The Sapling is Planted

The Ministry of Education and Sciences of Paraguay was represented by the Director of Primary Education, Ms. Claudelina Villalba, who expressed gratitude to the Sathya Sai Foundation for its collaboration in establishing an excellent

model of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) in Paraguay. Dr. Otto is the supervisor responsible for the area where EDISS is located. She extended her support and guidance to provide free quality education.

The ceremony included a video presentation showcasing Sathya Sai Schools worldwide, along with testimonials from students, teachers, and parents. Ms. Ada Espindola, Public Outreach Coordinator (Zone 2B), shared heartwarming experiences from the SSEHV program in Brazil.

The ambiance was filled with joy and hope as Asuncion welcomed its first Sathya Sai School-bringing to 40 the number of SSSIO schools dedicated to SSEHV worldwide. The event concluded with blessings by priests from the 'Heraldos de los Evangelios' (Heralds of the Gospels) and a message from Cardinal Monsignor Adalberto Martinez.

Future Plans

The groundwork for the school started in 2019, with the development of educational projects and the preparation of documentation required by the Ministry of Education and Sciences. After two years of loving hard work and dozens of meetings, the required resolutions from the government for the opening and operation of the Child Development Space were issued at the end of 2021.

A few days before the inauguration, on February 19, Mr. Luis Ramirez, the Minister of



Mr. S<mark>e</mark>rgio Espindola



Education, visited the school with his 'Basic Elementary Education' team. They toured the entire school as SSSIO members shared detailed insights about various educational initiatives.

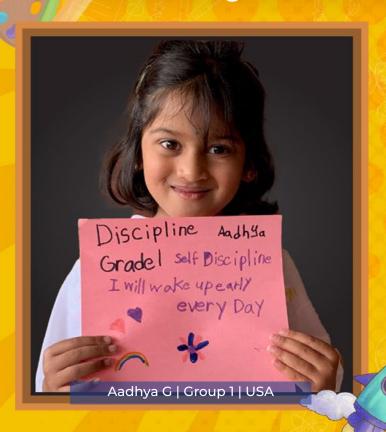
The Sathya Sai School of Paraguay plans to grow organically. It started with the kindergarten class and aspires to add a new class each year with Swami´s blessings.

As Ms. Florencia Bogado puts it, "From my personal experience, I am convinced that the SSEHV Program works. Since I began participating in the human values workshops offered by the ISSE it has changed my way of approaching life. From being a somewhat egocentric person, I now try to lead a more humble and simple life. Such profound experiences made me offer my services to the Master (Sri Sathya Sai Baba)."



My Life is NIU Nessage

Swami followed Discipline throughout His Life and is an epitome of Discipline. He always said, "My Life is My Message" and inspired the world. We Group I Students started to understand the importance of Discipline and infused it in our Daily life through Self-Discipline and Spiritual Discipline in different ways.



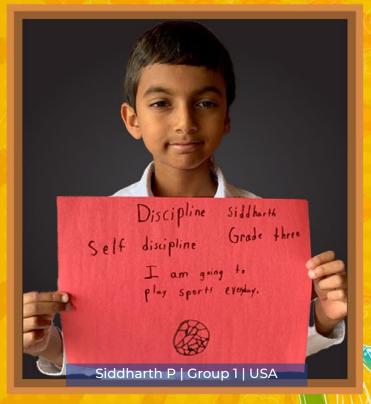


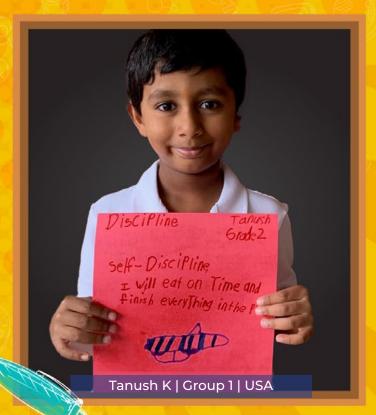
Sathya Sai Co Education





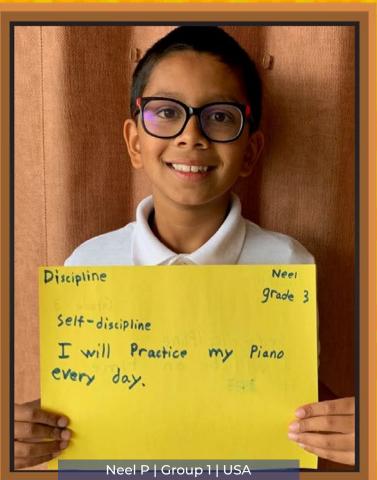














Upcoming SSSIO Online Events

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

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

Date of Online Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
April 13-14, 2024	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri
April 24, 2024	Wednesday	Aradhana Mahotsavam
June 15-16, 2024	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri





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.





















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 ☑



Be pleasant to everyone; let everyone be pleased with you. Do not hurt or harm, by thought, word and deed. Purify your heart; cleanse it of narrow selfishness. Bring any amount of flowers and worship with them. All will be rejected, none accepted. Offer the lotus of your heart that Sathya Sai accepts gladly and grants love and peace. Offer your virtues as flowers. Virtues that spread beauty and fragrance. Offer the lotus of your heart free from pests like lust, anger, and hate.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba April 21, 1983



sathyasai.org

Love All • Serve All

Help Ever • Hurt Never