

SATHYA SAI THE ETERNAL COMPANION



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101st Birthday Special



DIVINE
GLORY &
MISSION OF
SRI SATHYA SAI



Love, love, love. I love all and I ask all to love. My greatest wealth is love. People speak about My powers and My miracles, but My love is My greatest miracle. All should share in this love. Only then there will be oneness. All of you should take a vow continually to develop the Seva Organizations. Let all join in the activities. Treat all as the children of one God. Whomsoever you may serve, consider you are serving God. Then you will experience the Divine. You are bound to have that experience soon. Never give up the organization. Regard it as the breath of your life. This is real penance. Having this firm resolve, become exemplary leaders. This is My sole desire. Swami's love will accompany you everywhere.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
November 24, 1990



DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO
BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 101ST YEAR
OF THE ADVENT OF THE AVATAR





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YAJNA

MAKING ONE'S WHOLE LIFE AN OFFERING

Part 2 of 2

In the first part of this editorial, in the October 2026 issue, we explored the meaning and significance of *yajna*—from its Vedic origins and its expression in the Bhagavad Gita to the *pancha mahayajnas* and the great *yajnas* described in our scriptures. We saw that *yajna* is not merely a ritual performed with the help of fire, priests, and offerings, but a way of transforming every action into an offering to God. In this second part, we will explore the deeper dimensions of *yajna*: the various forms of inner *yajna*, the supremacy of *jnana yajna*, Bhagawan's profound teaching on the inner altar, and how sacrifice, purity, selfless service, and surrender can transform the individual. We will also reflect on the lessons from the Upanishads and Puranas that reveal the true spirit of *yajna* as an offering of not merely external substances, but sacrificing one's whole life to God.

Ati Rudra Mahayajna* and Other *Yajnas

During the last few years of the *Avataric* sojourn, our dear Swami presided over two *Ati Rudra Mahayajnas*—one in Prasanthi Nilayam and the other in Chennai. In the *Ati Rudra Mahayajna*, *Namakam* is chanted 14,641 times, and *Chamakam* is chanted 1,331 times. They are based on the repeated recitation of *Sri Rudram*, during which participants perform *abhishekam* (ritual bathing of the *shivalinga*) and make offer-

ings into the sacred fire during the *homa*. (*Sri Rudram* has been discussed in detail in a two-part editorial published in the February 2025 and March 2025 issues of *Sathya Sai—The Eternal Companion*.)

Bhagawan oversaw and blessed the first ***Ati Rudra Mahayajna*** at Prasanthi Nilayam in August 2006. The *yajna* was performed in Sai Kulwant Hall and featured 11 *homa kundas* with 121 *rithwiks* (priests) and an altar with 160 *kalashas* (vessels) filled with water from India's sacred rivers.

On the opening day, August 9, 2006, Swami said that this *yajna* was being conducted for the welfare of the world and explained that its goal was to protect and foster the divine nature in human beings while eliminating or reducing the demonic qualities. In the same discourse, He makes a point that bears repeating. Swami says that the Vedas are God's gift for the welfare of all humanity, and anyone may chant the *mantras* without any regard to religion, caste, or nationality.

Yet in BG 4.25-4.30, Lord Krishna describes the offering not as a material substance, but as offering ourselves into the fire of the Supreme Truth. This is the inner *yajna*. Even in *Lalita Sahasranama* (a sacred Hindu text that adores the Divine Mother with 1,000 names), it is said that the Divine Mother is more pleased with the inner *yajna* than with the performance of outer *yajna*.

11 homa kundas with 121 rithwiks during the Ati Rudra Mahayajna at Prasanthi Nilayam in August 2006.



(*antarmukha samaradhyā, bahirmukha sudurlabha*).

Lord Krishna enumerates a whole spectrum of sacrifices in these verses. In *Samyama Yajna*, control of the mind is considered a *yajna*; *Indriya Yajna* is the control of the senses; *Dravya Yajna* is offering material wealth for service; *Tapo Yajna* is doing austerities; *Yoga Yajna* is about leading a disciplined life; *Swadhyaya Yajna* is the study of scriptures; *Pranayama Yajna* is breath control; and *Niyatahara Yajna* is the intake of *sattvic* food in moderate quantities. These *yajnas* can be done by anyone, without the need for an altar, a priest, or resources. However, Lord Krishna delivers the final verdict in BG 4.33:

*shreyaṁ dravyamayā yajnaṁ
jñāna yajnaḥ paratapa
sarvaṁ karmakṣilam partha
jñāne pariśamapyate*

It means, “O subduer of enemies, sacrifice performed for spiritual knowledge (*jñāna yajna*) is superior to the sacrifice of any

material substance. After all, O Partha, all work-related sacrifices culminate in spiritual wisdom.”

He ranks *jñāna yajna*, the *yajna* of acquiring spiritual wisdom, above everything else. But one should remember that *jñāna* is not knowledge gathered from books or from listening to scholars; rather, it is the knowledge of the Self (enlightenment).

***Jñāna Yajna* and Other *Yajnas* Prescribed by Swami**

Swami says, *advaita darshanam jñānam*—seeing oneness is true knowledge. Swami also says that a dual mind is half-blind. **So, when we attain oneness and see unity in diversity, we attain *jñāna*.**

To achieve such oneness, the proper conduct of the physical *yajna* is also important. In addition, we should remember that what matters is not just what we do in the *yajna*, but how we do it and the state of our mind.

If it is done without following the prescribed procedure, without proper chanting of the *mantra*, and without faith, then it becomes *tamasic*. When one does it for pomp and show, with expectation of results, it becomes *rajasic*. So, the proper way to do a *yajna* as prescribed by the scriptures is with faith, offering all the results to the *yajna puruṣha*, the Divine. Then the *yajna* becomes *sattvic*.

In the Srimad Bhagavatam (the divine story of Lord Krishna and other incarnations of Vishnu), it is stated, “*yajñaih sankīrtana-prayair yajanti hi su-medhasah*.” **This means that in this current age of Kali Yuga, intelligent people will worship the incarnation of the Supreme Lord by performing the sacrifice (*yajna*) of congregational chanting (*sankīrtana*).** The emphasis is on congregational singing of the Divine Name, which Swami promotes.

That in itself is considered a great *yajna*. This is what we do in the SSSIO, includ-

You must offer all the evil qualities at the altar of the mind. That is the ideal internal yajna to be performed by every person.



ing *bhajans*, particularly the worldwide *Akhanda Bhajan* and *Akhanda Gayatri*. We should participate in these practices and continue to promote them.

Among the *jnana yajnas*, in the SSSIO we conduct study circles, Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) classes, and hold *satsangs* (company of spiritual aspirants). Then there is also *bhuta yajna*, in which food is distributed, and animals are served. We provide health services through medical camps, clinics, and cataract surgeries, and we offer humanitarian services to those affected by natural calamities around the world.

We also serve nature by cleaning the environment, planting trees, using alternative energy, and avoiding waste, all in the spirit of *yajna*. Finally, one can also consider the Ceiling on Desires program as a *yajna*, in which one voluntarily conserves food, money, time, and energy, avoiding waste and using the savings for service.

Inner Yajna and Inner Altar

On October 2, 1981, while inaugurating the *Vedapurusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna*, Bhagawan describes all aspects of the *yajna*, explaining the procedures being performed by the priests in front of Him, and naming their corresponding inner aspects, item by item. He says,

“The heart is the ceremonial altar; the body is the fireplace; the hair is the holy grass, darbha; wishes are the fuel sticks with which the fire is fed; desire is the ghee that is poured into the fire to make it burst into flame; anger is the sacrificial animal; the fire is the tapas we accomplish.

People sometimes interpret tapas as ascetic practices like standing on one leg or on the head. No. Tapas is not physical contortion. It is the complete and correct coordination of thought, word, and deed. When this is achieved, the splendor of fire will manifest.

Talking of thought, word, and deed in the context of the Vedapurusha Yajna, I have to tell you that the Rig Veda is vak (speech) taken form. Sama Veda contains hymns that are sung. It is ‘srothra’ (hearing) that has taken form. Whenever the speech is saturated with truth and compassion, or inspired by service to others, it becomes Rig Veda. Good deeds are Yajur Veda.

There is no compulsion that you should have an external altar as here. Only, you should be vigilant about the purity of the words you utter or listen to and the deeds you engage in.”

In the divine discourse on November 23, 1988, Swami says that people go to *gurus* for *mantras*, holy men for *yantras*, and pundits for *tantras*. All of it is wasted effort. He advises, “*One should accept the body as yantra, one’s own breath as mantra, and one’s heart as tantra.*” There is no need to seek any of them outside oneself.

On October 19, 1993, during the Dasara festival, Bhagawan said, “*You must offer all the evil qualities at the altar of the mind. That is the ideal internal yajna to be performed by every person as distinct from the external yajna done ritualistically.*”

On October 6, 1989, Swami clearly distinguishes between the two kinds of *yajnas*: external and internal. For the external *yajna*, one needs a place, priests, and material offerings. The external form is an image of the internal one, and as Swami advises, one should inquire into the nature of the inner *yajna*. This means recognizing one’s inherent divinity and offering up one’s bad qualities as the oblation at the sacred altar of the mind.

“Yajna does not mean merely performing a ritual sacrifice with priests and offering oblations in the fire. It is what every person must do at every moment of life.”

Swami also reveals a profound truth in the divine discourse of October 2, 1981: **“*When all words emanating from you are sweet, your breath becomes Rig Veda. When you restrict what you listen to and prefer only sweet speech, all that you hear becomes Sama Gana. When you do only sweet deeds, all that you do is Yajur Homa. Then, you will be performing every day the Vedapurusha Yajna, the Yajna which propitiates the Vedic Spirit.*”**

A Lifelong Yajna

Lord Krishna proclaims (BG 9.26) that God is satisfied with a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water when offered with love and a pure heart. But Swami provides a beautiful explanation of

these four offerings. He says the leaf one should offer is the leaf of the body, which is sanctified in the service of others. And the flower one should offer is the heart, which is pure, not infested with the evil qualities of desire, anger, greed, pride, attachment, and jealousy. ‘*Phalam*’ is not the ordinary fruit but ‘*manophalam*’ (the fruit of your mind). And the water one should offer is the tears of joy one gets when remembering God and singing His glory or remembering His Divine sport. God is very pleased with these offerings and expects nothing more.

A *puja* (worship) comes to a conclusion; it has a beginning and an end. A pilgrimage comes to a completion; it has a beginning and an end. But the *yajna* dedicated to God’s glory continues and ends only when life ends.

Importance of Sacrifice (Yajna)

Swami often quotes verse 3 of the *Kaivalya Upanishad*, saying, “*na karmana na prajaya dhanena thyagenaike amrutatwam anashuhu.*” This means, “Not by actions, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but by renunciation alone can one attain immortality.” We must give up evil tendencies, harmful thoughts, selfish feelings, sensory pleasures, ostentation, and pomp. Swami says that what one offers in the holy fire of *yajna* is transformed into *amrita*, divine ambrosia, and conveyed to the gods. Correspondingly, when a person sacrifices negative qualities, he himself is transformed into the Divine. This is the divine alchemy.

As described in BG 18.5, the result of the *yajna* should be *chitta shuddhi*, the cleansing of the heart. It is said in *Vivekachudamani*, “*chittasya shuddhaye karma*” (action is for the purification of the mind). Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). **Once we get rid of all impurities, we will be able to see God face to face. That is why Swami says, “Purity is enlightenment,” which means that when**



we are completely pure, we become enlightened.

In this connection, it is important to remember that after the *yajna* is completed, there is *yajna-shishta*, which refers to the remnants of food or blessings left over after performing selfless sacrifice (*yajna*), as described in BG 3.13. **Those who eat this food get rid of all their sins, bad karma, and faults. This underlies the concept of *prasa-dam*,** meaning first we offer it to God, and then we live on what we receive.

The famous *Ishavasya Upanishad* says the same thing in three words: “*tena tyaktena bhunjita*,” namely “Enjoy through renunciation.”

Great Masters on *Yajna*

Sri Adi Shankaracharya, commenting on Chapter 4 of the Gita, places *jnana yajna* as the ultimate of all *yajnas*, as Lord Krishna does.

Swami Vivekananda gave a simple formula. Work done for others without thought of return is *yajna* or worship. **He insisted that only those who live for others truly live. This is *yajna* for modern days.**

Shirdi Sai Baba gives a practical example of *yajna*. He always kept the *dhuni* (fire) burning at Dwarakamayi, and He used to take sacred ash (*udi*) from the *dhuni* and distribute it to devotees. He taught that everything is finally reduced to ash and that the sacred ash is the cure for all worldly evils, and it bestows upon us all the good in this world and hereafter.

This ash is permanent as it undergoes no further change. It is also Baba's demonstration by example, showing that everything we offer into the fire of *Brahman* or the fire of God becomes *vibhuti*, the sacred ash that bestows the greatest blessing from God.

Lessons from the Upanishads about *Yajna*

The *Katha Upanishad* recounts the *yajna* performed by Sage Vajashravas. He gives away all his possessions in charity, but his son Nachiketa notices that the cows being donated are old and no longer useful. The boy's conscience is troubled by an offering that gives the appearance of generosity while withholding what is valuable.

Nachiketa's question, "To whom will you give me?" exposes the attitude of the father, who is merely going through the motions of the sacred ritual without being truthful to the spirit of sacrifice. **The first lesson, therefore, is sincerity. The real *yajna* should be a sincere offering to God, not an outward religious show.**

As Nachiketa makes himself the true offering, he gives up fear and rejects celestial pleasures, wealth, and long life. **Instead, he seeks and prays for the knowledge of the Self, which is the wisdom that conquers death forever, so that one becomes immortal.**

Similarly, in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, at King Janaka's great *yajna*, the sage Yajnavalkya interprets the priests' func-

tions in terms of cosmic and inward powers: speech as fire, breath as air, and mind as the moon, thus redirecting attention from external rites toward the Self that illumines.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* warns that sacrificial acts performed merely for heavenly rewards are not beneficial because finite action can produce only finite results. The Eternal cannot be obtained through these ceremonial rituals.

Baba explains that when we work, we should remember that strength, intelligence, talent, and energy are all divine gifts. When we work in this spirit, we relinquish the doership and the ownership of the fruits of action. If success comes, we offer praise to the Lord. If failure comes, we also offer our disappointments to the Lord. Thus, we learn to live in equanimity, treating both outcomes as the Lord's *prasadam*.

Baba's universal lessons, "Love All, Serve All" and "Help Ever, Hurt Never," are at the heart of a *yajna*.

Lessons from the Puranas about *Yajna*

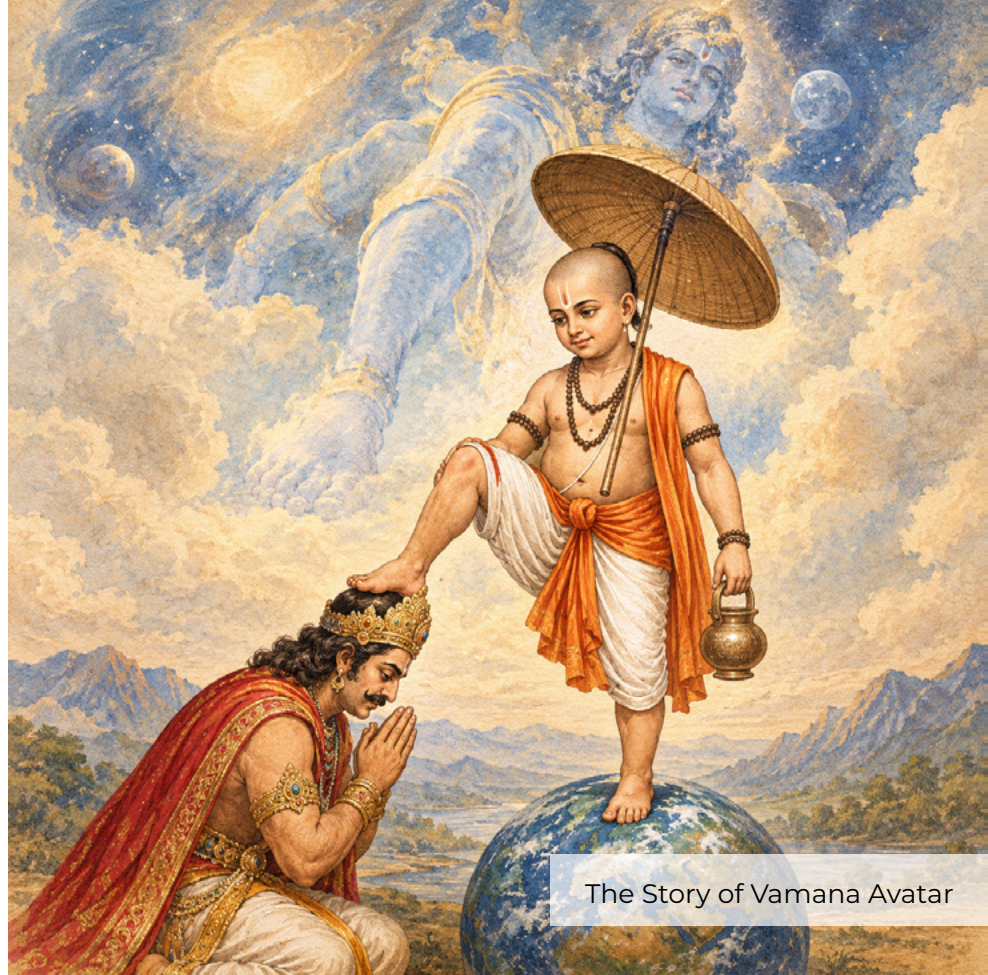
The *yajna* done by Daksha Prajapati, son of Brahma and father of Mother Sati, teaches important lessons regarding *yajna*. Mother Sati was the previous incarnation of Mother Parvati and consort of Lord Shiva. Daksha Prajapati was learned and knowledgeable and performed an elaborate ritual, but he was also domineering, proud, arrogant, and disrespectful to others. His main problem was his hostility toward Lord Shiva and his refusal to give Him a fair share of the offerings in the *yajna*. That turned the *Daksha Yajna* into a battlefield, where he was humiliated and beheaded by Virabhadra, who was created and sent by Lord Shiva.



This lesson shows that *yajna*, when performed with ostentation, show, and pride, becomes an anti-sacrifice. In contrast, the Kurukshetra War between the Pandavas and the Kauravas became a *yajna* because it was done selflessly for upholding *dharma*, guided by Lord Krishna Himself.

Thus, *yajna* turned into a war because of arrogance and disrespect toward Lord Shiva, and a war became a *yajna* because of implicit obedience and loyalty to Lord Krishna.

In the Srimad Bhagavatam, another beautiful example is that of Emperor Bali, who promised to give land covered by three steps to Lord Vishnu when He came in the form of Vamana. When the Divine form covered the earth with one foot and the heaven with another, Bali offered his own head for the third step, fulfilling his promise. Though he lost all his possessions and kingdom, he still held fast to truth. **His final offering was himself. At that moment, his loss became a victory. He is now remembered forever, as we celebrate his noble**



The Story of Vamana Avatar

sacrifice annually as the Onam festival. So, this became a great *yajna*.

Another great example in the Srimad Bhagavatam (Canto 9, Chapter 21) is the story of King Rantideva, an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu. He was renowned for his boundless generosity and unwavering devotion to God. Though born into royalty, he had no desire to accumulate wealth or

enjoy luxury. Whatever came to him, he shared with those in need, seeing the same Divine Presence in every living being.

Once, Rantideva and his family endured 48 days without food or water. Weak with hunger and thirst, they finally received a little food and drinking water. Just as the king was about to eat, a hungry *brahmin* arrived. Rantideva welcomed him reverently



The Story of King Rantideva

and offered him a portion of the meal. Before he could eat what remained, a *shudra* appeared asking for food. Without hesitation or discrimination, Rantideva shared his portion with him. Then came a man accompanied by hungry dogs. The king lovingly gave them all the food that was left. Only a little water remained. Rantideva was so exhausted by thirst that his life was in danger. As he prepared to drink, a *chandala*—a man considered an outcaste—approached and pleaded for water. Looking upon the suffering man, Rantideva forgot his own misery. His heart overflowed with compassion. He offered his last water and uttered **one of the most sublime prayers in the Bhagavatam: “I do not desire from the Supreme Lord the highest powers, nor even liberation from rebirth. I wish to dwell among all living beings and take upon myself their suffering, so that they may be freed from sorrow.”**

For Rantideva, relieving another’s suffering was more precious than preserving his own life. By offering water to the thirsty man, he felt that his own hunger, thirst, exhaustion, and distress had been overcome.

At that moment, the visitors revealed themselves as divine beings, including Brahma and Shiva, who had come to test his devotion. Rantideva sought no blessing, wealth, spiritual powers, or reward. He bowed respectfully and fixed his heart entirely upon Lord Vasudeva. Freed from selfish desire, he transcended the illusion of separateness. The greatness of Rantideva was not merely that he gave everything away, but that he saw God in everyone. His prayer teaches that the highest devotion is love without self-interest, compassion without discrimination, and service without expectation of reward. His life is a timeless expression of the sacred ideal: Love All, Serve All.

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, in His infinite love and compassion, incarnated as Poorna Avatar, the embodiment of pure and unconditional love. His life was an example of sacrifice and the greatest *yajna* for the welfare and redemption of all. We can express our love and gratitude to Him on the occasion of His advent on November 23, 1926, by making our entire life a *yajna* of loving sacrifice.

Jai Sai Ram.



Let the Conscience Rule

*More effulgent than the Sun,
surpassing even the whiteness of snow.
It is subtler than the ether (vast sky),
yet it is immanent in and pervades all living beings.
There's nothing in the cosmos that is not Brahman,
it dwells in all living beings.
That Brahman is you, and Brahman is in you,
you and the Brahman are not different.
What more Vedanta can I tell you,
O noble assembly of virtuous and righteous souls?
The light is in me; I am in the light,
I am the light, and I dwell in that light.
One who firmly holds this wisdom in the mind,
he is Brahman; and Brahman alone is he.*

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of the Divine Atma! Only a human being can understand God in human form; no one else can. So, we should respect and love the human form. It is said, "God is in human form!" (*daivam manusha rupena*). God comes in human form, dwells in the world, loves the people, and incarnates to bless them with His grace and shower His grace upon them.

The whole of nature is like a blazing ball (energy) with fire present both inside and outside. Likewise, the divine principle is present everywhere, within and without (*antarbahischa tatsarvam vyapya*

narayana sthitah). The divine principle, the principle of Atma, the principle of Brahman, is all-pervading. This divine power is present in everything in this world (*ishavasyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyam jagat*). Only a human being has the capacity to recognize this divine power. But in trying to recognize it, one may form a distorted notion and delude oneself into thinking it is the truth. **Divinity cannot be explained, only experienced.**

In today's world, one can give wonderful scientific lectures about the world, society, community, and various other matters.



Divinity Cannot Be Explained, **ONLY EXPERIENCED.**

Logical knowledge can also be gained through such lectures. Also, the divinity in human form can be criticized in many ways. But these are just imaginations, and they contain no real truth. Eloquent scholars may make big claims like this, but no human has ever seen or will see true divinity. The true nature of the Lord can only be recognized by man, only in the human form, but this divinity cannot be proved or recognized by any other means. Whatever one has perceived is only one's own illusions and imaginations!

An elephant may wish to worship God. Based on its own nature, it can envision God as a large elephant. But it cannot envision God in another form. Even a mouse, wanting to worship God and celebrating its own nature, can envision God as a huge mouse far larger than itself. Simi-

larly, a human being, based on one's own nature and reality, can only envision God in human form and not in any other form. As long as the illusion "I am a human being" persists, it is not possible to recognize divinity in any other form. But eloquent speakers may describe God in many ways. Some scholars describe God as "incomprehensible, beyond speech and mind, transcendent, without attributes (*aprameya*, *avangmanasa-gochara*, *ateeta*, *nirguna*)."

In all this, only the weight of the words may appear impressive, but what lies within them is mere froth, not substance, and nothing more. The reason is this: these words can be given meanings, which can be further split into countless interpretations. But in one's own actual experience, they remain meaningless, without real substance, and never become true reality.



There is only one
God who is present
in everyone! All are
manifestations
of the Divine!

God is the Divine Essence in All Forms

Whenever you get an opportunity, ask any scholar: “Sir, what is the meaning of *aprameya* (incomprehensible)?” He will answer that it means one who cannot be grasped by any means of proof. He will describe God as “*avangmanasa-gocharudu*,” meaning “one who is beyond mind and speech.” That’s all he can explain; he cannot go beyond this to establish or prove God’s true nature. In My opinion, an ordinary person is better than a scholar at explaining and elaborating the meanings of such words. Why? Because even an ordinary person could say the same things. But instead, he stays silent. **Through that silence, society maintains peace. But because of the meanings this scholar puts forth, unrest arises in society, and its peace is disturbed.** So, rather than stirring things up in this way, it would be far better to simply remain silent about such matters without offering explanations, for that is what truly preserves peace and order in society.

From those days to today, people have described this divine principle only in words and assigned various meanings to it. No one has yet revealed its true nature. **God is the divinity present in all beings,**

the divine essence in all forms. All forms are His! How, then, can anyone describe such divinity? What can anyone establish or determine with certainty? People can say, “This is *Brahman*,” but who can say “This is not”? Nowhere does one find a human being who can point to something in this world and say, “This is not God.” People may say such things, but these are merely the weaknesses of human nature.

Deep Relationship Between Man and God

Just as fragrance exists within a flower, divinity manifests as fragrance within human beings. Like fire hidden in wood, or oil hidden in sesame seeds, divinity pervades every aspect of a human being. But unable to recognize this inner truth, people mistake mere outward forms for reality, cling to them, and believe them to be the truth. Since ancient times, following such ideas and teachings has only deepened man’s ignorance. People pour milk into anthills (as an offering to the snake in them), yet when they see an actual snake, they kill it. They beat and mistreat the very bullock that serves them by plowing the fields, yet they worship a strange stone bull (Nandi) with devotion. This is the kind of philosophy that has been handed down to us since ancient times.

Causing harm to living beings and adoring inanimate objects has been a weakness among the *Bharathiyas* (Indians). People who do not offer even a morsel of food to a starving person offer all kinds of delicacies as *naivedyam* (sacred offerings) to the idol image. One will offer thousands of rupees in the *hundi* (donation collection box) of Lord Venkateswara, but will refuse to give a small alms to a beggar. All this is regarded as part of our ancient tradition. **But how sanctified will one be if one offers food to a starving man? It is essential to realize the basic truth that God is present in the form of a human being. Is one doing one's duty if one inflicts pain on a *jiva* (a living being) and offers worship to *deva* (the divine)?**

Just as air is contained in space, all of nature (*prakriti*) is within the Self (*Atma*). Space is the material cause of air. "Material cause" means that from which something is created. Space is the support (substratum); air is that which is supported. Air depends on space; space is what air rests upon. These two share an inseparable, mutually interdependent relationship. That is the same kind of relationship that exists between God and a human being. **Therefore, only when one recognizes and lives by this inseparable relationship between the Self (*Atma*) within oneself (embodied being), and that oneself (embodied being) within the Self (*Atma*) can one truly understand divinity.**

Avatars and Poornavatara

In this world, God has manifested as a human incarnation in five different forms, each based on divine attributes known as "*kalas*." The first is "*Nityavatara*," the second is "*Visheshavatara*," the third is "*Avisheshavatara*," the fourth is "*Leelavatara*" (also known as "*Amshavatara*"), and the fifth is "*Poornavatara*."

Nityavatara, *Visheshavatara*, and *Avisheshavatara* possess between five and

nine *kalas* (divine attributes), whereas only *Poornavatara* encompasses all 16 *kalas*. The ancients believed in this *Poornavatara* and regarded it as the complete manifestation of divinity.

In this context, every human being can be considered an *avatar*. This descent (*avatarana*) of the divine is what gives rise to the term "*avatar*." However, God does not assume a distinct and special form to manifest in this world through transformation. An elephant, a mouse, or a human being can all access the ocean of God and return filled with God's grace. Here, the elephant, the mouse, and humans are simply like different vessels. Each vessel can collect and carry back the water of divinity. While the forms of these vessels may differ, their essence is the same—the divine principle of God.

*sarvatah paanipadam
tatsarvato'kshishiromukham.
sarvatah sruthimalloke
sarvamaavrutya tishthati.*

(BG 13.13)

*With hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouths,
and ears pervading everything,
divinity permeates the entire universe.*

There is only one God who is present in everyone! All are manifestations of the Divine! We don't have to go to any special place to seek God. Respect every human being. Love every human being.

Love is not something that can be cultivated like a crop or sold in a shop. It transcends social status; **whether a king or an ordinary person, true love emerges only when we let go of our ego and embrace sacrifice.** As long as I identify as "I," you remain "you," and in that distinction, there is no room for both you and me. There exists only one truth: the heart.

Our heart is not a seat where two individuals—"you" and "I"—sit separately, nor is it a double sofa or a musical chair. There is room for only one. Truth is one; the wise

call it by various names (*ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti*).

This essence represents the heart itself—a singular entity, not two. Thus, only when we relinquish the difference between “you” and “I,” embrace oneness, love divinity, and experience the divine, do we truly manifest our nature as the divine (*avatara purusha*).

Sanctify This Rare Human Birth

Embodiments of Divine Love! Do not be under the delusion that it is impossible for a human being to be subject to illusion or ignorance. Among all living beings, human birth is rare (*janthunam narajanma durlabham*).

Having attained such a rare human birth, wasting it without trying to realize its essence and deluding ourselves into thinking that God exists in the external world is profound ignorance. So, instead of wasting time, sanctify it and try to recognize divinity by performing righteous actions with the body.

We must make an effort to revere this precious humanity. Truly, if we want to worship God, we should worship Him in human form. Whatever forms we imagine, they are all artificial! They are products of imagination! They come with illusions! Until this illusion (*bhrama*) disappears, we cannot realize *Brahman*. So, we must distance ourselves from these illusions.

Many people have described God in various ways. Even in the *Vedas*, scriptures, epics, and *Puranas*, God has been portrayed with good attributes. The *Upanishads* and *Brahma Sutras* also describe divinity in myriad ways. But the expounder is satisfied with these descriptions alone and does not seek to realize the form described or experience the divine. What is the true form of the divine? Do you wish to behold this form?

If you wish to witness the divine, the form you imagine will be only a caricature.

Consider your own form as a manifestation of the divine. **Esteem yourself as divine. Show respect to others, love yourself, and extend that love to others. This is the essence of true worship (*aradhana*).** Because this broad-minded perspective on the divine has not been widely propagated throughout history, humanity has fallen victim to many forms of ignorance.

The Avatar is Not Just the Body

There is no such thing as God “descending” to earth or leaving it. The body lasts only for a short time, like a water bubble.

*Born in water, growing in water, and
merging back into water—such is
the water bubble;*

*Man is the bubble, and Narayana
(God) is the water;*

*This is the word of truth; this is Sai’s
proclamation.*

(Telugu Poem)

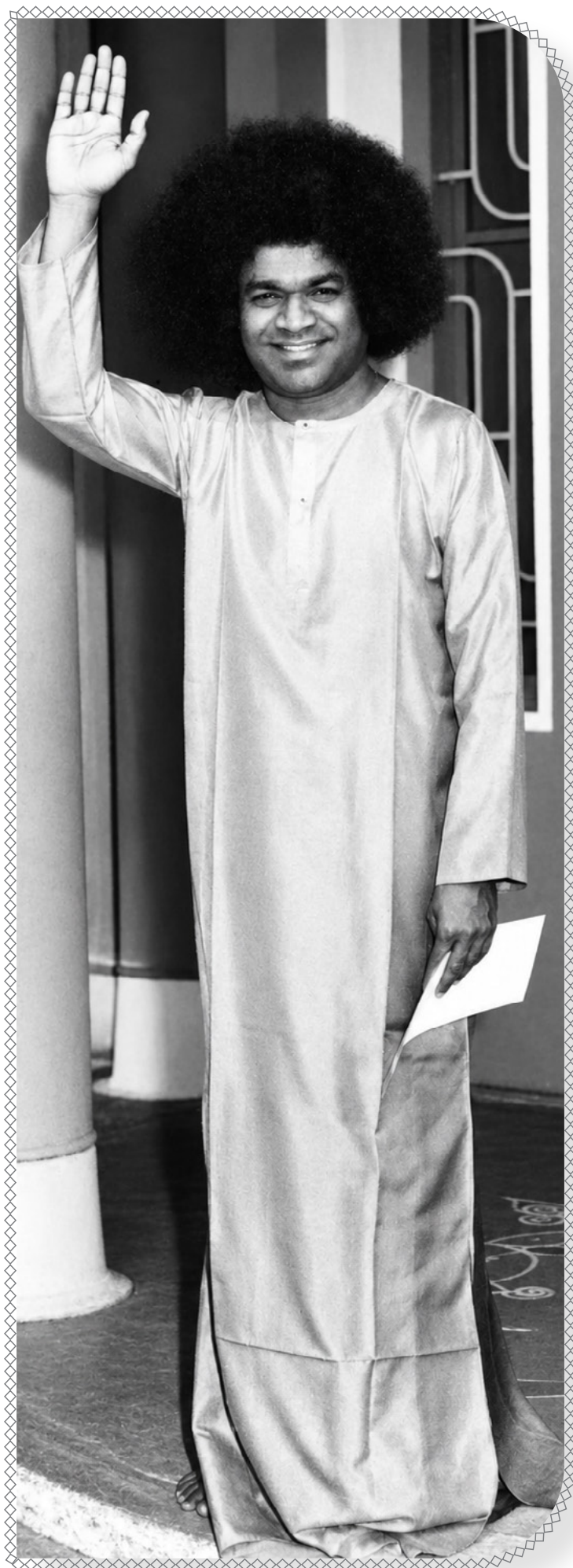
The water bubble is born in water, grows in it, and merges into it. Human beings also go through this. Man is born from *Brahman*, lives in *Brahman*, and ultimately merges back into *Brahman*. *Brahman* represents freedom from *bhrama* (delusion). **It is due to delusion that *Brahman* is not experienced. Man is often overcome by the illusions of *ahamkara* (ego) and *mamakara* (attachment).**

Therefore, everyone who seeks to recognize, believe in, and worship the divine should worship only the human form [Love and serve God by loving and serving man]. How can you worship the divine who embodies the entire cosmos? What can you offer to the One who is everything?

*Is it possible to build a temple for Him
who pervades the entire cosmos?*

*Who can hold a lamp before Him
whose radiance outshines a
million suns?*

*Who has the power to describe,
in any form, the One unattainable*



even by Brahma, Hara, and other gods?

Is it possible to give a fitting name to Him who moves within all living beings?

Can food and delicacies be offered to Him who holds the whole cosmos within His belly?

The world declares Him as Sai Baba.

The world declares Him as Sri Rama.

The world declares Him as Sri Krishna.

The world declares Him as Jesus.

The world declares Him as Allah.

The world declares Him as Zoroaster.

The world declares Him as Buddha.

Beyond this, there is nothing else to know.

That which pervades everywhere is One alone; that is the Atma.

(Telugu Poem)

Therefore, adoring the divine in all forms, revering the divine with awareness of its omniscience, and serving the divine with a spirit of equanimity (or total surrender) constitute true worship (*aradhana*).

Worship God by Adhering to *Sathya* and *Dharma*

Embodiments of Love! The primary form of God is love. His form is truth. Truth is subtler than a subatomic particle, which is why it has been said, "Truth is more fundamental than the atom." Scientists consider the atom to be extremely small, but truth is the subtlest of all things. Truth permeates everything around us, and we must recognize and honor this essence.

There is no meaning in worshipping God as *sathyaswaroopa* (the embodiment of truth) and not adhering to truth in daily life. Therefore, it is essential that we practice and uphold the truth. *Dharma*, or right conduct, emerges directly from this very truth, rooted deep within the heart itself.

Dharma is what brings satisfaction and fulfillment to oneself. This *dharma* is fundamentally consciousness, Self-consciousness. Consciousness is the highest divine quality that we must embrace. No one should act against their own conscience, and doing so is not good. **Acting according to one's conscience is a virtue. True worship consists therefore in doing what is right as dictated by your conscience.** It is important to maintain unity among our thoughts, words, and deeds. Even though we may undergo many sufferings in life as part of earning a livelihood, remember that everything is God and that God is one! Your beliefs and principles are personal to you, but they are separate from the universal truth. True unity, which exists within everyone, is divine. See the One Divine that is present in all beings.

All is Love; All is God

Every human being is filled with love and truth. There is no one in this world without love. This love can be expressed in many ways, yet it is one and the same. That is why love is divine; it is present in everyone. You should not follow a path that goes against love. Even though we worship divinity in various forms, it is essential to recognize that the divine principle is only one *Atma*. There can be many flowers, but we must remember the truth that worship is only one. Similarly, there may be many forms, but we must recognize that the divine principle of *Atma* within them is One. **Let go of the delusion that God exists somewhere in some place. Have faith that "I am God."** **When you have faith that you are divine, you are unlikely to go astray.** Believe that God exists in every human being. This is what the Upanishadic declaration, "*ishavasyam idam sarvam*," means.

The *Vedas* and *Upanishads* teach in many ways that all this is *Vasudeva* (God), and that One *Atma* is the indweller of all beings (*eko vashi sarvabhutantaratma*). Yet, we

fail to understand these teachings properly and ruin our lives through mere scholarship. Being learned doesn't imply reading many books, giving great lectures, or simply memorizing the *Vedas*, scriptures, epics, and *Puranas*. **A true scholar (wise person) is one who sees everything equally (*panditah sama-darshinah*).** A scholar who is equal-minded never follows divisive paths. Scholars may wear bracelets, valuable shawls, or earrings, but these are merely external displays; there is no joy within. That is why, irrespective of whether we write books or read them, we must first believe that divinity is only One and worship accordingly.

Practice Over Precept

Rather than preaching 100 things to people, it is far more important for us to practice just one thing and demonstrate it. That is why practice (*achara*) is more important than mere preaching (*prachara*). It is precisely because of such preaching without practice that atheism has been developing. We act in ways contrary to the principles in the very books we write and the very teachings we preach. This in itself is a kind of betrayal of oneself. We must distance ourselves from such things. We should regard all as children of the one God. We must believe that we all are divine sparks (*amsha*) of God. **We must nurture and develop the divine spark within us. Only then do we become true embodiments of the divine (*avatara purushas*).**

Unchanging Love is True Devotion

There is no difference between divine incarnations (*avatars*) and you. All are indeed incarnations! The only difference lies in the number of divine aspects (*kalas*). We can cultivate and enhance these divine aspects through practice. We must cultivate the feeling of equality (*samatva*). We

must nurture pure and sacred love. Only then do these divine aspects develop. Love that grows or diminishes moment by moment cannot be called true love. True love has no birth or death. It always shines and blossoms within the heart of a living being. True love is unaffected by the feelings of elation and dejection, and in the face of hardships and losses, or criticism and praise. **Love that grows and declines with circumstances such as gain and loss, pleasure and pain, and praise and blame is not true love at all. True love remains steady, pure, and unshaken. Such love alone is true devotion (*bhakti*).**

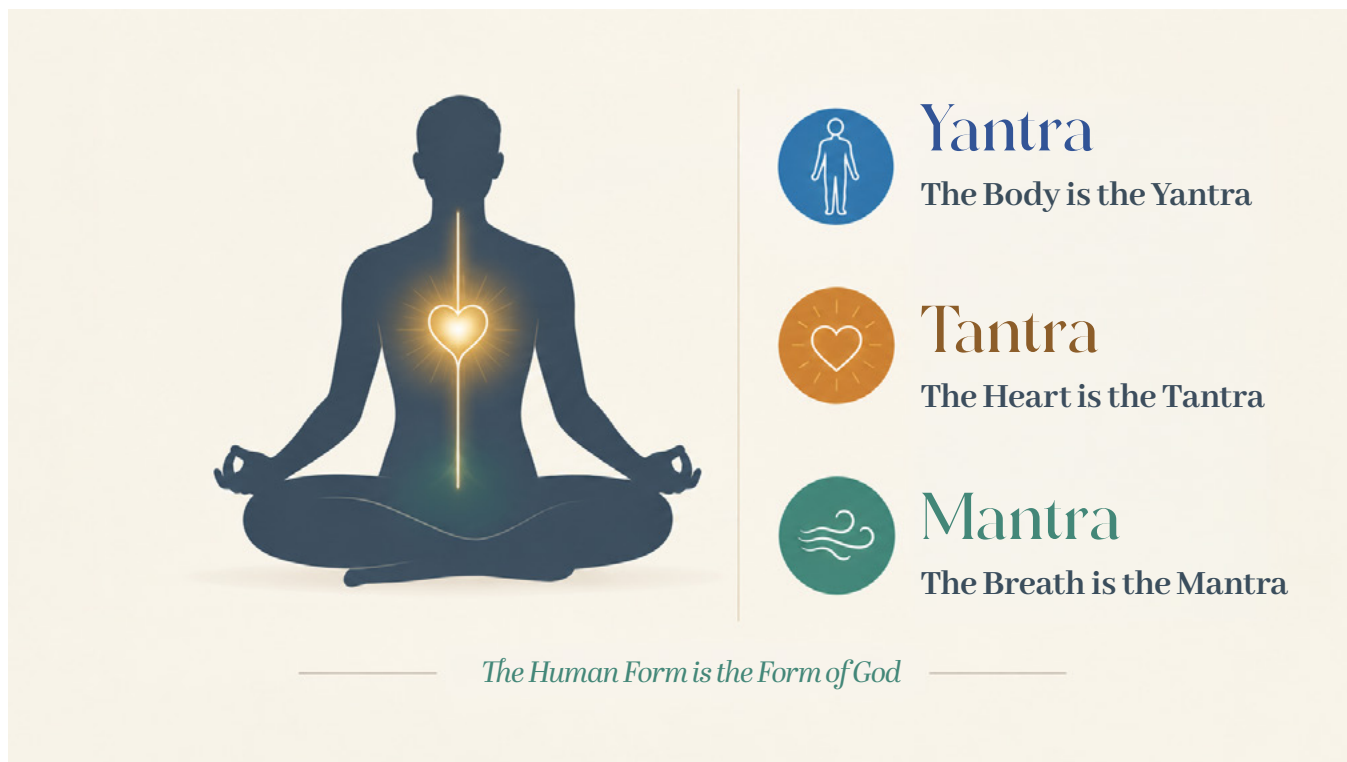
Treat Picture as God; Not God as Picture

One day a boy who was not doing well in his exams heard about the power of the *Gayatri Mantra*. The following day, he had to take his exams. That day, he prayed to a picture of Gayatri Devi, “O embodiment of all deities, Divine Mother Gayatri Devi (*sarva devata swaroopini Gayatri*), may You illumine and improve my intellect (*dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*),” and went for the examination. That day he did not do well in the exam. As soon as he came home, he took down the photo of Gayatri

Devi and put it away in the cupboard. The next day, the exam was in mathematics, which was a very difficult subject for him. Saying, “Somehow I must pass this,” he offered worship to a picture of Rama. Sadly, that day he couldn’t answer a single question and received zero marks. He came back angry, removed the photo of Rama, and threw it in the cupboard.

The next day, he thought, “Everyone is going in groups to see Sai Baba. If He had no real power, why would anyone go to Him? There must be something.” With that belief, he worshipped Sai Baba’s photograph, but with many doubts. He thought, “Everyone is going to Him, everyone is worshipping Him, everyone is doing *bhajan*; let me also try and see.” He brought bananas, placed them before the photograph, and made an offering (*naivedyam*). He bought incense sticks and lit them. Then he saw that the fragrant smoke from the incense sticks was drifting toward the photographs of the gods he had placed in the cupboard. This made him angry, and he thought, “The fragrant smoke of the incense is going to those gods who didn’t fulfill my wish—it shouldn’t go there!” He went inside, took out an old cloth, tore it into small pieces,





and tightly tied them around the noses of the photographs in the cupboard. Then he shut the cupboard doors securely. Immediately, a divine fragrance filled the air, and Gayatri, Saraswati, and Lord Rama seemed to appear before him.

The student was astonished and perplexed. He thought that when he worshipped with devotion, love, and surrender, God didn't appear to him directly. But God became visible only when he tried to "punish" God. So he thought that "punishing" God was itself an act of worship. As he wanted to know the truth, he asked, "Swami, I worshipped You with so much devotion and care, but the gods didn't appear that day. What is the reason that the gods appeared to me today?" God replied, "My dear, all this time you have been worshipping us as if we are lifeless. Today, when you considered us as living entities, tying a cloth around the nose in the photos, we appeared to you. The day you believe in the living presence of God, we will appear to you that day."

In short, what is the inner meaning of this? Living beings themselves are forms of the

Divine, not lifeless objects. Yet divinity exists even in lifeless objects. **The principle of God exists in everything. But since the human form alone is similar and relatable to us, we must believe in the human form.**

Human Form Embodies *Mantra*, *Tantra*, and *Yantra*

The human form alone is the closest to us. We must respect humanity that is so close to us. Only when we learn to respect humanity does our worship become true worship (*aradhana*). Therefore, it is essential that we worship the divinity that exists within all human beings. This is the most important thing for you to recognize today.

Gods, including Rama and Krishna, also assumed human forms! Since ancient times, every form of God that we have adored and worshipped has also been in human form. Therefore, worshipping and honoring the human form itself is the primary form of worship. Also, it is essential for us to believe that all living beings are God. It has been said that when we offer salutation to living beings, it reaches Keshava (God) (*sarva jiva namaskaram keshavam prati-gacchati*). Why should

the word “Keshava” be used here? In the word Keshava lies the entirety of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. The word Keshava is formed by the joining of three syllables: “ka,” “isha,” and “va.” “Ka” refers to *Brahma*, “isha” refers to *Ishwara* (Shiva), and “va” refers to Vishnu. So, what does Keshava mean? The inner meaning is that Keshava is the combined form of Brahma (creation), Ishwara (dissolution), and Vishnu (sustenance).

Brahma means the principle of creation. Our own resolve (*sankalpa*) is the principle of Brahma. What does *Isha* mean? It means one who dwells in the heart! So, our heart itself is the principle of *Ishwara*. Likewise, the principle of our intellect (*buddhi tattva*) is the principle of Vishnu, who pervades everything. Hence, these divine principles manifest within our body as special divine powers: as *yantra* (machine or instrument), *mantra*, and *tantra* (spiritual technique). The *yantra* is our body itself. Every part of it works in coordination with the other parts. That is why our body is a *yantra*, and our breath is a *mantra*.

“*Soham, soham*” is that very *mantra*. As for *tantra*, our heart itself is the *tantra*. **That is why the embodiment of *yantra*, *mantra*, and *tantra* is the human form alone, and no other form.** We must believe that our human form is itself the form of God.

Get Rid of Selfishness Through Adoration of God

As human beings, we must perform good deeds. What does human value mean? True human value is divinity; this is the true value. We need to understand and know this true value. These values are not new to us. They are innate in us from the day we are born. But we keep suppressing them to fulfill our needs and desires. Selfishness is the root cause. Once selfishness enters, duality (*dvaita*) begins. Once duality sets in, attachment (*raga*) and aversion (*dvesha*) arise. Through these very attachments and aversions, the disease of worldly existence (*bhava-roga*) begins to take root within us. To rid ourselves of these inner ailments, devotion and devotional singing (*bhajans*) are essential.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
November 23, 1988



All I Want is You

Part 1 of 2

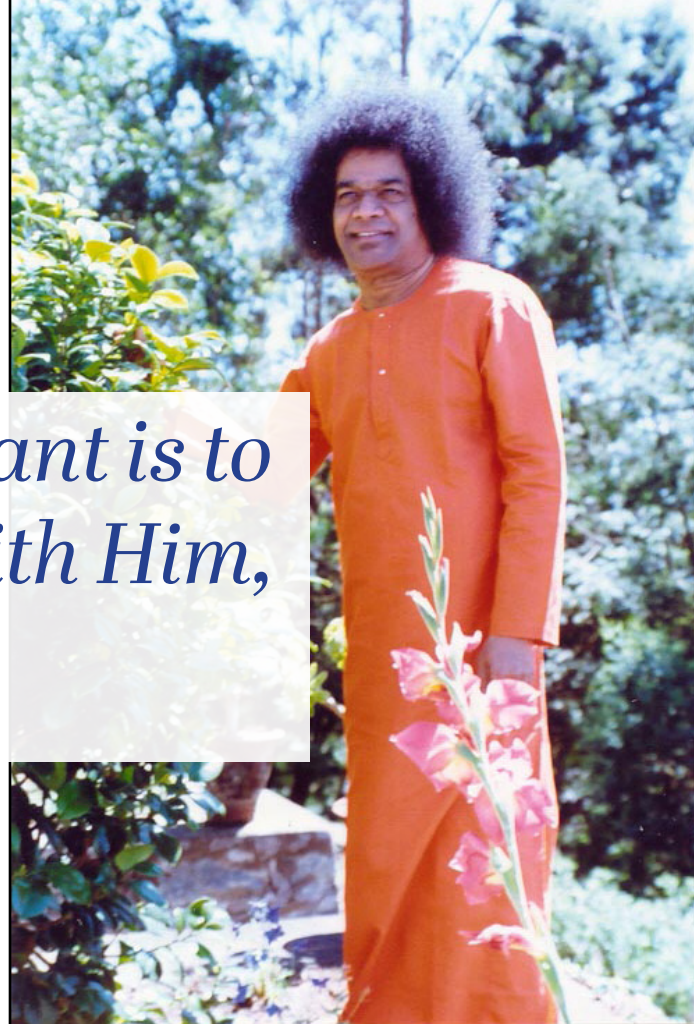
I was on my third trip to India in January 1992. I had arrived in Puttaparthi with all my spiritual books stuffed in my luggage, my desperation mounting. I felt like a clock was ticking; an end was coming. My mother was already living permanently in India.

One morning, as I was reading in our flat, my mother came to me, lowered the book I was reading, and simply asked, “Why are you here?” Those four words hit me. Here I was reading books, but where had that gotten me? There is one person who can help; that is Sathya Sai. It was like a switch turning on—I needed an interview! I stopped reading and put away all my books. **I needed Him! Words and teachings were not what I needed; I needed a spiritual open-heart surgery!**

“Swami, Interview Please”

How to get an interview? Since Swami was more likely to grant a group interview, I needed to join a group, but how? Swami had it already arranged. I went for *darshan* (sacred sight of the Divine), and while sitting in line, by chance, I overheard a conversation in English next to me. I turned and sheepishly asked, “Where are you guys from?” Ladd Bogdanoff, the leader of the group, who later became my dear friend, answered, “We are from California.” Being from the same place, I asked if I could join their group. He said only on three conditions: we study Swami’s teachings together, sing *bhajans*, and do *seva* in the *ashram*. He said Swami may call us

What I really want is to find God, live with Him, and serve Him.



if we show unity, discipline, and devotion. I agreed and discovered that Sai devotees were not strange people at all—they had jobs and ordinary lives. **But they were all dedicated to selfless service and self-transformation and devoted to His divine lotus feet in their hearts.**

One day at *darshan*, our group got first-row seating. We were all lined up. Ladd Bogdanoff leaned over and said with confidence to the group, “When Swami comes, we are going to ask for an interview.” Swami came, and not one of the men asked for an interview. They were all frozen in bliss, looking up at Swami as He passed by. My heart pounded in my chest, thinking, “Oh my, it’s up to me!” Swami was now in front of me. I looked up and nervously asked, “Swami, interview, please.” Swami stopped and turned His head to look down into my eyes. As He did, I felt the whole universe’s attention turn to me. Time seemed to stop, as if the Almighty had paused time to be fully occupied with me. Words cannot express the bliss of love flooding into me.

The Turning Point

As I was lost in His infinitely deep eyes, His sweet voice spoke, “*Where are you from?*” He asked. I replied, “California, Swami.” He

said, “*Huh?*” as if He couldn’t hear me! “From Ojai, Swami,” I replied. With a big smile, He said approvingly, “*Ah. I will see. I will see.*” Then He turned and walked on.

That was a turning point in my life. From that moment onward, I no longer saw a man in a robe walking; nor did I see a guru. I saw beauty, poetry, perfection in motion. The form was a doorway, a mirror for experiencing the divinity within us. **Every movement of His, even the wind moving His hair, was pregnant with meaning and a message. His whole presence spoke personally to the thousands in the *darshan* hall, all at the same time. Who could do this but God! Those eyes, my Lord, those eyes! We all longed for His gaze to fall on us. For the first time in my life, I felt whole, and I wanted more of it!**

A few days later, in the same situation, in the front row, it was again up to me to ask Swami for an interview, because the group froze again. Swami replied, “*Too many people;*

Swami leaned forward, looked
into her eyes, and sang sweetly,
“Love is My form, truth is My
breath, bliss is My food...”

the room is too small.” He had called in only three people, and there was plenty of space. He did the same thing a few days later, under the same conditions, and again made an excuse for why He couldn’t call us in. He was making me long for Him more and more. At the same time, the clock on my life was about to stop. I was in an existential crisis, with no answers of my own. I was truly at the end of my rope. I was in the moment before surrender.

A bit of my background is essential to understand my situation. To understand how I came to be in Puttaparthi at this crucial moment in my life, let me take you back to my childhood days.

Spiritual Awakening

When I was young, I watched a six-part TV series during Easter called “Jesus of Nazareth.” I was so deeply affected by this series that it didn’t feel like watching a movie. I felt like a participant, personally familiar with the profound love and compassion of Jesus. It felt as if I had forgotten Him even though I had known Him before. After watching the mini-series, I was sad and desolate. I felt that I was born 2,000 years too late. Later, in interviews, Swami told my mother and me that in a previous birth we were contemporaries of Jesus. **That revelation and subsequent dreams of Jesus and other forms of the**

Divine further assured me that Swami had been guiding me from time immemorial.

However, at that time Swami did not resonate with me. It wasn’t my time yet! But I had the ability to connect with deep spiritual wisdom and insights that were beyond anything I had been exposed to. It came easily to me. I remember one summer, when I was a 16-year-old teenager, working as a carpenter. For the first time, my boss gave me plans to build a portion of a wall for a building. I was nervous, since I had never done this alone before. As I started the work, a voice inside said, “You do not need plans; just build.” The voice was so confident that I followed it. I put the plans down and began to build. As I picked up a tape measure to cut the wood to the right length, the same voice said I didn’t need to measure; just cut. The more I followed it, trusted it, and let go, the more my thoughts began to disappear. I began to witness my body doing the work. Time stood still, and even though the work continued, there was only “this moment.” I was in bliss. Suddenly, the job was completed. I slowly came back into my “normal” state of being and saw that the wall, with windows and other fixtures, was not only complete, but it was also perfect. Not a gap in the wood, nothing out of place. It was beautiful, a work of art. My gaze drifted from the wall out to the fields and valley surround-

ing the construction site, and I saw the same beauty and perfection. In fact, it was all one experience; the separation in form was only a creation in my mind.

In retrospect, I realized that this experience was a gift from Swami, a sign of His grace. It was also a taste, a preparation, and a sliver of light to help me through the difficult times to come. He let me briefly experience what it is to live a divine life, free of thought, desire, and fear. I wasn't ready to understand this; rather, my *vasanas* (inherent tendencies) were about to kick in big time. I needed to repay past *karmic* debts and fulfill many worldly desires.

Worldly Desires Pull

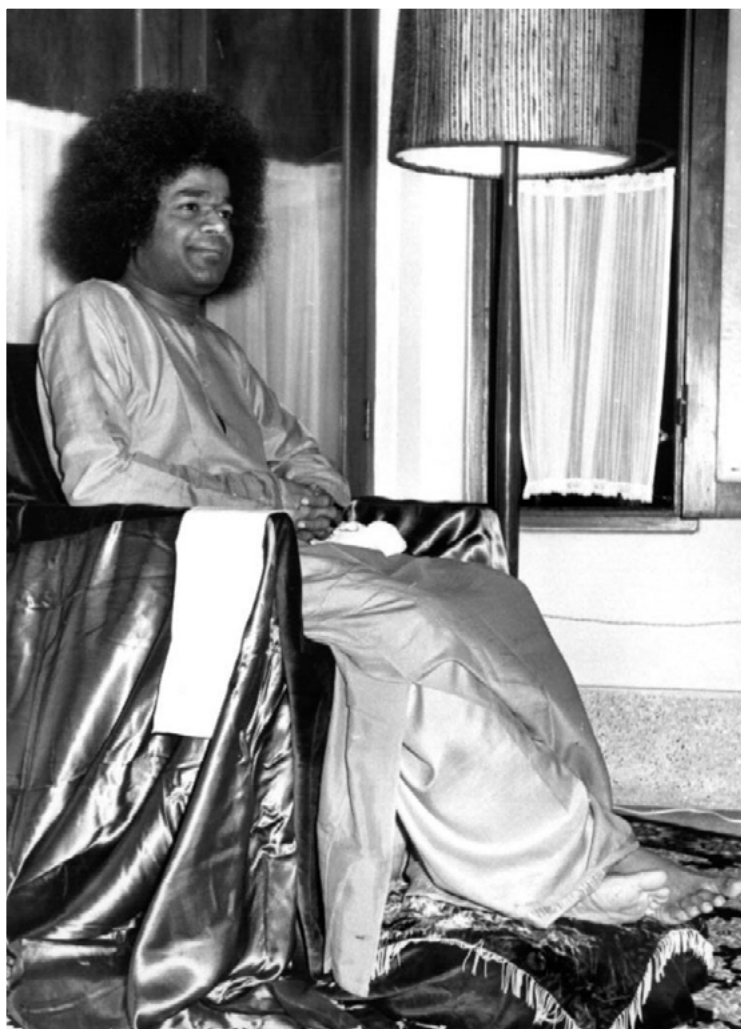
At a young age, I met a girl in Hungary. The moment I saw her, there was an instant connection so powerful that, looking back, it felt like an inescapable *karmic* bond from a previous life. I remember later praying to God, "Please give me this person for my wife, and I will give You anything in return." That prayer would later teach me a profound

lesson in the presence of Swami during my first interview. Years later, after our family moved back to California, she and I reconnected, and we got married at a young age. She moved to California, but we had a stormy relationship. My life was now moving further away from the "Source" that had touched me earlier. I didn't realize how my selfish behavior was hurting those I cared for. I began to experience exactly what my father had experienced when he was pursuing his desires. I was becoming ill, and doctors could not find any physical reason for my ailments. Meanwhile, my mother had already found her spiritual harbor—Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba!

Know I've Always Loved You

All her life, my mother never felt truly loved. She carried a deep sadness. One day, she walked out of the supermarket with her grocery bags in her arms, feeling a deep longing to be loved. Suddenly, she heard a booming voice that filled the Ojai Valley where we lived and said lovingly to her, "Don't you know I've always loved you?" She almost dropped the groceries, looking around to see if others had heard this strange but powerful voice too. That experience made her think deeply about what she wanted in life.

When I was about 17, one morning after breakfast, my father sat down with my mother and asked seriously, "Our son is almost grown-up; he will be leaving the house soon, and we will be done raising him. What do you want to do with the rest of your life? A new career, travel the world, or what?" She replied, "Give me three days to answer." She spent those three days deeply reflecting on what she really wanted to do in life. On the third day, she sat down with my father, looked into his eyes with complete conviction, and said, **"What I really want is to find God, live with Him, and serve Him."** A long silence followed. My father was speechless



and could not respond. For him, and for most Westerners, God appeared on earth long ago, in ancient history.

Swami says that if you yearn for Him from the depths of your heart, He will respond. The next day my mother began cleaning the house, including every book on the bookshelves. She eventually pulled out a book we had never purchased or received! On the cover was a picture of the divine face of Sathya Sai Baba. She froze, instantly recognized the picture, and exclaimed, "This is God! This is God!" She was overcome with joy. She sat down and began reading the book. With tears streaming down her face, she turned the pages, saying, "This is truth, this is truth." She understood every teaching and every story of Sathya Sai as nothing but the truth—pure and direct, not buried under convoluted language and verbal gymnastics. She finished the book in a single day. Now all she wanted to do was find Him and meet Him.

There turned out to be a Sai Center in Ojai, which she joined in 1986. My father and I both thought the whole affair rather strange: an Indian guru; strange *bhajans* with unfamiliar music in a language we didn't know! Before long, the Sai Center planned a group trip to India to see Sai Baba.

Weeks later, in India, when her group was called for an interview, she sat down next to Swami's chair. **Swami leaned forward, looked into her eyes, and sang sweetly, "Love is My form, truth is My breath, bliss is My food..."** Swami sang the whole song, and my mother cried tears of joy and bliss, knowing she was loved completely, unconditionally, and eternally. The formless Divine Love that had spoken to her at the supermarket was none other than Sathya Sai sitting in front of her. Thus, the first part of her wish,

"I want to find God," was fulfilled. The second part of her wish, "I want to live with Him," would soon be granted.

Swami's Invitation

I was reluctant to turn to my mother's "Swami" for help. I thought I could fix the situation myself. My mother said, "Give Swami a try." Part of me knew I needed help from a higher source, but I tried to make excuses for not doing so. So, I told my mother, "Doesn't Swami say that no one can come to Him unless He calls?" She reluctantly agreed and left it to Swami.

That night, I had a dream unlike any I'd had before—the kind that comes only by His will.

I was walking across a desert when a stagecoach came up behind me. Inside were the great and powerful sages and masters I'd read about: J. Krishnamurti, Paramahansa Yogananda, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and others I didn't recognize. They welcomed me into the cabin. I climbed in, hesitant and feeling unworthy of *being in* their company.



Author's Mother with Swami

The stagecoach carried us up a hill to a castle. We alighted in the central courtyard; in the middle stood a tent with an opening. With the sun shining brightly, I couldn't see if anyone was inside the tent. Suddenly, Swami walked out of the tent, straight up to me, and looked directly into my eyes.

At that moment, I woke up. I knew exactly what my mother would say, and when I told her, she exclaimed, "See, Swami is inviting you!"

With Swami as her very life breath, she glowed with inner happiness and true purpose. I, on the other hand, relying on myself, was anxious, unhappy, and alone, and I needed a way out of this conundrum. I decided to give Sathya Sai Baba a try. Swami says, *Don't try; just do!*

The Nightmare First Trip to Puttaparthi

In 1989, full of spiritual pride and ego, I traveled to Prasanthi Nilayam with my mother and my wife. It was a total culture shock, but I did my best to adapt to the unique local customs and navigate the physical challenges. What I wanted was a one-on-one connection with Sathya Sai Baba. During *darshan*, I was certain He would immediately call me for an interview and solve my problems—such was my ego! He would walk right past me, taking people's letters, never once looking my way. After a few days of being ignored, I thought, "Doesn't He know that I'm here for His help?" Frustrated, I told my mother I was done with Sathya Sai Baba. I would go find a real guru in the Himalayas. I know it pained her, but she only said, "Give it time." Later, in an interview, Swami turned to my mother, pointing at me, and said, "*This boy has no patience!*"

My wife and I then took a train to Delhi in the terrible heat. There, I finally hit a wall and fell ill with a severe case of dysentery. By the time I recovered, I had had enough of India and returned home.

Things did not get better; in fact, they got worse. In 1991, I decided to seriously give Swami another chance, this time for three months. I know how audacious this sounds: "Give Swami a chance!" But unknown to me, Swami was setting me up for eventual surrender. My wife stayed in California because she was not inclined toward spiritual pursuits. All she wanted was for me to get healed and come back happy.

Mother Gets Residence in Prasanthi

By then, my mother had been living in India for long stretches. Swami had given her a flat, but only after staging a small comedy! She had gone to Swami's engineer, Colonel Joga Rao, who was in charge of the *ashram's* construction and buildings, to ask about her place on the long waiting list for a flat. He showed her the list, and her name was at the bottom. She asked to see the paper, turned it upside down, and smilingly said, "Now I'm at the top." That made Colonel Joga Rao laugh uncontrollably! Shortly after, Swami showered her with His grace, and she was handed the keys to her flat. She could not bring herself to step over the threshold of the flat, as it was holy ground for her. She did *puja* for an hour, placing Swami's picture and incense while shedding tears of gratitude. Only then could she step in and occupy the new home. **Later, in an interview, Swami said to her, "*This is your home; you stay.*" Swami had now fulfilled her second wish, "To live with Him."**

My Second Trip to Puttaparthi

On my second trip to Swami, in 1991, both of my parents were already at the *ashram*. I began reading Swami's discourses, His Vahinis, the Ramayana, and other texts, and something in me that had always loved myths and ancient stories came alive. I began to understand that Jesus, too, was an avatar—God taking a particular form suited to a particular time and need. I practiced seven days of silence (*mounam*) while reading the *Bhagavata Purana* and inexplicably

found myself in the front row at every single *darshan* that week. Swami would stop and stand in front of me each time, though I still did not see Him as the embodiment of God. He was transforming me simply by being in His divine presence, something I did not know at that time. Over the three months, Swami performed spiritual surgery on me by bringing to light the dirt within me that needed cleaning, misconceptions that needed erasing, and getting me ready for the next phase of my spiritual journey.

What Do I Really Want?

My mother told me that devotees write letters to Swami, asking for help or anything they want. I wrote many letters, all from my head, not from my heart, and He never took them, no matter how much I tried. Then, my mother said, "You need to write it from your heart; ask for what you really want." I finally wrote a letter from the heart, "Dear Lord, all I want is to live a divine, magical, mystical life." I took it to *darshan*, sitting about ten rows back. Swami came, looked right into my eyes from a distance, smiled, and signaled for me to approach Him. I carefully stepped through the crowd, while Swami waited patiently for me. With arms outstretched, He took my letter. Before I could turn back to sit down, He wrote something in the air with His finger, pointing directly at my chest. I felt He was writing into my soul. After *darshan*, I went to my father, who was sitting far in the back. I said excitedly, "Did you see? He took my letter!" My father smiled and said, "When He took your letter and motioned with His finger, in my head, I heard Swami say, 'Don't worry, this is good for your son.'" I was stunned. My father would not make up something like that. He did not see Swami as divine; rather, he saw Him as a guru with some *siddhis* (spiritual powers). I later realized that Sathya Sai Baba, the *Poorna Avatar*, had rewritten my destiny out of sheer love and grace, an act only God can perform. **Swami can, with a simple glance, remove mountains of karma that would otherwise require**

innumerable lifetimes. I was slowly coming to understand that Swami is not just a human being with divine power; He is the divine power, the embodiment of *shakti*. What He wills must happen!

I went back home to Ojai, certain I could now put His teachings into practice and that my life would get back on track. Well, everything fell apart! My wife and I separated. I had been working as an electrical design engineer, and now I was unemployed and couldn't find a single job! I ended up living in a friend's garage in Ojai, doing odd carpentry jobs just to survive, with almost no money left as December turned cold.

"I Will Take Care of Him"

Meanwhile, my mother back in India wrote a letter to Swami, expressing worry about her son and what to do. Swami took the letter at *darshan*, immediately turned to her, and said emphatically, "*He is My son!*" Then, pointing at Himself, said, "*I will take care of him!*" What a relief and a blessing for a mother—God was giving her reassurance! **She later told me that**



her heartfelt duty as a mother, and her most important task in life, was to bring her son to God.

One night, in the cold garage back in Ojai, in desperation I knelt before the two pictures by my bed, Jesus and Sai Baba, and pleaded, "One of you, just one of you, please help me!" I went for a long walk and found myself knocking on my father's door at ten in the evening. I told him I had no money, no job, and no idea who I am. To my surprise, he said, "Why don't you send out your resumes, go back to India, and stay for six months? When you come back, you might know more about who you are, and a job may be available." Little did I know that what he said would come true, but not in six months. It would happen only after five years of living and serving in the divine presence! I replied that I don't know who Swami is, but I know Jesus is my brother. My father asked, "When you were there with Swami, how did

He feel to you?" I said, "Like a father." My father then said, "So, then, why not think of yourself as His Son and Him as the Father?" Swami was now speaking through my father—there was no way he would have said this on his own.

I had no idea how I would pay for the ticket to India. The next morning, I went to the bank to check my balance, expecting almost nothing. The teller handed me a figure on a piece of paper, and I handed it right back, certain it was someone else's account. But it was mine. There was enough money to buy the plane ticket and to live in India for at least six months.

It was Swami's miracle! He was reeling me in, not by force, but by love, day by day. And sure enough, on the third trip, I got an interview with Swami, and my life changed forever, beyond anything imaginable!

Mr. Leslie Farkas
USA



(To be concluded in the December 2026 issue of Sathya Sai – The Eternal Companion.)



Mr. Leslie Farkas lives in California, USA. He first visited Swami in 1989, when his mother, Veronica, was already an ardent devotee of Bhagawan. Leslie's third trip in 1992, which was to last six months, turned into a five-year spiritual odyssey of living and serving in the ashram, when Swami asked Leslie and his mother to run the Western Canteen. During the last year of his stay in India, Swami also directed Leslie to speak to the visiting devotees as a Public Relations Officer, sharing His love and message.

In 1997, Leslie returned to California, USA, where he works as an electrical engineer. He is an ardent devotee who continues to render selfless service in the SSSIO.



Sai's Slow MIRACLES



I have always wondered, and still wonder, why I am not blessed with a dream about Swami. My parents and my sister see Swami in their dreams, and I can't help but ask myself what I am missing. I hear countless stories of miracles, each unique and wondrous in its own way. Some were close to home, such as *vibhuti* (sacred ash) appearing at a neighbor's house and visions of Swami during *nagarsankeertan* (devotional singing procession). Yet somehow, I never seem to experience any of them.

With the passage of time and exposure to His teachings, I think I know a little better, at least in theory! **It's not always about what I want; it's about what I need!** And many times, what I need is simply a different perspective!

Importance of Imbibing Swami

One day during Swami's 85th Birthday celebrations, I was sitting along the pathway near the North buildings of Prasanthi Nilayam. A few devotees nearby were discussing how irregular Swami's morning *darshans* (sacred sight of the Divine) had become in recent times. My eyes were drawn to a lady quietly picking up small rocks nearby. I kept watching her, wondering if she had lost something. When she saw me and our eyes met, she smiled and said, "Astronauts who were fortunate enough to land on the Moon brought back rocks to show people back home. I am luckier. I am walking on the grounds the Lord walked on. So, I'm collecting a few rocks to show people back home."

What a profound perspective! I wondered how many times I had walked on that very ground without paus-



ing to simply say, “Thank you, Swami.” **More importantly, I realized that the Lord who walked there had also entered my heart and installed Himself there. Do I remember that blessing with gratitude every moment of my life?** That reminds me of a talk I once watched on YouTube.

The speaker, Mr. Ashwin Venkateswaran, fondly recalled a session at Prasanthi Nilayam where Swami was interacting with a small group of His university and school students. He shared how Swami had a beautiful way of turning even the simplest conversation into a profound lesson.

That day, Swami asked each boy, *“How many years have you all been with Swami?”*

The first boy replied, “Two years, Bhagawan.” Swami smiled and moved on to the next. “Five years,” the boy answered. Swami finally turned to the most senior among them. This was his moment! With great pride, he replied, “Baba, I have been here for 11 years.”

He expected a special word of recognition. Instead, Swami gently smiled, patted the chair He was sitting on, and said, *“This chair has been here for 25 years.”* Then He pointed towards a tree outside. *“And that tree has been here as long as Prasanthi Nilayam has been here—over 50 years.”*

In just a few words, Swami transformed a moment of pride into a profound lesson: It does not matter how long we have been at Prasanthi Nilayam. What matters is whether “Prasanthi Nilayam”—the abode of Swami’s love—is in our hearts.

The true measure of our spiritual journey is not how long we have been physically near Swami, but how deeply Swami lives within us.

Gift of the Sai Center

Looking back on my life, I realize I may not have known what I was asking for. But the Swami in my heart always knew exactly what I needed!

When I first moved to the USA in March 2014, I was in Plantation, FL, and didn’t have enough contacts or means to visit a Sai Center. Before moving to the USA, I had spent five years in Bengaluru, where the Sai Center was within walking distance and opportunities for service were plenty. I had never realized how much of a blessing that was. Here, away from my family and my Sai family, I felt that absence deeply.

And what did Swami do when I asked for a Sai Center? He gave me a roommate who was a regular churchgoer and somehow made sure I went to church every Sunday. I enjoyed the sermons and beautiful hymns, but they also made me miss *bhajan* sessions even more. Sai student articles, Mixcloud audios, Radio Sai discussions, and *Samarpan* online programs were a blessing and, in many ways, my only solace. So many questions were answered there! Reading and listening to these channels became my way of talking to and connecting with my dear Swami.

After I moved from Florida to the state of Illinois, I once again struggled to find my way to a Sai Center. **I felt Swami made me pray for a Sai Center, yearn for it, and understand the value of something I had once taken for granted.**

One day, my manager, Ms. Priya Rao, asked me if I was a Sai devotee. She had guessed it from my name, Saidutta, and wanted to know if I went to a Sai Center! She was the one who had interviewed me for the job months earlier and had known my name all along. Yet it only occurred to her to ask me about a Sai Center months later! What made it even more special was that, unknown to her, it was my birthday! The gift of the Sai Center was indeed the icing on the cake! That was when I also discovered that her full name was Sai Priya Rao!

After all those years, I was finally able to sit in a Sai Center for *bhajans* again. I sat there, taking it all in, with tears of gratitude quietly flowing down my cheeks. Even today, I can’t



SSSIO USA, Region 5 Labor Day Retreat, Chicago, September 2026

quite describe what those tears represented—nostalgia, emotion, devotion, or simply the overwhelming joy of feeling close to Swami again. Perhaps they were a little of everything. And perhaps all that matters is that the tears were spontaneous and real, coming straight from the heart. **The Sai Center indeed reconnected me to the Sai in the center of my heart!**

Slow Miracles

During *bhajans*, memories from my life flashed before me, and each day of my life felt like His miracle! I remembered being a schoolgirl, returning from a trip to Puttaparthi, only to discover that our school exams had been postponed. This was the first and only time that happened in our entire 14 years of schooling. And it was exactly what I had been praying for! What a blessing! Years later, when I was posted to another location for work, it turned out to be a place from which I could travel to see Swami as often as I wanted! Another blessing!

I was pregnant when I first sat in that Sai Center, and during the *bhajans* I prayed to Swami to bless my child with the kind of childhood I had been fortunate enough to experience—knowing Him, loving Him, growing up with *bhajans*, Sai Spiritual Education (SSE), service activities, and, most of all, the love of a Sai family. Months later, when I had my baby, my gynecologist told me, “With your medical condition, this is a miracle.” I had been blissfully unaware of this condi-

tion, and I realized that Swami had lovingly taken care of it!

Swami surrounded me with people who had something to teach me, people who nudged, shaped, challenged, and supported me, and, most importantly, kept me honest on my journey towards Him. **I have learned that much of our growth happens through one another. We are inspired not just by what people do, but by the love, faith, and devotion with which they serve our beloved Swami. In their love for Him, I have often found lessons that words could never express.**

When I look back, there have been so many “coincidences.” So many moments that, at the time, seemed ordinary—except that they were not. These are the “slow” miracles! The ones that don’t announce themselves as miracles. These miracles are the ones that quietly unfold while we are busy living our lives. The ones that make you look back years later and suddenly see how perfectly everything fell into place—the people, the opportunities, the places, the timing, and most importantly, the challenges. I realized that too many things have fallen into place too perfectly to be mere coincidences.

Gift of a Sai Retreat

There are times even now when I feel distant from Swami, even while surrounded by “spiritual” activities and responsibilities. I felt that way for a couple of months at the start of 2026. I was just complaining to Swami that He doesn’t connect with me, and He answered—and in a most spectacular way!



SSSIO USA, Region 5 Labor Day Retreat, Chicago, September 2026

My experience at the SSSIO USA, Region 5 Labor Day Retreat in 2026 was nothing short of extraordinary. Swami made His presence felt every step of the way, from the retreat preparation sessions to the final reflections. **Every hurdle became an opportunity, every challenge a lesson, and even the mistakes became gifts that taught me lessons I will carry close to my heart.**

When a QR code failed during the very first session, what began as panic turned into an unexpected exercise in faith, patience, and surrender. When the laptop seemed frozen, and the network refused to cooperate, chanting Sai Gayatri somehow got things moving again! The guest speaker, Mr. Aravind Balasubramanya, gifted me with *vibhuti* that had materialized from Swami's picture at a devotee's home, which felt so special and wonderful.

The decision to use reusable steel dinner plates at the retreat was met with doubts and objections from a practical standpoint. We wondered whether it would be hygienic, whether the water would be too cold for washing, whether there would be enough volunteers, and whether a large-scale dishwashing system would actually work. A detailed plan was eventually developed, including a 12-person assembly line

for washing the plates, because more than anything else, this was an opportunity for *seva* (service)! Mr. Balasubramanya "coincidentally" shared the experience of a devotee, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Raman, who pleased Swami by washing steel dinner plates in an assembly line at the canteen as her *seva* and was blessed with *padanamaskar* (reverentially touching the Guru's feet)!

Perhaps the most beautiful part was watching young adults stay through multiple *satsang* sessions and participate in various service activities, seeing people return after a long time, and receiving loving messages from people I had never even met.

I had complained that Swami felt distant. At the retreat, He answered me—not through a single dramatic event, but through a hundred little reminders that He is always there!

Every time I yearn for Him, He shows me He has been there all along—quietly arranging, protecting, guiding, and answering prayers I sometimes didn't even remember I had made. These are His "slow" miracles. These are also His "steady" daily miracles. And yes, slow and steady always wins the race!

Mrs. Saidutta Kumari 



Mrs. Saidutta Kumari was born into a Sai family and has been a devotee of Bhagawan since childhood. She lives in the northern suburbs of Chicago, Illinois, USA, and regularly attends Sai Centers in the area. She currently serves as the Young Adult Representative for SSSIO USA, Region 5. Professionally, she is a Senior Application Developer at a bank, but at heart, she remains forever an aspiring Sai Student.

Kavinaam Kavi Sai

SAI-THE SUPREME POET

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba conveyed profound spiritual truths through Telugu poems, often singing them at the beginning of His discourses or weaving them into His message. With simple language, vivid imagery, and memorable verses that even a layperson can understand, He brought spiritual wisdom into everyday life.

Indeed, Bhagawan has been a *kavi* (poet) since His childhood. His poetic expression takes many forms: from playful songs and witty verses to compositions that correct human follies, discourage undesirable habits, and guide people towards righteous living. In His letter of May 25, 1947, to His elder brother, Seshama Raju, He uses poetry's extraordinary power to convey the purpose of His divine mission. Beyond His discourses, His letters to devotees also feature sweet verses that illuminate the intellect, ennoble the heart, and awaken the spirit.

"Dorike, dorike Bala Bhaskara!"—"It's here! It's here! Bala Bhaskara!" With this catchy refrain, young Sathyanarayana Raju set His village streets abuzz with a lively advertising jingle for a medicine! Composed at the request of the local medicine merchant, Kote Subbanna, the song invited children and villagers to buy the medicine, highlighting its claimed benefits and directing them to the merchant's shop. It was easy to remember and humorous, drawing everyone's attention. What a delightful glimpse of the natural poet who would one day be revered as Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba!

Poetry is far more than an art of words. True poetry must describe sacred objects, convey noble ideas, and bestow inner fulfillment. A poet must not chase popular whims for cheap name and fame or fleeting prosperity but must nourish and channel the divine urge within humanity. Bhagawan exemplifies this ideal, revealing the profound truth of His declaration, **"My life is My message."**

In Geetha Vahini, chapter 16, and Bhagavad Gita, chapter 8, verse 9, Bhagawan reveals the deeper significance of the *Kavi*: one who knows the past, present, and future. In its highest sense, the term denotes the omniscient Lord, who knows all and sees the next step. In this supreme sense, Bhagawan is indeed the *Kavi*, nay, **the Kavinaam Kavi, the supreme poet!** His verses are revelations of divine wisdom, expressions of boundless love, and luminous guideposts that lead humanity towards its final goal of Self-realization.

Through this new section, the readers are brought closer to the heart and vision of the *Kavinaam Kavi* through selections from His delectable poetry. May these sacred verses delight our minds, purify our hearts, illumine our intellects, and inspire us to better understand His teachings and to live the divine truths they so beautifully reveal, leading to Self-realization.

POEM 1

ఏను దైవంబు తద్భిన్నమేమి కాదు
ఆ అఖండ పరబ్రహ్మమౌదు నేను
వ్యధయు క్లేశముల్ నన్ను స్పృశింపబోవు
సచ్చిదానందమేను తద్భిన్నమేమి కాదు
నిత్య తృప్తుడ భీతినన్ చేరబోదు
ఉల్లమా! పల్కుమోంతత్సత్తంచనెపుడు.

enu daivambu thadbhinnamemi kaadu
aa akhanda parabrahma-maudu nenu
vyadhayu kleshamul nannu sprishimpa-bovu
satchidanandamenu thadbhinnamemi kaadu
nithya thrupthuda bheethi nan-cherabodu
ullama! palkum-omtatsat-anchu-nepudu

I am God, and I am no different from God.
I am that indivisible supreme consciousness
(*Parabrahman*).
Anguish and sorrow cannot touch me.
I am *satchidananda* (Existence, Consciousness, Bliss),
I am no different.
I am ever content. Fear can never enter me.
O mind! Always proclaim, "Om Tat Sat."
(*Om*, eternal *Pranava*;
Tat implying *Brahman*; and
Sat denoting Existence.)



POEM 2

ఆ నంద బాలుడే ఆనంద బాలుడై
తనవారి గుర్తింప తరలి వచ్చె
ఆ రామచంద్రుడే ఆరామచంద్రుడై
తన బంటులను కన్గొనగ వచ్చె
ఆ ఈశుడే బాల సాయీశుడై యిట
తన గుంపుతో ఆడుకొనగ వచ్చె
ఆ మహా విష్ణువే ఈ మహీ విష్ణువై
తన ఆయుధములు చేకొనగ వచ్చె
అట్టి పరమాత్మయను బొమ్మలాట గాడు
తాను జీవుల రంగస్థలాన నిలిపి
ఆడు ఆనాటి ఈనాటి ఆట జూచి
సుంత వర్ణించి కొంత సంతసము గనుడి

aa nanda baalude aananda baaludai
thanavaari gurthimpa tharali vachche
aa ramachandrude aaraama chandrudai
thana bantulanu kangonaga vachche
aa eeshude baala saayeeshudai ita
thana gumputho aadukonaga vachche
aa mahaa vishnuve ee mahee vishnuvai
thana aayudhamulu chekonaga vachche
atti paramatmayanu bommalatagadu
thaanu jivula rangasthalana nilipi
aadu aanaati eenaati aata joochi
suntha varninchu kontha santhasamu ganudi

That son of Nanda (Lord Sri Krishna) has come again
as the blissful boy, to identify His people;
That very Lord Sri Rama has come again like
the pleasant moon, seeking out those who served Him;
That Lord Shiva has come again as Sai Shiva
to sport with His companions;
That great Lord Vishnu has come again
as the Lord of the world bearing
His armaments (weapons of love).
That Supreme Lord is the producer
and director of this puppet-show;
Keeping the living beings on the stage of life;
Makes them act out their roles.
Narrate His glory a little, and be happy!



POEM 3

అఖిల మానవులకు నానంద మొనగూర్చి
రక్షించుచుండుటే దీక్ష నాకు
సన్మార్గమును వీడి చరియించు వారల
పట్టి కాపాడుటే వ్రతము నాకు
బీద సాదలకైన పెను బాధ తొలగించి
లేమిని బాపుటే ప్రేమ నాకు
నీమనిష్ఠలతోటి నను గొల్పువారిని
కాపాడుచుండుటే ఘనత నాకు
మంచి చెడ్డలు కూడ మనసులో సమముగా
భావించు చుండుటే భక్తి నాకు
అనగ బేరొంది నాయందు నలరువారి
నెన్నడును మరువని వాడనన్న మాట
నెట్టి కుచితము మదికి నే నేర్పకుండు
అట్టి నా పేరు చెడుట యొట్లగును భువిని

akhila maanavulakun-aananda monagoorchi
rakshinchuchundute deeksha naaku
sanmaargamunu veedi chariyinchu vaarala
patti kaapaadute vratamu naaku
beeda saadalakaina penu baadha tholaginchu
lemini baapute prema naaku
neema-nishtalathoti nanu golchu-vaarini
kaapaaduchundute ghanatha naaku
manchi cheddalukooda manasulo samamugaa
bhaavinchuchundute bhakti naaku
anaga berondi naayandu nalaruvaari
nennadunu maruvani vaada-nanna maata
netti kuchithamu madiki ne nerpa-kundu
atti naa peru cheduta yetlagunu bhuvini

Bringing happiness and protecting all
humanity is My resolve.
Guiding back those who stray from the righteous path
and protecting them is My vow.
Relieving the suffering of the poor and
removing their poverty is My love.
Protecting those who worship Me with discipline
and steadfast devotion is My glory.
Treating good and bad with equanimity
is My definition of devotion.
I never forget those who rejoice in Me.
I never entertain bad thoughts or deceit,
How, then, could My name be dishonored in this world?



LOVE IN ACTION



MAURITIUS

Serving God by Serving Pilgrims

Veeramakalee Ammen Kovil is a vibrant temple dedicated to the Goddess Maha Kali, located along the Royal Road in Le Hochet, Terre Rouge, Mauritius. The concluding thanksgiving events of the Thimeedhee (firewalking) festival were held at the temple on September 8, 2026. On that auspicious occasion, 13 SSSIO volunteers served the Divine Mother by serving Her devotees. **They distributed about 300 food and refresh-**



ment packs comprising pancakes, sweet cakes, and juice to the pilgrims, in keeping with the annual tradition of service of SSSIO Mauritius.



SWITZERLAND

Gratitude to Mother Nature

On September 5, 2026, members from five centers of SSSIO Switzerland gathered high in the Swiss mountains at a remote site on the Gotthard Pass to offer their gratitude to Mother Nature by planting trees. **With 465 saplings carefully prepared in advance under professional guidance, they worked together to give each young tree a place to take root and flourish.** This simple but laborious act of planting became a beautiful expression of love, service, and responsibility towards the Earth.

The day also brought a moment of reflection. The group revisited a nearby site where they had planted trees two years earlier and were delighted to see the young trees growing and establishing themselves. For the volunteers, it was more than a successful planting effort. It was a heartfelt reminder that caring for nature is an act of gratitude—and that every



tree planted today is a gift to generations yet to come.



SURINAME

Providing School Essentials to Children

Leading up to Avatar Declaration Day on October 20, 2026, the Sri Sathya Sai Center of Sonjastraat in Suriname continued its annual “Everyone a Messenger of Sai” service. The initiative ran from September 2026 through the start of the new school year, with SSSIO volunteers providing school necessities to children in need. **This year, the initiative supplied 131 school children with packages of pens, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, notebooks, drawing supplies, and geometry sets across the rural areas of Commewijne and Magenta, as well as two children’s homes.**

At Zout der Aarde, a boarding-school-style home, 20 children currently receive care.



These children come from poor families in the interior whose homes have burned down and are being rebuilt. At Campagne Orphanage, 75 orphans and children from challenging backgrounds were also served. The organizers described the project as a sincere effort to practice Swami’s teaching that service to man is service to God.



THAILAND

Worshipping Goddess Nature and Divine Mother

On September 5-6, 2026, 23 SSSIO members in Thailand, joined by students of the Sathya Sai School in Lopburi, cleaned Bang Sare Beach in Sattahip, Chonburi, collecting garbage and raising awareness about protecting Thailand’s coastline. **The two-day event began with *bhajans* (devotional songs) and a student presentation on the ecological importance of clean beaches and waters,** followed by dinner and a visit to the Pattaya Kali temple for more *bhajans*



and *arati*. Local officials in Pattaya praised the initiative, which was guided by the Sathya Sai Foundation to promote environmental responsibility and civic participation among young people.

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



SEVA FOR EVERYONE



SELFLESS SERVICE IN
FIJI BY THE SSSIO'S
HEALTHCARE MISSION

6
DAYS

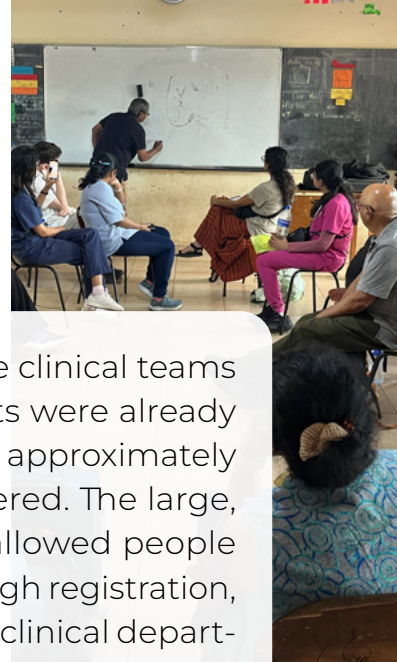
94
INTERNATIONAL
VOLUNTEERS

2,274
PATIENTS SERVED

There is something beautiful about selfless service: it is a win-win for everyone involved. The patient receives care; the doctor gets to use their professional experience to help someone who needs it; the medical students learn from real situations; the volunteer discovers the joy of giving; and the community is inspired to give back. Here, there is really no separate “server” and “served.” **Everyone gives, everyone receives, and everyone is enriched by a contentment and joy that is hard to find anywhere else. This is the lesson taught by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.**

The SSSIO Zone 3 medical mission in Fiji embodied this spirit in a recent six-day service project. From August 23 to 28, 2026, **medical care was provided to 2,274 patients by a team of 94 volunteers from Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, working alongside approximately 20 local volunteers**, across communities in the Western Division of Viti Levu, Fiji’s main island. While the numbers appear notable, they tell only a fraction of the actual story. The real story is about people traveling long distances, communities opening their doors, teachers giving up their holidays, young students learning, volunteers discovering new dimensions of service, and patients receiving healthcare that might otherwise have remained beyond their reach. If there is a need, the service goes there. And in Fiji, that principle was once again put into action.





Seva Begins Even Before the First Patient's Arrival

Yet the mission was not only about the present but also about the future. Each day, approximately 15 medical students and 15 nursing students joined the teams, gaining practical experience from the wide range of medical specialties represented. The six-day project was preceded by two days of education. On August 21, **more than 200 local nursing students attended a seminar led by more than six experienced senior nurses**, combining lectures with hands-on learning. On August 22, more than 60 University of Fiji's Umanand Prasad School of Medicine & Health Sciences (UPSM&HS) medical students from their second through fourth years, mostly third-year students, participated in a seminar featuring eight presentations by senior doctors from diverse specialties, with some students joining remotely via Zoom.

The education was not limited to medical professionals. The volunteers too were part of these living classrooms. At the pre-mission dinner at the Mariamma Temple in Lautoka, participants were reminded that seva is not merely about serving others; it is ultimately a journey of self-transformation. This year, it was particularly heartening to welcome 15 new overseas volunteers, who met experienced volunteers returning year after year.

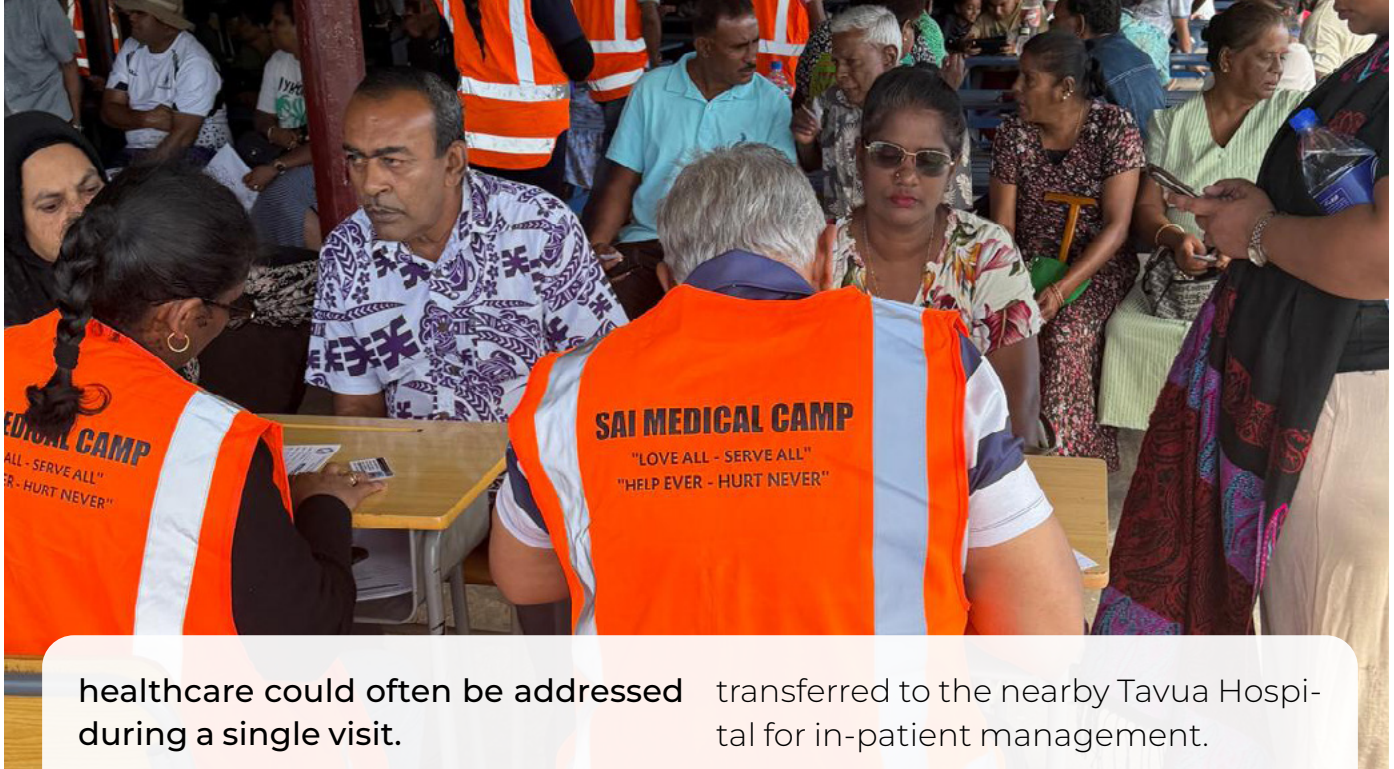
Baba at Ba and Ra: When a Community Joins Hands to Serve

The first camp, at Ba on August 23, began early, with the main buses departing at

6:30 am. By the time the clinical teams arrived, 20 to 30 patients were already waiting, and by 11:30 am, approximately 150 patients had registered. The large, well-organized venue allowed people to move efficiently through registration, triage, and the different clinical departments. It was a busy beginning, but also an encouraging one. The need was evident, and so was the volunteers' willingness to engage and respond.

On the second day, August 24, the team traveled to Ra, where the journey itself reflected the spirit of the mission. The advance team left about an hour ahead of the main group to prepare the venue. The camp coincided with a public holiday and the school holidays, yet the headteacher arranged for teachers to come and help. They opened classrooms, organized clinical spaces, and unloaded tables and chairs from the transport truck. **Their willingness to sacrifice part of their holiday was a beautiful expression of the community spirit that soon became one of the mission's defining features.**

Many of the patients in Ra came from remote and rural communities. They waited patiently despite the inevitable delays of a large multidisciplinary camp and received medical care for chronic medical conditions, musculoskeletal problems, injuries associated with physically demanding rural lifestyles, and conditions requiring further investigation or specialist care. **Because doctors from multiple disciplines worked together, several aspects of a patient's**



healthcare could often be addressed during a single visit.

Even after the patients had gone and the buses had left, the day was not over. The transport truck carrying equipment got stuck in the soft ground behind the school. It took almost two more hours to find a tractor to free the truck. The remaining team reached the hotel only after 10:00 pm. It had been a long day but filled with the satisfaction of knowing that they were able to provide loving, compassionate, and much-needed healthcare to an underserved community—where access to specialist healthcare can be challenging.

Vatukoula: Service Doesn't Wait for Perfect Circumstances

The next morning, everyone was ready again despite the long day of service the previous day. On the third day, August 25, the team visited Nelson High School in Vatukoula. Many patients were already waiting when they arrived. The school staff opened the necessary rooms and helped the teams work efficiently. The people of Vatukoula were warm and patient, and it was especially heartening to see many indigenous iTaukei residents come to the camp for health assessment and medical advice. One wheelchair-bound patient required hospital admission and was

transferred to the nearby Tavua Hospital for in-patient management.

The kindness and cooperation shown by patients, local volunteers, and school staff created a wonderful atmosphere. Despite the logistical challenges, the dedication and teamwork of everyone involved ensured that the Vatukoula medical camp was a complete success.

Nawaicoba: First Camp Becomes a First Hope

On the fourth day, August 26, the healthcare mission traveled about one and a half hours to Nawaicoba in the rural interior of Nadi, where access to specialist healthcare was limited. The school provided an excellent setting, and the community extended a warm welcome. A striking feature of the day was the number of patients with lumps and skin lesions requiring minor surgical procedures. **The headmaster remarked that this was the first medical mission of its kind ever held at the school. By the end of the day, the team had seen 354 patients** and made 45 referrals to the local Subdivisional Medical Officer for further assessment and management.

That same day, the Sri Sathya Sai Specialist Medical Centre, a part of Visei-sei Sai Health Centre, newly established

by SSSIO Fiji, hosted a pre-booked endoscopy session. **Six patients underwent upper and/or lower gastrointestinal endoscopy, and gastrointestinal malignancies were detected in three cases.** The cardiologist, who had only one day left before returning to Australia, also traveled to Vuda to provide a cardiological evaluation for the newly appointed tribal chief of the area, known as Tui Vuda. The day was another reminder of the many unmet healthcare needs and how timely access to specialist expertise can make a difference.

Cuvu: Patience to See Patients

On the fifth day, August 27, the team took about two hours to reach Cuvu College in Sigatoka. The school opened shortly before 7:00 am and provided a well-organized venue. Many patients arrived with significant, multiple medical conditions, requiring doctors to spend considerable time listening patiently, assessing, and advising. Limited local resources and difficulties accessing medical specialists and tertiary hospital care remained recurring concerns. By the end of the camp, **SSSIO volunteers had seen 382 patients and made 23 formal referrals**, while others were given recommendations to continue evaluation with their regular doctors. Even the long return journey, due to traffic delays and difficult road conditions, could not diminish the satisfaction of serving the community with love and compassion.

Lautoka: Immense Need Despite Nearby Hospital

Then came the final camp at Gurukul Primary School in Lautoka on August 28. It became the busiest of the entire series of medical camps. Although the school was close to Aspen Medical Lautoka Hospital, people arrived in large numbers. Some had traveled from distant towns after hearing about the camp at the last moment. Registration had to close earlier than planned, **yet the teams still attended to 585 patients, with 51 referrals for further investigation and management.**

The surgeons again encountered many patients with lumps and other lesions requiring removal. Some had waited for these procedures for many years, and the lesions had caused considerable discomfort and affected their daily lives. Behind every clinical statistic was a touching story of someone who had waited, endured, hoped, and finally found help. The extraordinary turnout also revealed the trust the community had placed in the medical mission of the SSSIO, serving the ongoing need for healthcare. Despite the intense workload, the volunteers continued to provide assessment, treatment, education, and follow-up advice diligently.

Beyond Six Days

By the end of the six days, 2,274 patients had received healthcare, but the mission's reach had extended far beyond that number. The team identified 197 patients with more complex medical needs and referred them for further investigation, specialist assessment, and ongoing





management. **Many will continue to be served through the Viseisei Sai Specialist Centre.** Thus, the medical camps are evolving from episodic outreach into an integrated approach, bringing together clinical services, multidisciplinary care, education, referral pathways, and continuing care.

Recognition for Selfless Service

The impact of this healthcare service is being recognized beyond the medical camps. **Dr. Dinesh Lal**, the Co-Chair of the SSSIO International Medical Committee, received an honorary appointment as an Adjunct Professor at UPSM&HS for three years from September 15, 2026, opening opportunities for teaching, mentoring, research, and academic collaboration.

Dr. Prashanth Hari Dass, an oncologist from Rotorua, New Zealand, and an integral member of the Sai Medical Unit for more than two decades, also received an honorary appointment as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Fiji's UPSM&HS for three years. Such recognition is deeply humbling, and it also opens new avenues for service.

The doctors themselves viewed these appointments as yet another expression of Swami's infinite love and grace, creating opportunities to take small

but meaningful steps in His mission. Mention must be made of **Dr. Rajat Gyaneshwar**, who was instrumental in initiating these appointments, and of **Dr. Swaran Naidu**, whose vision, encouragement, and support have contributed enormously to the strength and continuity of healthcare services. **Both these Sai doctors have long-standing records of serving the needy people of Fiji lovingly and faithfully, following the teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.**

The Past, the Present, and the Future of Seva

And perhaps that is the most inspiring part of the story. The past, present, and future of service converged in Fiji.

The past is the beautiful legacy of medical outreach—the accumulated experience and commitment to reach those who need care the most. The present is what unfolded over those six days. Thousands of people were seen and many were identified for further treatment. Communities opened their schools and hearts, and doctors, nurses, and volunteers worked together across disciplines and borders. The future is already taking shape—in the medical and nursing students being trained, in the young professionals seeing selfless service as part of their calling, and in

the new volunteers whose hearts are joining those who have served for years, with enthusiasm.

But the future extends even further. **The response from the communities themselves shows that seva has a way of uniting and multiplying. Teachers sacrificed their holidays. School staff gave their time. Local volunteers gave their energy. Patients gave their trust and patience.** Those who witnessed the service were inspired to consider what they too could do for others. And the camp united all of them in a bond of love and service.

That is why selfless service is truly a win-win-win. The patient receives healing. The professional finds joy in serving. The student receives an education that no textbook can provide. The volunteer receives the opportunity for self-trans-

formation. The community receives not only healthcare but also an example that inspires it to give. In the end, it becomes impossible to say who gave and who received.

The 2026 Fiji mission therefore leaves behind much more than a successful medical camp. It leaves behind a living continuum: a beautiful past that has brought the service here, a beautiful present in which love has been translated into care, and a beautiful future in which the seeds of service are already taking root in new generations.

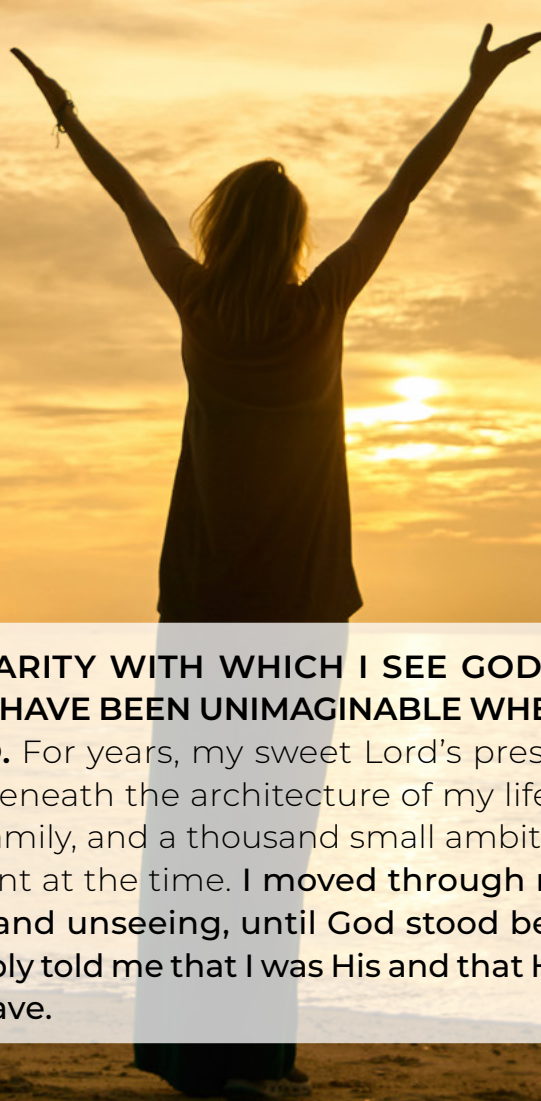
This is perhaps the true measure of seva—not simply how many people were served, but how many hearts were touched and inspired.

SSSIO Zone 3 Medical Team



GOD'S REASSURANCE

“I Will Always Be With You”



THE CLARITY WITH WHICH I SEE GOD TODAY WOULD HAVE BEEN UNIMAGINABLE WHEN I WAS A CHILD. For years, my sweet Lord's presence lay buried beneath the architecture of my life—school, career, family, and a thousand small ambitions that felt urgent at the time. I moved through my days, chaotic and unseeing, until God stood before me and simply told me that I was His and that He would never leave.

Early Years with Swami

I hold a quiet, unshakeable conviction that Lord Sai has walked beside me longer than memory can reach, perhaps across lives I cannot recall. I first came to know Swami in Fiji, where I was born—the fifth generation of a family descended from Indian indentured laborers shipped across the ocean in the 1800s to work the sugarcane fields. My ancestors rose before the sun and came home long after dark, working tirelessly under a punishing sky for endless days. My maternal grandfather, I was told, was born beside the tracks of a sugarcane railroad, his mother having kept working the fields until the moment she delivered him. I owe everything I am to their endurance and faith in God.

I was about six when my parents first heard the name Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Friends invited them to an *akhandā bhajan* (continuous devotional singing) in Labasa, our hometown, where they watched children not much older than me sing to Swami with pure love and devotion. Soon after, my sister Kajal and I enrolled in the local *Bal Vikas* (Sai Spiritual Education, or SSE) program, and Swami, quietly, almost without our noticing, became a vital part of our childhood.

My First Gurus

Looking back, my earliest and most important education in God came from my parents. Ours was not a religious household in a formal sense. Wherever God is, by whatever name we call God, God feels our love. My parents embodied Swami's teachings: "Service to man is service to God"; "Help Ever, Hurt Never"; and "Always speak the truth."

Service was simply what we did. Nearly every Sunday found us at the Old Age

Home, fruit or snacks in hand. **To this day, my parents give themselves wholly to whatever act of service is within reach, without show. There was another rule in our house, never stated but absolutely binding: we did not speak ill of others.** When my sister or I arrived home with a complaint, our parents gently steered us toward kindness, or at least forgiveness.

Then came a lesson I learned the hard way. I was about nine when I stole a candy bar while shopping with my mother. She sensed it—the Sai mother in her always did—the instant we walked through our door. She had me write an apology note, drove me back to the store, and stood beside me as I handed it over, apologized, and paid for what I'd taken. The lesson has stayed with me since then. I am endlessly grateful to Swami for the gift of two such quietly divine souls who raised me.

A Presence I Couldn't See

In 1989, my family left Fiji for Seattle, USA. Amid the disassembly and reassembly of a life with a new house, a new school, and a new language of daily living, a small pin bearing images of Swami and Shirdi Sai Baba, which I wore as part of my SSE uniform, found its way onto our home altar. We did not sing *bhajans* or read Sai literature, and for years, that pin was the only visible connection we had with Swami. And yet every time I passed the altar, my eyes went to His image, and I would wonder what He was doing in India at that very moment. **I believe now that it was Swami, gently and without insistence, reminding me that however far I wandered, I had never left His side.**

By senior year of high school, Swami had receded into the background—present, but unattended to, like a porch light left

on during the daytime. Had I known then what He would say in a 2006 Maha Shivaratri discourse: *“Never be under the mistaken notion that God does not know what is happening. ... Do not doubt or deny His existence just because He is not visible to the naked eye,”* I might have understood sooner that He was present in every one of those seconds, including those when I forgot Him.

I went on to the University of Washington to study business. I was never a gifted student, limping toward the final term of my final year, while carrying a difficult upper-level accounting course I’d put off as long as possible. My grade was stuck at a flat D; I needed at least a C minus to graduate. I studied for hours before the final examination, but with little confidence. The night before, exhausted and heavy with worry, I fell asleep.

His Presence Shown

That night, I had my first dream about Swami. He appeared in the doorway of my bedroom. Even inside the dream, my first coherent thought was: How is Sai Baba, all the way from India, standing in my room? I screamed for my parents, “Sai Baba is here, help!” but no one came. Swami walked calmly toward me, stood beside my head, smiled, and said, with perfect clarity and gentleness, *“I will always be with you.”* He lingered for a moment more, then vanished as peacefully as He had arrived. I couldn’t fathom what had just happened. Swami had stood so still in that doorway. The lights were on, and I could see, quite distinctly, the soft halo around His hair. It did not feel like a dream. It felt vivid, luminous, real, and I lay awake long afterward, thinking about what I had just experienced.

I did not grasp the magnitude of what had happened until years later. Swami once explained, in a discourse, that ordinary dreams are merely reflections of what already lives within us. But dreams in which He appears are not of that kind. He comes only when He chooses to, never simply because we long for Him.

The next morning, I sat for the accounting examination and, by God’s grace, passed with a C minus. I have never, before or since, been so thrilled by a C minus. It meant I would finally graduate.

Finding My Sai Family

After graduation, I found a Sai Center near home and began attending its weekly programs, where I discovered a Sai family bound together by love for the same Lord. I threw myself into serving Him through many Center activities. **Not long after, I met my future husband—by chance, though nothing offered by Bhagawan is ever random.** He was already a devoted follower of Swami, and I remain eternally grateful that Swami set us on this path together.

Seeing God in India

We married in 2000. A couple of years later, we felt the pull to travel to Puttaparthi and see Swami with our own eyes. An ‘aunty’ at our Center suggested I simply write Swami a letter asking for permission. I placed my letter requesting a visit on our small prayer altar and waited for a sign.

Weeks passed without one. Still, to keep the hope alive, I looked up the airfare between Seattle and Bangalore and quietly built a budget of about \$2,500 for a two-week trip. It was 2002, when the world was a whole lot cheaper. But it was discouraging, since we had just bought our first small home and had little left

“I believe that if each of us paused, even briefly, to look inward, we would find our own moment—or many moments—of joy drawn straight from God’s pure love.”

over for a journey halfway around the globe. Our merciful Swami answered our prayers. About two months later, our tax return resulted in a refund of \$2,900, which was \$400 more than we needed. We booked the flights immediately.

We arrived in Puttaparthi brimming with anticipation, only to learn that Swami had left that morning for Brindavan for the summer. It was our first trip to India; smartphones did not yet exist, and we genuinely didn’t know where Brindavan was. Nearly 24 hours into the trip, thoroughly exhausted, we had no idea what to do next.

Then, as a father keeps a watchful eye on his children, Swami came to our rescue, yet again. A stranger approached us, said he’d heard we hoped for Swami’s *darshan* (sacred sight of the Divine), and offered to drive us to Whitefield. We got into his car, based on faith alone. By the time we arrived, it was dark; this kind man helped us find a hotel and told us we could go for *darshan* in the morning.

We rose early, joined the token line, and I could hardly believe it when I drew my seat in Row 2. I filled page after page of a notebook while I waited, writing ‘Om Sai Ram’ again and again. I was so absorbed

that I never noticed that the *Seva Dals* (volunteers) were asking two women in Row 1 to move until one tapped my shoulder and told me to move to Row 1. I felt as though I had won the lottery of a lifetime. I was ever so close to Bhagawan.

That *darshan* still plays in slow motion whenever I remember it. Swami glided down the aisle, His orange robe more pristine than I had ever imagined it to be, with the halo near His head ever so radiant. Time seemed to stop, and the noise quieted, and it was just Swami and me. He stood a few feet from where I sat during *arati* (waving of lamps), His arms moving gently with the music, His face smiling with warmth. **At the end, He offered each of us His majestic ‘abhaya hasta’ (raised-hand) blessing. That moment has never left me—even now, whenever *arati* is sung, I am carried straight back to Brindavan, and the same bliss rises in me again.**

Letting Go of the Physical Form

After that first trip, we returned to India nearly every year. Our son, Sidhaarth, was born in 2004 and began making the journey with us from infancy. Swami was the center of our lives. When Bhagawan

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left His physical form in 2011, I, like millions around the world, was shocked and saddened to hear the news. In my heart of hearts, though, I hadn’t wanted Swami to suffer for us in His body any longer. **And I earnestly believed that God would remain with each of us at the center of our hearts, even if we couldn’t see Him physically in India.**

Keeping God in My Heart

It is one thing to believe God can live in my heart, unmoved by His physical absence. It is another to live with that belief. We traveled to Puttaparthi for a USA Youth Pilgrimage in November 2011, our first visit since Swami left His body. Prasanthi Nilayam felt hollow, like a house whose heartbeat had gone quiet.

A few months before leaving for Puttaparthi, Swami came to me in a dream and said, “*I am giving you a child.*” Soon after, we learned we were expecting our second child and were overwhelmed with gratitude. By the time we reached Puttaparthi, I was just shy of completing my first trimester and fighting near-constant nausea. But on Swami’s birthday, I felt well enough to attend the USA young adult offering

in Sai Kulwant Hall. Sitting there, looking toward His *samadhi* (sacred resting place) and image on the wall, grief overtook me. I missed Him, not abstractly, but with my whole body, and could not reconcile myself to the fact that there would be no *darshan* that day. My eyes closed, tears coming quietly, and then, without warning, I heard a voice, unmistakable and clear: “*I am giving you a daughter. Be happy.*”

I opened my eyes in a reaction close to shock. Did I just hear Swami’s voice? I looked straight at His picture, and He smiled back at me, radiant—there was no mistaking whose voice it was. By then, I had had several dreams of Him and had sat in Sai Kulwant Hall listening to His discourses in person. **I knew, without needing to argue with myself, that I had just heard the voice of God, that when I called for Him from the deepest place in my heart, I found Him exactly where I had always imagined He would be.** My grief turned quite suddenly into tears of joy. I kept the experience to myself for months, until a sonogram confirmed what Swami had already shared: our baby was a girl. We named her Saiesha, *blessing of Sai*.

God's Presence

The years since 2011 have brought me closer to God than I could imagine, and my recognition of His presence is unlike anything I could have described to my younger self. **Duty, discipline, and devotion—these were vital in revealing God's presence to me.** It's only through Bhagawan's divine grace that my husband and I have had the opportunity to serve in His organization since we were young adults. We consider each opportunity to serve Bhagawan a privilege of this lifetime. A few disciplines that I've learned from the elders in our organization have helped me see, feel, and hear Swami more consistently and with greater devotion:

- I read Swami's teachings regularly—even five unhurried minutes of reading His words help me feel closer to Him.
- I write in a gratitude journal regularly, closing the day by thanking Bhagawan for spending it with me.

- I chant the *Gayatri Mantra* daily and find it helps me feel His presence.
- And whatever I am living through, good or difficult, I try to remind myself that it is, in fact, good for me, since nothing happens without purpose.

I am eternally grateful to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for being my best friend, my savior, my God, my path, and my destination. I feel His unmistakable presence, and each new experience sharpens that recognition. **I believe that if each of us paused, even briefly, to look inward, we would find our own moment—or many moments—of joy drawn straight from God's pure love.** Swami, may we continue to see, feel, and experience Your presence in every moment.

Jai Sai Ram.

Dr. Komal Ram
USA



***Dr. Komal Ram** lives in Southern California, USA. She was first introduced to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as a Group 1 Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) student in Fiji. Her family emigrated to Seattle, USA, in 1989, and Swami has guided her ever since. She has served in the SSSIO as a Center president and as the Female Young Adult representative for SSSIO USA, Region 6. She has also been an SSE Group 4 teacher for nearly 10 years. Currently, she supports the International SSSIO Media team as an analyst. Dr. Ram and her husband, Balbir, are active members of the Sai Prema Nilayam devotional group in Riverside, California. Professionally, she holds a doctorate in Business Administration and is a professor of Business Management.*

from the International Sai Young Adults

The Vedas are a Living Tradition



The 22nd Veda Webinar, held as part of the SSSIO International Young Adults Veda Programme, took place on September 19, 2026, and featured Mr. Sathya Zadeh, who spoke on the topic “The Vedas are a Living Tradition.” The online session was attended by 129 participants on Zoom, with live translation in Russian and Spanish.

The program began with live Vedic *mantra* chanting and opening prayers, followed by Mr. Sathya Zadeh’s insightful sharing on his lifelong relationship with the Vedas. Drawing from his personal journey, he reflected on how his connection with Vedic chanting began in childhood through his family’s relationship with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He shared how, as a young Iranian child, he began chanting Vedic *mantras* simply by listening to them during his family’s visits to Prasanthi Nilayam. His natural aptitude for chanting was recognized at an early age, and he went on to chant Sri Rudram during the Ati Rudra Mahayajna in 2006, at the age of eight.

Mr. Zadeh also recalled a memorable interaction with Bhagawan in 2008,

when Swami asked him to chant a passage from the Rig Veda, Sri Rudram, and Sri Suktam. Reflecting on these experiences as an adult, Mr. Zadeh shared that the *mantras* he had initially learned as sounds gradually became sources of deeper inquiry and understanding. The Vedas, he emphasized, are not limited by nationality, language, caste, or religion, but represent a living tradition of humanity’s timeless search for truth, purpose, and the Divine.

A key message of the session was that learning the Vedas should go beyond memorizing and chanting. While preserving the purity of the oral tradition is important, Mr. Zadeh encouraged Young Adults to cultivate curiosity, study the meaning of the *mantras* and, most importantly, turn their inquiry inward. He said the Vedas teach us how to ask deeper questions about life, suffering, identity, prosperity, God, and the Self. The session concluded with an engaging Q&A with participants, followed by announcements and *arati*. The recording of the webinar is available on YouTube and the Vedas page, <https://sathyasai.org/ya/vedas>.



Obstacles as Steps, Success as Footprints

Young Adults (YAs) of SSSIO Sri Lanka held their Young Adults' Retreat for the Northern and North Central Regions from July 3-5, 2026, at Mullai Poonka, Iyakkachchi, under the inspiring theme, *"Obstacles as Steps, Success as Footprints."*

The three-day retreat brought together 130 participants, including 93 Young Adults, 22 Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) students, and 15 adults. Young Adults from across Sri Lanka, along with three Zone 3 YAs from New Zealand and Australia, also participated, strengthening inter-regional unity and fellowship. The retreat was designed to inspire YAs to turn life's challenges into opportunities for growth while strengthening their spiritual foundation through the teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The program focused on developing leadership, self-confidence, discipline, and a spirit of selfless service.

The retreat featured a blend of spiritual, educational, recreational, and service-oriented activities. Interactive workshops on Mind Management, and Money and Time Management deepened participants' understanding of spiritual values and provided practical life skills. The "Swami Within Me" experience-sharing session offered participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences with Bhagawan. A quiz titled "Find the Final

Goal" encouraged participants to reflect on the purpose and direction of their spiritual journey.

The retreat also offered opportunities for teamwork, leadership, and healthy interaction through traditional games and a campfire featuring musical performances. A beach yoga session encouraged participants to nurture their physical and mental well-being while connecting with nature's serenity. A major highlight of the retreat was the multi-service program held in Vettalaikerny Village, which reached approximately 250 residents. The activities brought together several dimensions of service at different venues, including a general medical clinic, an eye clinic, and a dental clinic. An Education in Human Values program was conducted for school students, while a Q&A session provided an opportunity for new Sai members to learn and engage. The service activities also included *narayana seva* (serving food to the needy as worship), with food distributed to village members.

Participants returned home with renewed enthusiasm. The retreat combined personal transformation with community service, strengthened unity among participants from several regions, and reinforced their commitment to spiritual values and selfless service.

His Greatest Miracle is the Transformation Within Us

WE CAN NEVER TRULY SAY WHEN OUR JOURNEY WITH SWAMI BEGAN.

Certainly, it did not begin in this lifetime alone. Nevertheless, to share my experiences with you all, I can say that I came to Swami only after 2011, the year of His *Mahasamadhi*.

My mother is a Christian, and my father also did not know much about Swami. Someone gave my parents His books and photographs and advised them to worship Him. After that, through Swami's grace, my elder brother was born seven years after my parents' marriage.

Although His books and photographs had remained in our home since my childhood, I did not know much about Him. On Thursdays, we observed a vegetarian diet. No one taught us about Swami or told us that He is God and that we must worship Him. My parents simply had deep faith that they were blessed with children only through Swami's grace. Their gratitude and love for Him were expressed through their unwavering faith.

When I was in Grade 6, my reading choice led me to spiritual books. The

first book I read was the biography of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. As I read about the Dakshineswar Kali Temple, the Panchavati gardens, and the events in his daily life, I could feel the depth of his yearning for the Divine. Whether it was his yearning for Lord Rama and the vision he received, or his longing to behold Mother Kali, his intense longing for God and devotion deeply touched my heart. I, too, began to feel a similar yearning, and tears would well up as I asked, **"Who is my God? Who is my chosen deity? When will I see Him?"** This longing shaped much of my life.

I began reading Sai literature at home, but something was still missing. I would stand before His photograph and ask, "Who are You? Are You God? Why is Your photograph kept with the pictures of the other deities?"

While other deities were depicted with multiple arms and faces, bedecked with jewelry, Swami, by contrast, appeared like a renunciate, dressed in a simple orange robe, with two hands, looking like an ordinary human being. Even after reading about Swami and learning about the



noble things He had done, these questions remained unanswered, and I never felt the urge to worship Him. When everyone recited the Sai Gayatri at home, I would remain silent.

When You Take the First Step...

In 2019, my brother suggested that we all attend Swami's Birthday celebrations at the nearby Sai Center. Although it was only two weeks before my secondary school examinations, I went with my father.

I didn't know how to conduct myself there. Since I had gone with my father, I sat with him in the men's section. A Sai sister gently guided me to the women's section and explained the dress code at the Sai Center. Everything I learned about the Sai Center began from zero on that day.

I was seated in the very last row, and the *bhajans* were in progress. Without even realizing it, tears began to flow from my eyes. At the end of the session, *arati* was offered. I thought that was a *bhajan* too. The final lines, chanting "*Narayana, Narayana,*" overwhelmed me, and I began to weep uncontrollably.

It was only when everyone chanted the *shanti mantra* that I realized the session had ended. That session had a profound impact on me. All the questions I had carried in my heart were finally answered, and the longing I had for God took shape as a deep attachment to Swami.

Without knowing why, I began attending the weekly Thursday *bhajans* at the Sai Center, simply because I felt a longing for Swami. At that time, I was preparing for my Advanced Level examination, which included special classes. But Swami ensured that Thursdays remained free, so I was able to join the *bhajans*. Every time I went to the Center, I felt recharged. For me, the week began on Thursday. Each Thursday, I would review what I had studied. It became the center point of my week.

Delays Are Not Denials

Whenever I worship Swami, I imagine Him standing before me and having a conversation with me. During one of my prayers, I asked Him: "Swami, I did not participate in Sai Spiritual Education (SSE). When You were in Your physical form, did I even see You once? You could have called me." At that moment,

I received a response from Swami: “*What would you have done on that day?*”

I understood that “that day” referred to April 24, 2011, the day Swami left His physical abode. I was in Grade 3, and the news shocked everyone. Back then, although there was no deep devotion to Swami in our home, we felt we had lost something precious, and I cried. But then my monkey mind said, “I do not even worship Him. I have not even opened my mouth to chant the Sai Gayatri *mantra*. Then, why should I cry? I am not even a devotee.” I wiped my tears and walked away. That memory came back to me during that moment of prayer. It felt as though Swami was telling me: “On that day, if you had had the same kind of love and attachment to Me as you do today, what would you have done? You would have been deeply worried. You were a small child then. It would have been very difficult. There would have been no one to explain and comfort you. That is why I waited all these years and called you at the right time.”

Although I longed to see Swami in person, His love had gone a step ahead and ensured that this delayed calling would spare me from experiencing unimaginable pain as a little child. This understanding became the reason I came closer to Swami. **Many people raise doubts about whether there is any evidence that Swami is still present. To them, I can say that I myself am a testimony.**

Sadhana: The Expression of Faith

In 2020, my father and brother were planning to visit Puttaparthi for Easwaramma Day on May 6, while I was going to stay home with my mother. Even so, I felt that although I couldn’t go, I should live in the same way I would have lived there. After coming to Swami, there should be a transformation within us. I should either give up a bad habit or begin following a good one, as an offering to Swami. I knew how

much Swami had emphasized that children should stay away from the cinema. Although we were not permitted to watch movies at home, I still had an interest in them and would watch them whenever I got an opportunity. It was a major distraction from my studies, and I decided to give them up.

I told myself I should stop watching movies before May 6. Since it was hard to put that into practice right away, as a first step, I decided not to watch them on Thursdays. Around the same time, a lady from the Sai Center gave me a ring with Swami’s picture on it. I longed to have something with Swami’s picture. I had not asked Swami for it, but it felt as though Swami had given it to me. From then on, I wore the ring on Thursdays and decided not to watch movies.

One Thursday, my English class started late. My classmate told me she had a newly released movie on her phone and asked if we could watch it together. The moment I heard the word “movie,” my desire to watch it returned. With a two-hour break and nothing else to do, I agreed. That evening, after returning home from *bhajans*, I noticed my ring was broken. The moment I saw it, I remembered what had happened. It felt as though Swami was asking me: “*Today, you watched a movie, didn’t you?*”

“Oh no! For the sake of a movie, I have lost the ring that Swami gave me,” I thought.

Swami used to say that before hanging a picture, one should first fix the nail and shake it to check whether it is firm. If the nail came out with the picture, it meant it had not been properly fixed. Swami was testing me in the same way.

I made a firm decision. I am not ready to lose my Swami for a movie. I had originally decided to stop watching movies before May 6, and I stuck to that decision.

Of course, Swami tests you again and again. Then the COVID-19 pandemic happened, and the world came to a standstill. Schools, special classes, and even my brother and father's trip to Puttaparthi were canceled. Swami was giving me every opportunity to watch movies. But my determination and promise to Swami protected me from returning to the cinema. He permanently removed that desire from my mind.

When Swami Answers a Prayer

In 2023, the SSSIO International Conference was held in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. I wanted to attend, thinking it would be a wonderful opportunity to spend time remembering Swami. While traveling to the conference, I had a slight health issue. But I didn't want to miss this opportunity given by Swami. I took my medicines and traveled, thinking it would be alright. While at the conference, my health worsened. I also did not have enough medication with me.

At that time, I prayed to Him: "Swami, I have to stay here for two more days, but I do not have enough medicine. I also forgot to bring *vibhuti* with me. Please help me." Usually, *vibhuti* is given at the end of the event. However, I learned that it had not yet been prepared. So, I prayed, "Swami, please give me that *vibhuti* or medicine immediately, or else, I will have to return home."

During the conference, we met many people and special speakers, including Mr. Aravind Balasubramanya. My fellow Sai sisters and I wanted to take a photo-

graph with him. He seemed to be engaged in some urgent work and asked us to take the photograph quickly, and we did so. Afterwards, he suddenly but calmly began taking something out of a bag. The urgency he had shown while taking the photograph was nowhere to be seen. He took out packets of *vibhuti* and *haldi* (turmeric) from his bag and gave them to us, telling us that they had materialized from Swami's picture at a devotee's home.

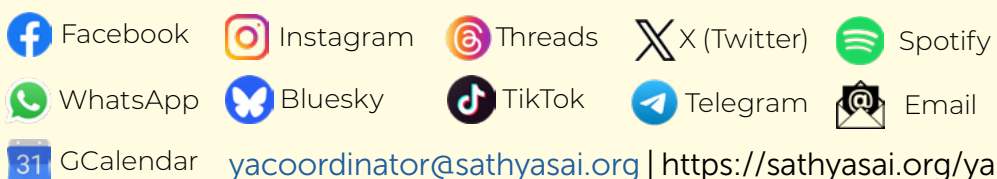
I was greatly surprised. The previous night, I had prayed to Swami that it would be wonderful if I could somehow receive *vibhuti*. Honestly, I had expected only a small amount of the *vibhuti* that was going to be distributed to everyone. Instead, I received *vibhuti* that had come from Swami's picture, which had been specially given to us.

When I look back, I realize that Swami was with me even before I knew Him. He waited for the right time, called me, and showed me that even the smallest step towards Him is met with His grace. These small, simple experiences have strengthened my faith in Him and inspired me to put His words into practice. Perhaps His greatest miracle is the transformation He brings about within us. He is always with us, guiding us, testing us, and waiting for us to take the next step towards Him.

Ms. Divainitha Parameswaran
SRI LANKA



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Sai's Mathematics

The Miracle of Sathya Sai School, Kathmandu, Nepal



Close to the sacred Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu, Nepal, an astounding miracle has quietly unfolded over the past three decades. It is, in many ways, the miracle of Pashupatinath in the form of Parthipuri-nath—the Lord of Puttaparthi, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Humble Beginnings

In 1992, a small school was established in Kathmandu with the noble purpose of providing education rooted in human values to the children of Nepal. **The following year, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba spoke to a group of teachers and the Principal and blessed the school with the words, “Every good work is God’s work.”** Little could anyone have imagined how prophetic those words would prove to be.

The journey was never easy. The school was initially handed over to the Sathya Sai Center at Naxal, Narayan Chaur, but declining enrollment and operational difficulties

soon threatened its future. Eventually, a group of teachers took responsibility for running it independently, and the school moved to its present location at Gaushala, near Pashupatinath.

Even then, survival was a daily challenge. With few students, limited fee income, high rental costs, and the need to retain professional teachers, the school was under enormous pressure. Then came the earthquake of 2015, the COVID pandemic, and rising inflation. Many times, the school seemed to be standing on the edge of collapse.

Divine Mathematics at Work

But whenever dark clouds seemed to fill the skies, hiding the sunshine, the devotees held on to Sai’s name. And by His grace, the school survived. Many other schools around it merged with larger institutions or closed altogether. This little school continued its journey with minimal facilities and modest means. It does not boast a long list



Current school principal, Mrs. Anju Koirala, receives the “National Service Award” from the chief guest, Honourable Ram Kumar Shrestha, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, on 19 Ashwin 2070 (Nepali calendar).



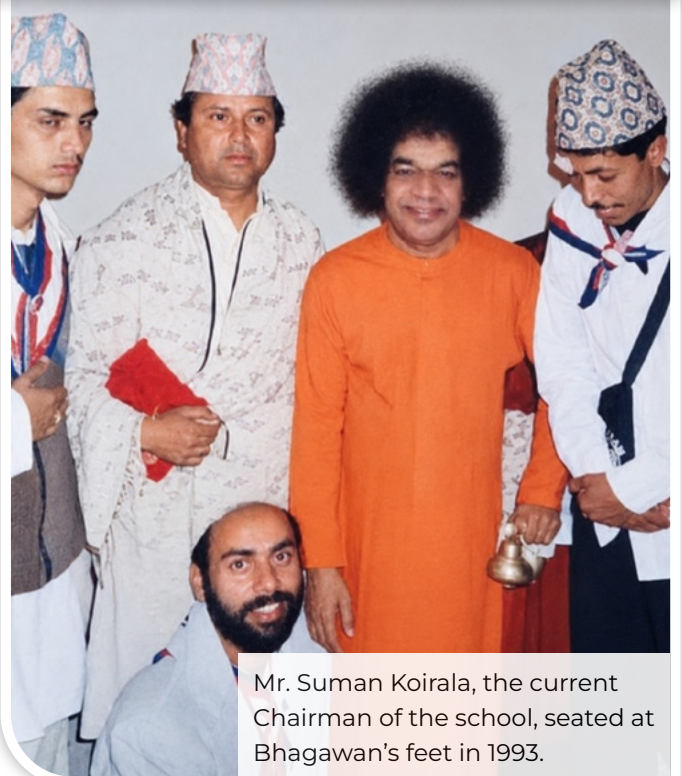
of influential alumni or prominent personalities. But it has something far more precious: sincerity in carrying out Swami’s work.

The devotees have a simple explanation for its survival: “Swami’s mathematics works.” **While a school with modest fees and disproportionately high expenses should have closed long ago, this institution is sustained by the conviction that even the smallest good deed, when done sincerely and dedicated to Swami, attracts divine grace.**

Education is for Life

Today, Sathya Sai School, Kathmandu, is an English-medium, residential institution serving around 160 students, supported by 26 teaching and 10 non-teaching staff. From nursery through Grade 10, the school provides integral education where emphasis is not only on academic excellence, but also on character development, discipline, spirituality, and service. Its philosophy is beautifully encapsulated by Bhagawan’s teaching, *“Education is for life, not merely for a living.”*

The school seeks to nurture children who are academically competent, morally responsible, compassionate, and socially conscious. Science and computer education, sports, music, the arts, and educational excursions



Mr. Suman Koirala, the current Chairman of the school, seated at Bhagawan’s feet in 1993.





Mr. Krishna Srinivasan, Director (Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation), delivering his address during the school's accreditation process.



Left to Right: Mr. Prabhat Adhikari (NCP, SSSIO Nepal), Mrs. Anju Koirala (Principal), Mr. Suman Koirala (Chairman), Mr. Aravind Balasubramanya (SSSIO Media Team), Mr. Krishna Srinivasan (Director, SSSWF).

complement classroom learning, while close teacher-student interaction provides individual guidance and support.

Yet the distinctive character of the school lies beyond academics. Each day begins with prayer and concludes with meditation. *Bhajans* (devotional singing) and devotional activities form part of student life, while *seva* (selfless service) takes the children beyond the school campus. They participate in cleaning rivers and neighborhoods, maintaining their surroundings and helping those in need. In this way, they discover that education is not confined to books and examinations; it is also about learning to care.

The school has become a platform for service and worship, not only for students but also for teachers and devotees. Some teachers have remained associated with the institution for decades. This is a remarkable testament to the bond of love they feel with the school.

A School That Became a Refuge

That spirit of service became especially visible during times of crisis. Following the devastating earthquake in 2015, the school

opened its free kitchen to neighbors and surrounding communities. During the COVID pandemic, it provided free food to staff in need as well as others from the local area. Such moments reveal that the school is not merely providing an education but working to develop character in students who will serve society with love and compassion.

Parents, too, speak of the school as a safe, caring environment where their children are treated almost like family. **Teachers have witnessed remarkable transformations in students who once struggled with discipline and behavior. The school's influence extends quietly into homes and families, helping children discover a different way of living.**

Swami's Helping Hand through the SSSIO

For many years, the school managed with very little external assistance. Then came another expression of Swami's grace through the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO), which was founded and nurtured by Swami. The school received accreditation and support in several areas, strengthening its operation and providing encouragement for its future. For those who had carried the institution through years of uncertainty, this was more than institutional assistance. It felt like Swami Himself was reaching out through His Organization.

SSSIO accreditation of the Sathya Sai School of Nepal means the school has reflected on all aspects of its program and culture in light of the Sathya Sai School Guidelines approved by Swami Himself. A visit to the school by SSSIO representatives confirms that the Certificate of Accreditation will adorn the hallowed halls of a school providing quality education in a culture of love and selfless service.

The SSSIO continues to be an instrument through which Swami's message reaches the world—not merely through words, but through education, service, love, and transformation. In Kathmandu, that message is embodied in this school that has flourished against all odds.

The school began its journey with His personal blessing and has continued because He has never withdrawn His hand. The Principal, associated with the school for three decades, describes the journey as *tapas* (penance) and feels blessed to have been chosen to serve there. The Chairman echoes the same faith: every difficulty has only strengthened the resolve to take refuge at Swami's lotus feet and chant His name.

And that is the real miracle!

SSSIO Nepal



Upcoming SSSIO Online Events

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

Date of Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
November 14-15, 2026	Saturday-Sunday	Worldwide Akhanda Bhajan
November 23, 2026	Monday	101st Birthday Celebrations of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
December 12-13, 2026	Saturday-Sunday	Worldwide Akhanda Gayatri
December 25, 2026	Friday	Christmas



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



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



Offer your entire self, your entire life, to Him; then your adoration will transform and transmute you so fast and completely that you and He can be merged into One. He thinks, feels and acts as you do; you think, feel and act as He does. You will be transformed as a rock is transformed by the sculptor, into an idol, deserving the worship of generations of sincere men. In the process you will have to bear many a hammer stroke, many a chisel-wound, for He is the sculptor. He is but releasing you from petrification! Offer your heart to the Lord, let the rest of you suffer transformation at His hands. Do not defile time, or the physical sheath, or this life's chance, using them for paltry ends.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

November 23, 1968



sathyasai.org

Love All • Serve All
Help Ever • Hurt Never

