SATHYA SAI

THE ETERNAL COMPANION

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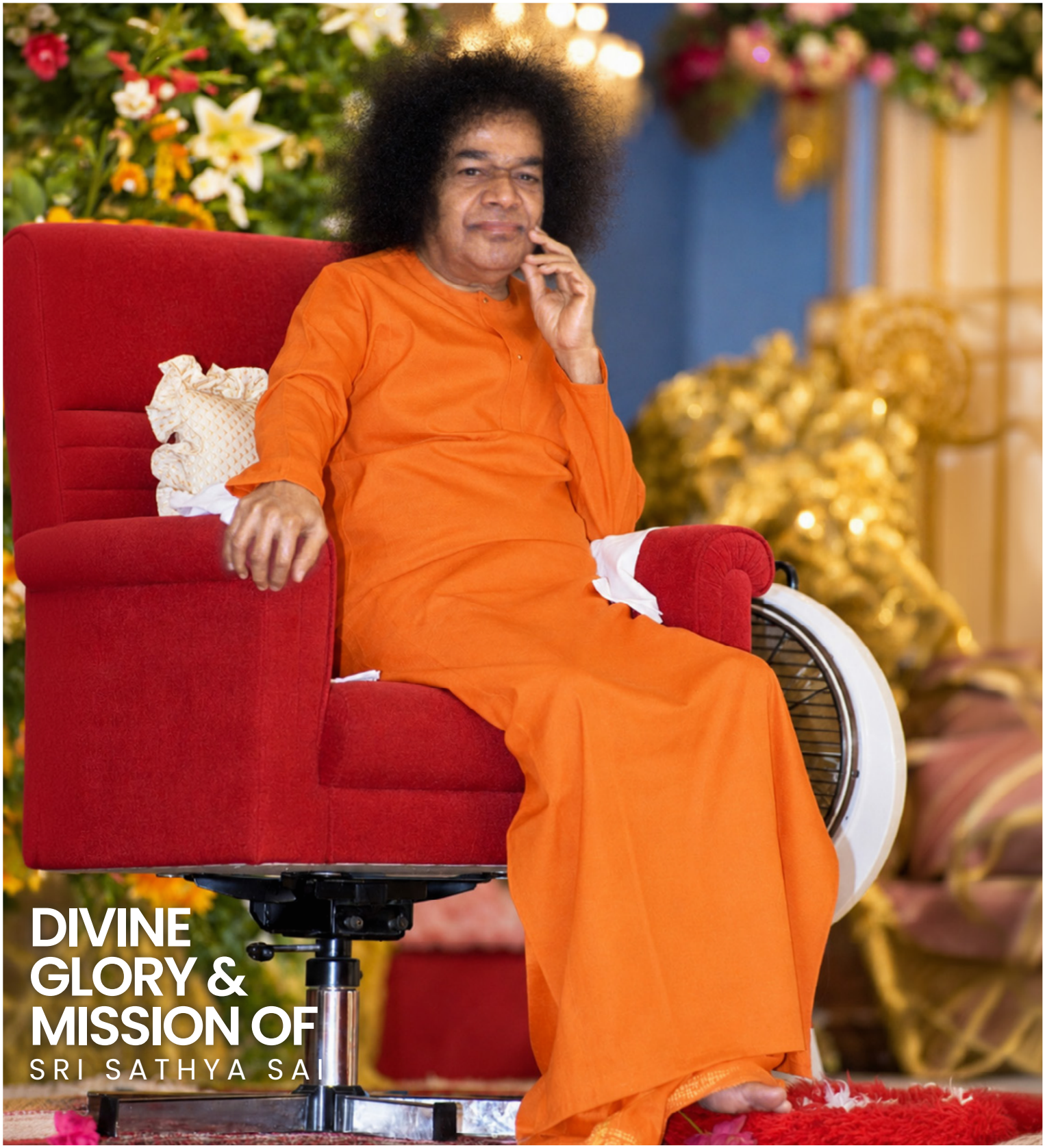

DIVINE GLORY & MISSION OF SRI SATHYA SAI

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All should realize that they come from God. All are children of God. Everyone should seek to get nearer and nearer to God. That is *sadhana* (spiritual practice). You must feel that God is *Hridayavasi* (dwells in the heart). You must develop compassion in the heart, because without it, the heart is only a stone. That is the message of Jesus–the message of love. Love is God. Live in love.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
December 25, 1996



DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO

BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA



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Editorial

NO REASON FOR LOVE NO SEASON FOR LOVE

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy and holy New Year 2027, filled with peace and love. This is the time of the year when we celebrate the birthday of Lord Jesus Christ, the messenger of love, with beautiful decorations, lighting lamps, putting up Christmas trees, exchanging gifts, and enjoying feasts. It is wonderful and joyful to have these festivities, but, more importantly, Swami says that these holidays become holy days when we understand their spiritual significance.

We should understand the inner significance and deeper meaning of Christmas. Lord Jesus said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)

Parable of the Sower and the Three Dolls

Lord Jesus once shared a beautiful parable. He spoke about a farmer who went out to sow seeds. Some seeds fell on rocky ground and could not take root. Others fell among thorny bushes, which choked them and prevented them from growing. But some seeds fell on fertile soil, grew, and yielded a bountiful harvest of a hundredfold (Matthew 13:3-8).

In this parable, the seed represents the Word of God. The Word reaches some people whose hearts are hard like a stone, with no love. It yields no results. Others receive the Word, but because of challenges and negative influences, which are like thorny bushes, the teachings do not bear fruit in them. **However, some souls are good–akin to fertile ground–in whom the Word settles, takes deep roots, and produces manifold results. Their love for God increases, and they share that love with everyone.**

Swami also relates a similar story in His discourse of August 22, 1996, about the riddle of the three dolls to illustrate the different types of people who listen to His divine discourses. In this story, a sculptor brings three identical dolls to King Bhoja's court. The king's minister tests them with a wire to rank them. When a wire is pushed into one ear of the first doll, it comes out through the other ear. In the second doll, it comes out through the mouth. But in the third, it goes in and does not come out at all. The court decides that the first doll is inferior, the second mediocre, and the third superior.

Swami explains that people are like these dolls. For many, the teachings go in through one ear and go out through the other. He says that these devotees are the inferior kind; they do not even grasp the meaning of the discourses.

The second category consists of those who listen to the discourses and contemplate them. They may give talks on the teachings



Some souls are good–akin to fertile ground–in whom the Word settles, takes deep roots, and produces manifold results.

or even write books. They are better, but they are still not up to the mark, as they do not practice the teachings. Swami jokingly calls them "platform heroes and practical zeros." These are the mediocre devotees.

But there is a superior category of devotees who listen to the divine Word, contemplate it, digest it, assimilate it, and put it into practice. These are the salt of the earth. **They are great souls. When you are around such spiritual seekers, you can feel divine love, supreme peace, and divine joy. That is what we should aspire to become.**

Three Stages of Spiritual Growth

There is a natural progression in one's spiritual journey that Swami explains in many of His divine discourses, including the Christmas 1998 discourse in this issue. He says that Jesus first affirmed that He was "the messenger of God," sent to share God's love. As He progressed spiritually, He declared that He was "the Son of God." Finally, He affirmed the highest truth, "I and My Father are one." This natural progression in the spiritual journey applies to everyone who is a spiritual seeker. In the beginning, we think of ourselves as servants of God.

Swami illustrates this through the story of Lord Hanuman. There is a gigantic 65-foot statue of Hanuman at Hill View Stadium in Puttaparthi, towering above the statues of the other gods. This reflects the importance Swami gives to this exemplary and dedicated devotee.

Lord Rama once asked Hanuman, "What do you think of Me?" Hanuman replied with all humility, "Lord, when I identify with the body, I think I am Your servant *(dasa)*. I wish to serve You, Your devotees, and all of creation." This is the path of *karma yoga* (selfless action). This is the first stage, when we possess body consciousness. In *Vedanta* (the culmination of the Vedas), this corresponds to *dvaita* (dualism).

Hanuman said, "But when I think of myself as being a divine spark *(amsha)*, I know that I am a part of You." Here the attitude is that of *bhakti yoga* (devotion) and *raja yoga* (meditation). This is like being the Son of God, an heir to His domain, where we develop the same qualities as the Lord. This means being like Jesus, like Sai–full of love, compassion, and noble qualities. This corresponds to *vishishtadvaita* (qualified non-dualism).

Then Hanuman continued, "When I am aware that I am the *Atma*, there is no difference between You and me. You and I are one." This is the path of *jnana yoga* (wisdom), the final stage, corresponding to *advaita* (non-dualism).

This teaching applies to all of us. **We must progress from being messengers of God, sharing His love with everyone, to becoming like the Son of God, embodying His qualities by living in love and serving all. Finally, we must realize that we are verily God, embodiments of the *Atma*.**

Let us explore a few important points on how we can progress toward this ultimate goal.

The Essentials–Purity and Sincerity

First, we must understand and develop divine love–unconditional love.

Let us recall the parable of the two debtors related by Lord Jesus. On one occasion, a Jewish religious leader, a Pharisee named Simon, invited Jesus to a meal. While Jesus was reclining at the table, a woman of ill repute came and fell at His feet. She brought an alabaster flask of perfume oil. Weeping, she washed His feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed them again and again, and anointed them with the perfume.

Simon was critical of Jesus. He wondered how Jesus could allow this woman to worship Him when she was not of good character and considered a sinner. Like our Swami, Jesus knew people's thoughts. He immediately said to Simon, "Simon, I have something to say to you." Simon replied, "Master, say on."

Jesus then described two people who owed money to the same creditor. One owed 500 denarii, and the other owed 50 denarii, and neither had the money to repay the debt. The creditor generously forgave both debts. Jesus then asked Simon: "Which of them will love him most?" Simon answered that it would be the person who had been forgiven for the larger debt. Jesus replied: "Thou hast rightly judged." (Luke 7:42-43)

The meaning is profound. When people recognize the greatness of the forgiveness they have received, their hearts overflow with gratitude and love. Jesus now turned toward the woman but continued speaking to Simon. He pointed out three striking contrasts:

- "I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head."
- "Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet."
- "My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with perfume."

–Luke 7:44-46

Simon had welcomed Jesus into his house, but he did not show Him these customary signs of hospitality and honor. On the other hand, the woman, although considered a sinner by society, had offered Jesus something far greater: her wholehearted love and devotion.

Jesus then made one of His most beautiful declarations: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." (Luke 7:47)

Jesus turned to the woman and said, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48), and then, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7:50).



The Lord looks at the purity of the heart and the sincerity of one's repentance.

Thus, the woman entered the house burdened by her past but departed with the assurance of forgiveness and peace. There are two important lessons to learn from this episode: first, do not judge others. Do not decide who is a sinner and who is not. The second is that the Lord looks at the purity of the heart and the sincerity of one's repentance–a reflection of one's faith, love, and devotion.

Mender of Soles Meets the Mender of Souls

Let me share another similar incident from the life of our Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. On one occasion, He was in Bangalore (present-day Bengaluru), staying in a house across from a cobbler who repaired shoes by the roadside.

The cobbler noticed many cars lined up near the house and many people entering it. He heard people say that the holy man there was God incarnate, an Avatar. Excited by this, he went up to the house and saw many people gathered around Swami, who was adorned with beautiful garlands. The cobbler also wanted to be near Swami, but he could not easily enter the big house. So he stood outside, carrying a small, somewhat withered garland–all he could afford.

Meanwhile, the Lord saw the love and purity of his heart. Swami came out all the way to meet him, accepted his garland, even though it was not as fancy as the others, and asked him, *"What do you want?"* The man was unprepared for the question. He replied, "Swami, please come to my house." Swami said, *"Yes,"* and returned to the crowd.

The cobbler had no further access to Swami. He started worrying and wondered how Swami would come to his house, as he had not given Him his address, nor had Swami told him when He would visit. How could he prepare for the visit? Eventually, he thought perhaps Swami had only said this to please him, and he forgot about it.

A few days later, as he sat in his usual place, a large car stopped in front of him. He looked up to see who was inside. Swami got out of the car and asked him to get in. The cobbler was overwhelmed. In great awe, he got into

the car. Swami's car then took several turns, going through the streets. The cobbler could not even give Him directions to his house. But Swami, the omniscient Lord, knew exactly where to go.

The car stopped in front of the cobbler's house, and they went inside. Since Swami had not announced His visit, the family was not prepared. Swami simply sat on a plank and blessed all the family members. They offered Him some bananas that were at home. Swami accepted them with great love, because the Lord accepts anything offered with love. He then materialized sweets and fruits and distributed them to the family, blessing them all.

After Swami left, the humble dwelling became like a place of pilgrimage. Many people began visiting the poor cobbler's home, which was sanctified by the visit of the Lord. This story reveals the unconditional love of Swami, the incarnation of love. It also teaches us that the Lord looks at the heart, not at outward appearances or material offerings.

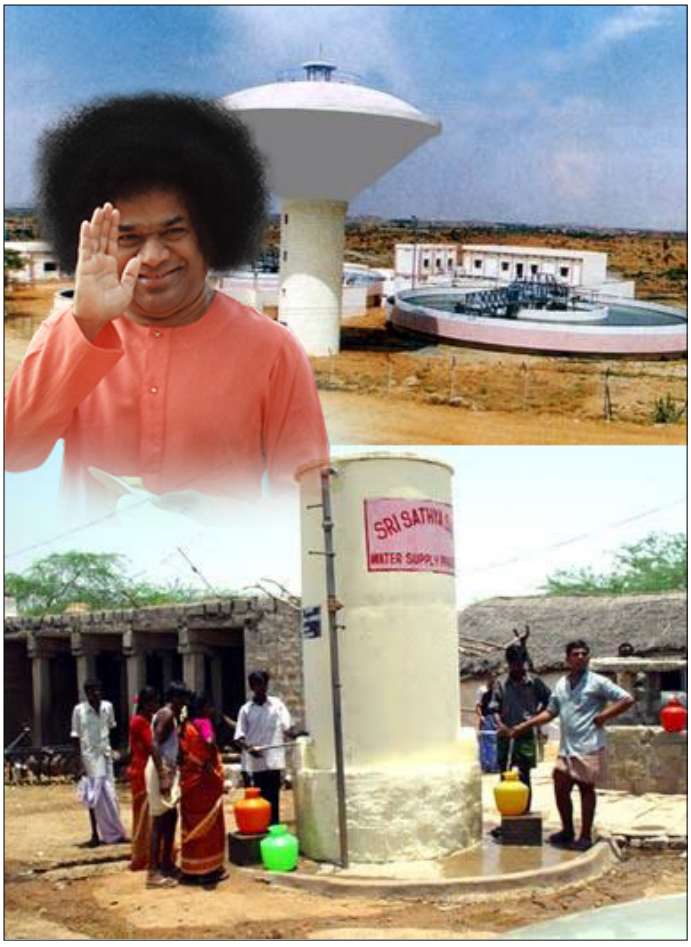
Sacrifice of the Last Supper

How do we put love into practice?

Swami declares that love in action is service. Jesus said, "When you serve the least of your brethren, you are serving Me" (Matthew 25:40). When people asked Jesus to identify instances when they served Him, He explained: "When I was hungry, you gave Me food. When I was thirsty, you gave Me water. When I was naked, you gave Me clothes. When I had no place to stay, you invited Me into your home. When I was sick or in prison, you visited Me."

When we serve any of our fellow human beings, we are verily serving the Lord. That is why Swami says, "Service to man is service to God."

Lord Jesus gave us the greatest example at the Last Supper. He washed the feet of all His disciples and gave them bread and wine, demonstrating His message that we should



serve and love one another just as He had loved and served the disciples.

The bread represented His body, and the wine His blood. In other words, God gives His entire body and blood, sacrificing Himself for humanity. Consider the sacrifice, humility, and spirit of service involved in such activities.

Serving is a Privilege

Swami demonstrated the same spirit when He undertook the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project for underserved villagers, providing water to millions of people who did not have access to potable water. It was a landmark humanitarian service and a great achievement. During an interview with Swami, I was present when one of the *ashram's* senior administrators suggested, "Swami, we should publicize this accomplishment in the newspapers. People should know about this great service."

Swami chided him and said, "*When you give something to your children, do you go and tell everybody? These are all My children.*

It is My duty. ***I enjoy serving them. That gives Me great pleasure.****"* Sometime later, villagers came to express their gratitude to Swami for providing them with free drinking water. They were seated for *darshan* (sacred sight of the Divine) and were about to say, "Swami, thank You." Before they could finish, Swami said, *"I have to thank you. You gave Me the opportunity to serve you."*

There are two important lessons here. First, when we serve, there should be no pomp or exhibition. Swami did not want any publicity for rendering service. Second, we should have an attitude of gratitude toward those who give us the opportunity to serve.

Unconditional Love in Action

Swami also teaches us through His extraordinary sensitivity and compassion.

My cousin's grandmother was a devotee of Swami. In her younger days, she had cooked for Swami and served Him. In her nineties, physically disabled and in a wheelchair, she longed to do *padanamaskar* (reverentially touching the Guru's feet) to Swami, but she could not bend down. Seeing her love and longing, Swami fulfilled her innermost desire by taking His feet and gently placing them on her lap so that she could touch them to her heart's content. What compassion! He was so sensitive to the needs of His devotees. **This is an example of unconditional love in action: being sensitive to others' needs.**

We should constantly ask ourselves, "How can I improve my service?" Above all, when we serve, we should give up any sense of doership and remember that God is the one truly working through us.

God is the Only Doer

Let me share a beautiful experience from Ms. Angelica Berger of Hamburg, Germany. She had been part of the Christmas choir since 2016 and was asked to play the organ in the international children's choir in December 2019. She did not know how to play it. But when the time came, without her conscious effort, her fingers began moving, and the music flowed. For those three minutes, she was astonished by how her fingers were working. She was convinced that Swami was the doer and that she had simply been there as His instrument. We must remember this message in every action we do and every word we speak.

On this holy occasion of Christmas, let us delve deeply into the teachings of Lord Jesus and our Lord Sai. **Let us remember that the journey from being a messenger of God to realizing oneness with God is not merely an ideal to admire, but a path each of us can walk.** It begins when we share God's love with the world; it deepens when we cultivate the divine qualities of love, compassion, humility, and selflessness; and it reaches fulfillment when we transcend the sense of separation and experience our innate divinity.

As Swami proclaims in His song, *Love is My Form:* "No reason for love, no season for love." There is no need for a reason to love, no season to which love belongs. True love flows naturally from a heart that recognizes the Divine in all. It welcomes the humble, forgives the repentant, serves without seeking recognition, and responds with compassion to every need. May our thoughts be filled with love, our words offer comfort, and our actions become acts of selfless service. Then every day will become a celebration of divine love, and every encounter an opportunity to experience God's presence. For indeed, **there is no reason for love, no season for love; for love is our very nature.**

Jai Sai Ram.

Divine Discourse

Sacrifice Leads to Immortality

Part 1 of 2

Muslims worship God, calling Him Allah,
Christians adore Him as Jehovah,
God is worshiped as the lotus-eyed Lord Vishnu
by the Vaishnavites,
And as Shambhu (bestower of auspiciousness and bliss)
by the Shaivites.
People may worship God by different names and forms;
but the one who blesses everyone
with long life, health, prosperity, and well-being,
the Paramatma (Supreme Self) is One and the same.
Recognize this! Realize this truth!

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love! Everyone knows that human life is precious, noble, and sacred. The alumnae of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Anantapur Campus, have formed a group calling themselves the **"Messengers of Sathya Sai,"** and are carrying out various service activities for the welfare of society. But first, we must understand what the word **"Messenger"** truly means. Who is a messenger, and what is the purpose of being one? It is important for everyone to recognize this truth. **Every human being born into this vast world has come here through divine will. In this sense, every person is a messenger of God.** When we reflect on why God has sent each of us as a messenger into this world, we begin to understand a profound spiritual truth about the purpose of human life.

The foremost duty of every
human being is
to share divine love with everyone.
We are not born in this world just to
live selfishly for ourselves.
The true purpose of human life is to
serve others selflessly,
and contribute to society's welfare.
It is through selfless service that we
become better human beings,
and experience true happiness and
inner satisfaction.
God has sent each of us into this
world to live by this message
of love and service and to share it
with others.



The one who loves God is a ***Messenger of God.***
The one who is loved by God is the ***Son of God.***
The one who realizes that God and he are one
becomes ***one with God.***

What is the value of human life if we
remain like a lump of clay,
without serving society?

(Telugu Poem)

O Man! You are born as a human, and you should grow and live as a true human being, with the aim of manifesting the divinity within you. This is the true purpose of human life. Every human being, as a messenger of God, has the important duty to help others understand the truth about God and to share the message of love and peace so everyone can experience them in their lives. A person who shares God's teachings with others is a true messenger of God. But someone who speaks only about worldly matters, material things, and temporary pleasures cannot be called a true messenger of God.

The Three Kings' Prophecy

A true messenger of God is one who teaches others the importance of truth, divinity, love, patience, and compassion, and inspires them to live by these values. When Jesus, who embodied these divine values, was born, three kings from Arabia came to see Him. They were filled with joy when they saw the newborn child. As they were leaving, one of the kings said to Mary, "Mother, you have given birth to a child who will love God."

The second king said, "Mother Mary, you have given birth to a child who will be loved by God. A son who is loved by God has been born to you." The third king said, "Mother Mary, your child and God are not separate. They are one and the same." When we understand the deeper meaning of these three statements, we begin to realize an



important spiritual truth. **The one who loves God is a Messenger of God. The one who is loved by God is the Son of God. And the one who realizes that God and he are one becomes one with God.** This is the concept of the Messenger of God, the Son of God, and the Father and Son being one.

What message are people sharing with the world today? Only a few are truly spreading God's message. Most people speak about worldly matters, material things, and temporary pleasures that do not last. A person who truly loves God and has received His love will never enter the wrong path. Such a person should share God's love with everyone and inspire others to live in that same love. This is the message Jesus gave as He was giving up His life: "All are one, my dear son! Be alike to everyone." We should not live with the belief that we are merely the physical body, nor become too attached to it. The body is temporary and will perish one day. This is what the world calls death. Our bodies are constantly changing. They never remain the same. How, then, can we consider something that is always changing to be the ultimate truth?

God is the embodiment of Truth. Truth never changes in any of the three periods of time. As human beings, we should express the divine love within us by following the path of Truth, rather than being drawn to falsehood and ephemeral things. When we live this way, we become worthy of God's love. Jesus, who was loved by God, dedicated His life to sharing this sacred, divine message with the world.

Death is the Dress of Life

He said, "Death is the dress of life." Just as we change our clothes, the soul leaves one body and takes on another. The body is temporary, like a water bubble, and serves only as a covering (sheath) for the *jivatma* (individual soul). **Jesus therefore taught us not to become too attached to the body, but to develop love for the eternal soul within us and seek to realize its true nature.** This same truth is expressed in the Indian culture: "The body is the temple of God, and the

soul within is eternally divine *(deho deva-layah prokto, jivo deva sanatanah)*." The body may change and eventually perish, but the *Atma* (divine Self within) is eternal. It takes on a new body to continue its journey and share the message of God with the world.

What is the deeper meaning of the teaching that God and I are one? What is God's true wealth, and the most precious message He gives to the world? God's true wealth is truth, right conduct, peace, love, forbearance, and compassion. These precious divine qualities belong to God and are shared with His children. As children of God, we should make every effort to spread these values, especially truth and right conduct. Of all these qualities, love is most important. Love is the natural path to God. It is inherent in every virtuous quality and flows through all of them. Love is God. That is why we should live in Love, realizing love as God. A heart devoid of love is not human. What does it mean, then, to be a messenger of God?

Every human being is a messenger of God. But we must first understand why we were born into this world. We are not born simply to eat, drink, wander about, and spend our lives without any meaningful purpose. This kind of behavior brings a blemish upon humanity itself. Having been born as a human being, living like an animal, and dying as a demon is not the best way to live.

From the moment we are born, our lives should reflect God's message. Whatever we study, whatever job we do, or whatever work we take on, everything we do should reflect God's teachings and values. But how many of us truly understand and follow this teaching? How many put it into practice? No one is putting it into practice. We often say that we have dedicated our lives to spreading God's message. But what does true dedication mean? What message are we really sharing with the world? When we honestly examine how we live, we realize we are wasting most of our lives without fulfilling their true purpose.

From the very beginning of our lives, we should strive to set an example and proclaim to the world the finest, the most sacred, the truest, and the most peaceful ideals. Many people spend their lives only studying, securing jobs, earning money, and enjoying worldly comforts. There is nothing wrong with studying, working, or earning a living. **But whatever we do, we should always follow the path of right conduct and engage in virtuous deeds.**

Happiness and Sorrow Go Together

We see many people in this world going through difficulties and suffering. We also see destitute people who are helpless and in need of support. What kind of help are we providing to these people? Jesus could not bear to see the suffering and cruelty around Him, especially the sacrifice of innocent animals in Jerusalem. He wanted to put an end to such practices and protect those who were suffering. But His efforts to do good also brought Him opposition, pain, and suffering. Even when we try to do good and help others, we may face difficulties and encounter people along the way who want to do harm. Sorrow invariably follows pleasure. One cannot find a single human being in this world who is free from both pleasure and pain.

Happiness and sorrow always
go together.
It is beyond anyone's power to
separate this.
We cannot find happiness by
itself anywhere.
Happiness is attained after
going through hardship.

(Telugu Poem)

Jesus taught that we should embrace this truth as a message and share it with the

world. We truly understand the value of happiness only after experiencing difficulties. Just as we cannot fully appreciate light without knowing darkness, we cannot understand the true value of happiness without experiencing sorrow. Jesus wanted to share this important truth with the world. He taught that happiness and sorrow are both part of life, and through these experiences, we recognize what is truly important in life, what is the basis of life, what is temporary, and what is untrue. We must learn to bear difficulties with patience, because hardships help us understand the value of happiness. A person who has never faced difficulties may not truly know what happiness means. We should face our problems, find happiness, and share that happiness with others. We should also do what we can to bring joy to those who are suffering. **Every small act of kindness and help we offer others is a way of sharing God's message.** We should follow these divine teachings in our daily lives and encourage others to do the same.

O Man! You enjoy many kinds of happiness in this world. But have you ever thought about what true happiness is? What happiness have you found in your life? What happiness have you enjoyed? And how much happiness have you given to others? When we reflect on these questions, we may find them difficult to answer. From the time we are born, we face many problems and sorrows. Yet we often fail to see that true happiness can be found even amid difficulties. But what kind of happiness is this? Is it a pleasure of the body? Is it the happiness of the mind? No. It is the happiness that comes from the *Atma*, the Self within us. This happiness comes from deep within us and does not depend on the pleasures of the body or the feelings of the mind. This is what Jesus taught as true peace.

What is this peace? We often chant *"shanti, shanti, shanti,"* which refers to three kinds of peace: peace for the body, peace for the mind, and peace for the *Atma*. All three are important in human life. True peace comes through love for God. Without divine love, we cannot experience lasting happiness. We often seek happiness in many things, but most of the pleasures we enjoy in this world are temporary. Sri Adi Shankaracharya also taught this important truth. He reminded us that wealth, relationships, and youth do not last forever. All of them disappear with the passage of time.

So, what is true happiness? Is it sitting comfortably in an air-conditioned room? Is it enjoying all kinds of worldly comforts and pleasures? No. These things may bring comfort to the body and happiness to the mind, but they cannot give lasting happiness to the soul. True happiness comes from the *Atma*, the divine Self within us.

We should never be afraid of the difficulties we face in this world. All these problems are like passing clouds. They come and go. Why should we allow ourselves to be troubled by things that do not last? Instead, we should place our faith in the eternal Truth within our hearts, which is beyond delusion, which remains steady, and which is unchanging, no matter what happens around us.

Head, Heart, and Hands

Every human being should understand the importance of bringing three things together: the head, the heart, and the hands. In Christianity, these three are also given a deeper spiritual meaning. We should use all three in unison in our daily lives. Keep God in your heart, think of God with your head, and serve others as God with your hands. **Our hearts should be filled with God's love, our thoughts guided by His teachings, and our hands used to do good work. The true message**



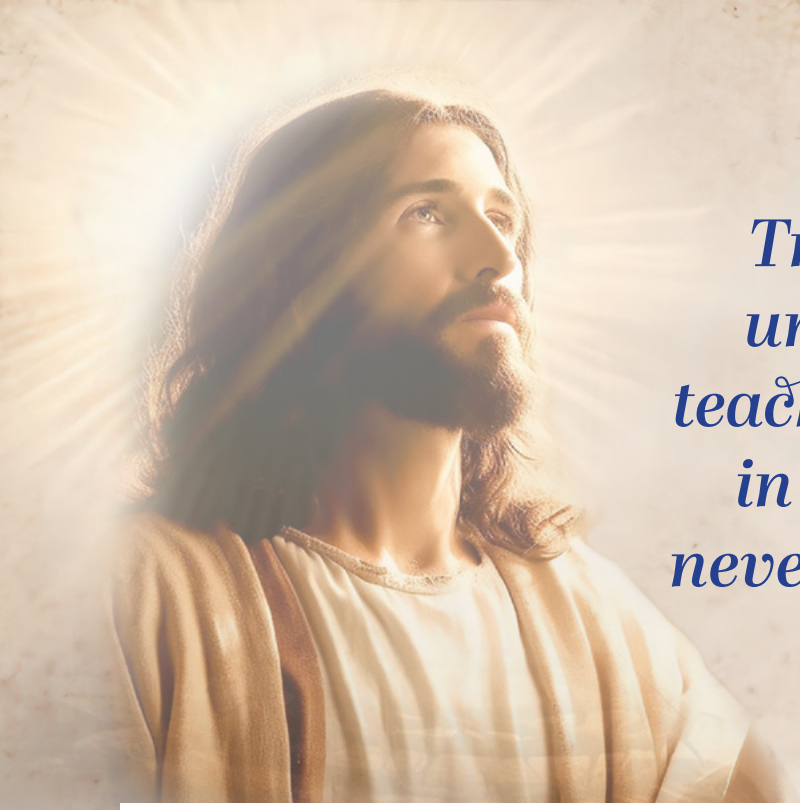
Love is Eternal

is to bring our thoughts, feelings, and actions together in the service of God. Our head, heart, and hands should work together in harmony. This is the true significance behind the sign of the cross. Put all three–head, heart, and hands–to sacred work. Whatever you think, consider it as divine; whatever you feel in your heart, regard it as divine; and whatever you do with your hands, believe that it is divine work. This is the true meaning of bringing head, heart, and hands together. But we often forget this message. Instead, we use our hands for wasteful things, misuse our minds, and defile our hearts. We should not live this way. Our heart is the residence of God, and our thoughts should reflect His divine presence–reflection, reaction, and resound.

With these noble thoughts, we should share God's message with the world and inspire others to live a meaningful life. Feeding the hungry, giving clothes to those in need, and helping others are all important acts of service. We should certainly continue doing them. But true service is not limited to these acts alone. They provide temporary relief, while true love has a lasting value. Along with serving others, we must also cultivate true and lasting love in our hearts. Love is eternal, and it should guide everything we do. **From the moment we wake up in the morning until we go to bed at night, all actions we engage in should be filled with love.**

Start the day with Love.
Fill the day with Love.
Spend the day with Love.
End the day with Love.
This is the way to God.

First, fill your heart with love and let that love guide everything you do. This is the true message of God. It is rare to find someone who truly lives by this message and shares it with the world. But simply calling ourselves messengers of God is



True devotion means understanding God's teachings, following them in our daily lives, and never going against them.

not enough. We must practice God's teachings in our own lives and share His message with others. Whether people listen or not, we should continue to spread God's message. Those who are fortunate will listen and understand, while others may choose to ignore it. We should not worry about how people respond. Our duty is to share the message with love and sincerity, without expecting anything in return.

True Devotion Calls for Sacrifice

Many people consider themselves devotees of God. But what does true devotion mean? Is it simply worshiping God, singing devotional songs, or taking part in service activities? These are all good practices, but they are only part of devotion. True devotion means understanding God's teachings, following them in our daily lives, and never going against them under any circumstances. This is the essence of the person who is the embodiment of truth.

The noble emperor Sathya Harishchandra was known for his steadfast adherence to truth. No matter what difficulties he faced, he never abandoned the path of truth or compromised his principles. He dedicated his entire life to living by truth. But in this *Kaliyuga* (the present dark age), many people have faith in God only when life is going well, and they are enjoying happiness and comfort. When they face problems, losses, or sorrow, their faith begins to weaken.

We see a similar lesson in the life of Jesus. When plans were made to crucify Him, His followers also faced the threat of persecution. Jesus' disciples, including Peter, Matthew, and Paul, followed His teachings closely. Yet, when difficulties arose, even those close to Him were not ready to stand by Him. True devotion is tested in difficult times. **It is easy to have faith when everything is going well, but we must remain devoted to God even when we face suffering and hardship. We should be prepared to make sacrifices for truth and right conduct.** Yet many are not willing to make such sacrifices. Sacrifice is one of the noblest qualities of a human being. Whatever the circumstances, we should never turn away from God's teachings or go against His will. Remaining firm in our faith and following God's teachings, even in the

God's love is our true wealth.

face of difficulties, is the true meaning of dedication. True dedication leads to sacrifice, and through sacrifice, one attains immortality.

True devotion is not just about doing small acts of service. It requires a willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of God and truth. The sacred teaching of the Upanishad declares: "Immortality is not attained through actions, progeny, or wealth, but through sacrifice alone" *(na karmana na prajaya dhanena, tyagenaike amritatvam anashuh)*. Sacrifice is most important in spiritual life. We should be ready to give up anything, even our own comfort and, if necessary, our very life, for sharing the message of God.

If wealth is lost, it can be earned again. If health is lost, it may be regained. But if good character is lost, it is very difficult to restore it. Yet today, many people neglect good character and spend their lives chasing wealth, comfort, and worldly pleasures. What is true wealth? *God's love is our true wealth. God's truth is our true wealth. The divine qualities within us are our true wealth. This is the wealth that truly matters.* Sadly, we often forget this precious true wealth and run after the impermanent, material possessions that do not last.

When you earnestly follow the truth and make a strong commitment to live by it, you will never face difficulties. But how many people today are truly ready to make such a commitment? If we are unwilling to follow God's teachings and make sacrifices for what is right, how can we expect His protection and grace? True devotion means being ready to face both happiness and hardship with the same faith and courage. We cannot seek comfort only and run away from difficulties. We cannot expect to enjoy the rewards of life while avoiding the work and effort required to earn them. This is not the spirit of true devotion. Above all, we must continue to share the divine message with the whole world.

Take It, Eat It, Digest It

The greatest message of all is love. We must continue to share this love with everyone, for no wealth is greater than love. Love is the very form of the Divine, and we must never give it up under any circumstance. Once, the disciple John saw an angel holding a book and reading it. Curious, John asked, "What is that book?" The angel replied, "Take it, eat it, and digest it." John wondered, "What does it mean to eat a book and digest it?" The deeper spiritual meaning is simple. We must not merely read sacred teachings or listen to spiritual wisdom. We must take their message to heart, understand it deeply, and put it into practice in our daily lives. **To truly "digest" spiritual wisdom means to make it a part of our being, to experience its truth within ourselves, and to express it through our thoughts, words, and actions.**

Valmiki teaches us this same truth in the *Ramayana*. Ravana had mastered all 64 arts and possessed knowledge equal to that of Rama. But there was one important difference: Rama put His knowledge into practice and used it for good, while Ravana failed to live by what he knew and instead misused his knowledge. That is why Valmiki described Ravana as wicked. In the same way, today we study many subjects and gain knowledge in different fields. But knowledge alone is not enough. What truly matters is how we put it into practice in our lives.

When the angel instructed John to "digest" the book, John understood that he must not simply read its teachings but live by them fully. He accepted this message wholeheartedly and began to put every teaching into practice in his daily life. As time passed, John became so deeply absorbed in the teachings and spirit of Jesus Christ that he began to reflect Christ in every aspect of his life. His face radiated the likeness of Christ, his words reflected the words of Christ, and his actions expressed the love and compassion of Christ. **Through constant practice and devotion, John became one with Jesus Christ. Vedanta expresses this profound truth in the words *"brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati,"* meaning, "One who truly knows the Divine becomes one with the Divine."** Whatever we constantly think about, meditate upon, and hold in our hearts, we gradually become like it. Through deep contemplation and devotion, we begin to reflect the very qualities of the Divine.

Consider the example of Prince Prahlada, an exemplary devotee of Lord Narayana. Although he was only a young boy, he never went against Divine will. No matter how many hardships he faced, his faith remained firm, and he saw only Lord Narayana everywhere. Because he had completely surrendered to the Lord, Narayana Himself cared for him and protected him at every step. When Prahlada was thrown from a mountaintop, he cried out, "Narayana! Narayana!" Immediately, Lord Narayana appeared and caught him, saving him from harm. When he was thrown into the ocean, he again called out, "Narayana! Narayana!" Even the waves appeared to him as Narayana. When a poisonous serpent bit him, the poison itself turned into nectar.



Through every hardship, Prahlada thought only of Narayana. His faith and devotion were so deep that he saw Narayana's presence in everything around him. Whatever danger he faced, he experienced only the loving protection of the Lord.

The spiritual lesson is that we, too, can attain this state through constant remembrance of God. If we keep our thoughts fixed on the Lord at all times *(sarvada sarvakaleshu sarvatra Hari chintanam),* in every place, and under all circumstances, we will gradually become filled with divine love and awareness. When our hearts are constantly absorbed in God, we begin to see God everywhere, and through that deep devotion, we too shall attain the Divine.

Never lose hope or fall into despair, thinking, "I cannot bear these difficulties any longer!" God never gives you more suffering than you can endure. He gives only challenges you can bear. You may say, "But I have suffered so much. Some of these hardships have been more than I could bear!" Yet think about it for a moment. Perhaps you have been facing these difficulties for three years. The very fact that you have made it through these three years shows that you have had the strength to endure them. Therefore, remember that God never places a burden on you beyond your endurance. He tests His devotees in various ways. Test is the taste of God. Never fear any test. Be ready to sacrifice even your life for God. When you surrender yourself completely to God and place your trust in Him, the Divine will care for you and protect you in every possible way.

Initially, Paul was a fierce adversary of Jesus. One day, Jesus appeared to Paul in a dream, with a loving smile on His face. Gently stroking Paul's back, Jesus asked him, "Paul, what harm have I ever done to you? Have I ever betrayed you, hurt you, or treated you unfairly? Why, then, do you speak ill of Me?" Jesus continued, "The suffering, difficulties, and sorrows you experience are not caused by Me. They result from your own past actions. Whatever you have done in the past has brought its own consequences, and you are now experiencing the effects of those actions. It is not I who have brought these upon you." Through these loving words, Jesus blessed Paul and brought about a profound change in his heart. Paul realized his mistake and became a devoted follower of Jesus. From that moment onward, he dedicated his life to serving Jesus and spreading His teachings and came to be known as Saint Paul.

In this way, Jesus reformed the wicked and those who had gone astray, guiding them onto the right and proper path of goodness and righteousness. Even when Jesus endured great physical suffering and His body experienced pain, His true Self, the divine Spirit within, remained untouched by suffering. **We should worship Jesus by following such ideals, His example, and putting His teachings into practice in our daily lives.** Without following these divine ideals, worship becomes an empty ritual, without any benefit.

I and My Father are One

Jesus revealed three important stages of His spiritual journey and His relationship with God. First, He declared, "I am a messenger of God." As God's messenger, His mission was to share the divine message with the world and bring it into the hearts of all people. Second, He declared, "I am the Son of God." Since God is His Father, Jesus inherits His property, possessing the divine qualities of truth, love, patience, and peace. These qualities are God's very nature and His true wealth. To be worthy of being called a son of God, one must not only understand these qualities but also experience them, practice them in daily life, and share them with

others. Only then does man deserve to be called Son of God.

Finally, having attained complete oneness with the Divine, Jesus declared, "I and My Father are one." In this state of perfect union or oneness with God, He rose above all feelings of pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow, and every hardship of life. He remained established in constant, unbroken divine bliss and was prepared for anything.

That is why, even when Jesus was crucified on the cross, He remained calm and continued to smile. He understood the deeper spiritual truth: "All this suffering belongs only to the body, not to My true Self."

The body is made up of five elements
and will one day perish.
But the indwelling soul, which lives
within the body, is eternal and
remains untouched by pain,
disease, or suffering.
The soul has neither birth nor
death. It is not bound by worldly
attachments or limitations.
It is forever pure, free, and
unchanging.
In truth, the indwelling soul itself is
Divine.

(Telugu Poem)

With this deep understanding, Jesus remained established in the awareness of His true nature. He realized: "I am not the body. I am the eternal soul that dwells within and sustains the body. **The body is merely a temporary covering, like armor, while My true Self is the divine Spirit within." Through this realization, He rose above physical suffering.**

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Christmas, December 25, 1998

(To be concluded in the January 2027 issue of Sathya Sai – The Eternal Companion.)



When Swami Sang My Song

A BROOKLYN BOY'S JOURNEY TO THE DIVINE



I am a kid from Brooklyn. That is perhaps the most important thing to know about me, because when a kid from Brooklyn ends up kneeling before the Avatar, laughing through tears at a joke the Universe has played on him, something truly miraculous has happened. And it all began with a basketball game!

Around 1991, I started searching. I am not quite sure what I was searching for–a teacher, perhaps, or simply answers to life and its purpose. Every Sunday I played basketball with a dear friend, and after nearly a year of playing, he told me he couldn't play for the next two Sundays. He was going to India with his family.

"To see our guru," he said, with a quietness I had never quite noticed in him before. He handed me a book before he left. "Read it. And when I come back, if you want to talk more, I'm happy to do it." That book was *Sai Baba: Man of Miracles* by Howard Murphet.

How Swami Won My Heart

Reading the book, what struck me deeply and immediately, right to my heart, were the reasons Baba said we are here. The first: serve those less fortunate than you. The second: whatever your faith–Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish–dive into it, dive deep, and become better in your faith. I thought, "Wow! I don't have to be anything other than who I am. I just need to be that–to represent my faith better."

Baba also spoke of God residing within us, saying that we are God. He also said that it is not necessary to talk about it; being it is

"Swami hears everything–the Divine hears, no matter where you are."

more important. These words told me why I am here on planet Earth, what I needed to do while I am here, and who I really am. That was very touching.

When my friend returned from India and shared details of his interviews with Sathya Sai Baba, I knew immediately that I needed to go to India. I needed to see Him in person! So in 1998, I made the journey. It was a Brooklyn kid stepping into Puttaparthi. **And I saw Him. I heard Him speak. I saw people from every corner of the world, from every faith and tongue, gathered for one reason: to reconnect with their hearts. My heart was connected and reconnected. I was sure I had found my Lord!** To cut a long story short, when I returned to the USA, I became a regular visitor at the local Sathya Sai Center in Connecticut.

Thirteen Songs, Thirteen Children

Music has been a part of my life from the very beginning. I had written a song–one that felt like it had come from somewhere beyond me. Our Sai Center in Connecticut heard about it and approached me with an idea. I offered them my home recording studio, and what unfolded over the next nine months was something beautiful. There were 13 children, with about 20 parents and adults, who gathered every month or so to rehearse songs of devotion, record them, and offer them at the feet of Bhagawan.

We asked for permission to perform before Swami, and wonderfully, He said, *"Yes."* Our leader shared with us something that has since become a cornerstone of how I live: "If we get to perform for Him, wonderful! If we don't, it is still wonderful. We are not losing anything. **Swami hears everything–the Divine hears, no matter where you are."**

We went to India in July 2005. Days passed. Almost two weeks went by without any summons. Then, just as we stopped thinking about it, Swami called us. It was the first day of August! We gathered rickshaws and cars, started rushing instruments toward the venue, and rushed and rushed! It was, in retrospect, quite a comedy. And then we were before Him. Swami had blessed us to perform!

I had decided that I would not even look up at Swami during the performance. I wanted to stay focused on the music, for the best service I could render, and lead our musicians well. But in the middle of our program, I looked up during a song that I had written, called "In Love Eternally." I was thrilled to see Swami happily singing along!

The first thought that came to my mind was, "How does He know the lyrics?" And then I understood. It was His song! It had always been His song! And the crowd of thousands joined in. They didn't even need to know the English words. It was the spirit of love that united us all before our beloved Swami.

The Voice of God Can Be Heard in the Depths of Silence

After the performance, Swami materialized a necklace for one of our leaders and lovingly placed it around her neck. I am embarrassed to share that in that moment, I closed my eyes and prayerfully thought, "Swami, I do a lot of volunteer work. I don't feel recognized for all that I do. I'll take a ring, please."

The joy He has gifted me comes from the understanding that love is joy and that sharing that joy is itself love.



Time passed. Swami looked over at the crowd, then looked at me. Then, He looked away. In that moment, I understood. I closed my eyes again and said: "Swami, forget the ring. I have more than I could imagine. Everything I need is here, now. And thank you for not exposing me in front of all these people."

I opened my eyes feeling lighter. Swami continued to bless the crowd. Then He looked at me again, and gestured. I thought He was calling someone behind me. The students around me said, "No, no–it's you. Go forward."

I went up and knelt before Him. He asked for my name and repeated it back to me, *"You are Bob Becker."* He spoke to me at length, though the words were difficult to hear even as I leaned closer and closer. Then, in a clear voice, He asked: *"If I make you this ring, will you wear it permanently?"*

I knew a message was coming. He took my hand, placed it in His lap, and materialized the ring right there. He began to place it on my finger, but it got caught on the knuckle and would not go any further. I thought, "Oh no! Am I going to be the first failure?" Swami leaned forward and said, with the most gentle mischief, *"Are we swollen, Bob Becker?"* I knew exactly what He meant: my ego. I had asked from my ego, not from my heart. Then, just as gently, He slid the ring past that bony knuckle, onto my finger.

As I walked back, I heard Him say in my mind: *"When you are quiet enough, your heart speaks to you. It says–it is you who must recognize your value, not anyone else. If no one recognizes your value, that doesn't matter. It comes from you."* The next message that followed quietly was even more profound: *"You must recognize the Divine within you. That is what life is all about."*

Trinkets and the Real Miracle

There were 13 stones in the ring He gave me. We sang 13 songs! There were 13 children who had participated in making the CD! **None of these is a coincidence! Swami's love, His attention to detail, His divine signature–all of these moved me profoundly.**

As people came to see the ring over the following days, they kissed it, pressed it to their hearts, and blessed my family and me. I was overwhelmed. I began to avoid people, unsure of my role in this drama and what receiving this divine materialization truly meant.

On the very last day, as our taxi waited to take us away, an elderly woman approached me

from afar. She kissed the ring, blessed me, and as she turned to leave, I heard Swami's voice within me: *"Bob Becker. You didn't ask for recognition. You asked for celebrity status. And you can't handle it."* I fell to my knees, laughing, because I finally saw the joke. He had given me exactly what I had asked for; not what I thought I was asking for, but what was truly in my heart. And now, I was not able to handle it!

Later, back at home, editing the footage of the video of our song and the materialized gifts, I recalled something Swami has said about these gifts. He sometimes calls them *"trinkets and trash. That is how I give attention to a baby."* And I wept, because I finally understood His message. The miracle is not the materialization. The miracle is that He got my attention and He got the message through. Now that I had received it, what was I going to do with it?

Baba is in Our Hearts

The understanding that came from those days in Puttaparthi has colored everything since then. Swami gave me the tools I needed for my work–in music, in marketing communications, and in producing videos for CEOs and hospital presidents. When clients ask me how to prepare the outreach materials and how to get their message right, I hear Swami saying: *"Remind them that it comes from the heart. They don't need to over-prepare. If it is in the heart, it will come out."*

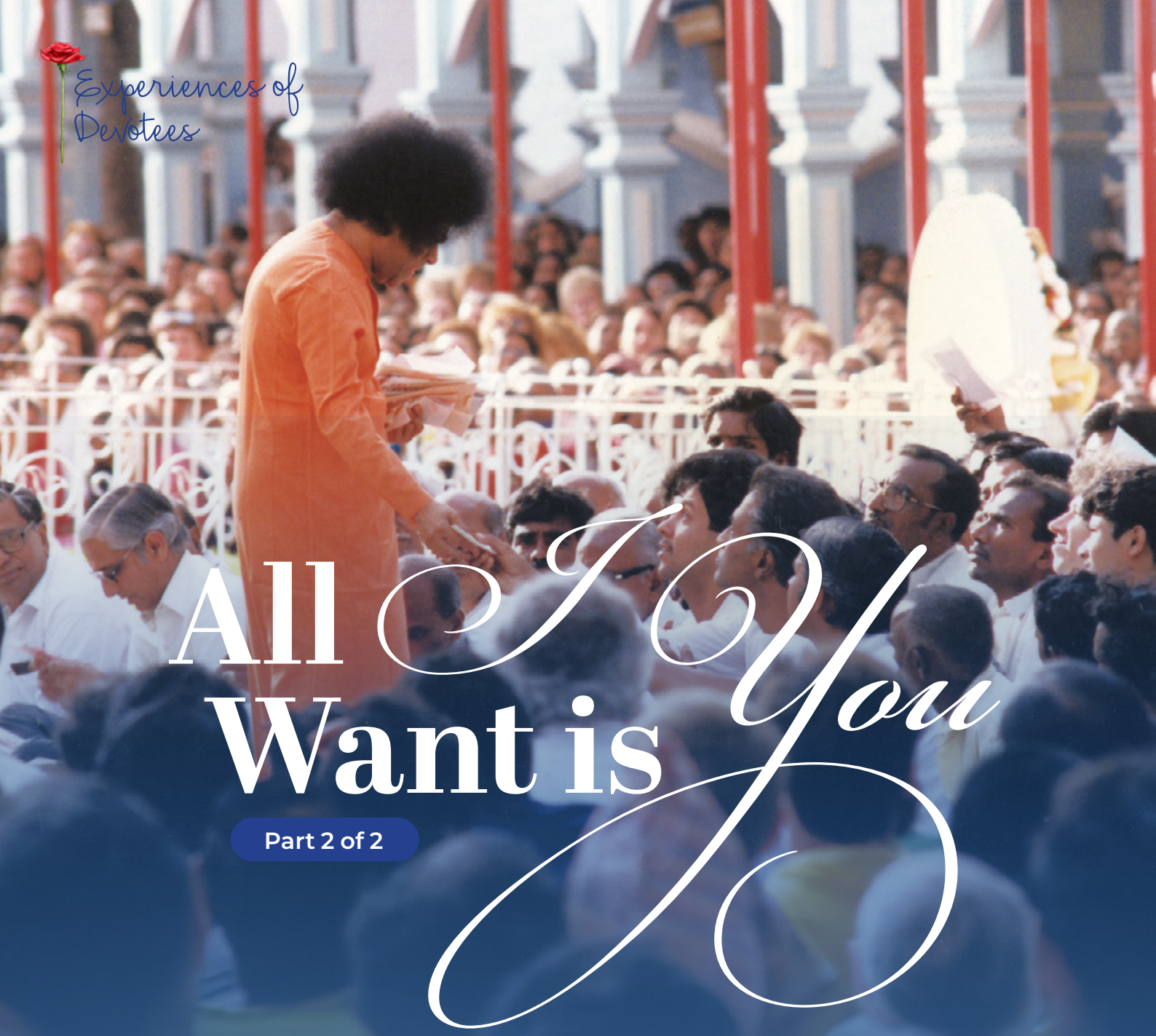
I became His instrument, and I realized more and more what my Baba has uncovered within me. It is all a blessing, a gift!

After over 30 years of connecting with the Divine through Bhagawan, I can say with certainty that Baba is in our hearts. He reveals Himself through our actions, not our words. **The joy He has gifted me comes from the understanding that love is joy and that sharing that joy is itself love.** This is what I carry forward, and for that, I am eternally grateful to Him.

Mr. Bob Becker
USA



Mr. Bob Becker *lived in the USA and was a devotee of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for over 30 years. With the blessings of Swami, he wrote and produced many devotional songs and also performed in the divine presence of Swami in Puttaparthi. He produced videos for sharing the teachings and works of Bhagawan, including a video on the healthcare services in the divine mission. He also led seminars on videography for the SSSIO.*



All I Want is You

Part 2 of 2

In Part 1 of this article, published in the November 2026 issue of *Sathya Sai – The Eternal Companion*, I shared how Swami gradually drew me towards Him, leading me through years of searching, confusion, and inner turmoil to the moment when I finally realized that the remedy I was searching for was to be found only at Swami's divine lotus feet, where all roads end. While I struggled to find my way, my mother had already found her solace and fulfillment at Swami's divine feet. But my father, too, had a remarkable spiritual journey of his own. Understanding what happened to him and how his life was transformed adds another dimension to my story. It reveals how Swami's grace was quietly working in each of our lives, preparing us for an extraordinary unfolding of His divine love. Let me take you back to our family's history.

He then said, "Follow the three Ps: patience, perseverance, and purity."



Family History

My parents were born in Hungary. My mother, Veronica, was raised in a large Catholic family with three brothers who became priests. She was ostracized by her family for marrying my father, Laszlo, who was a non-believer. My parents daringly escaped communist Hungary in 1965 with nothing more than a suitcase and their dreams of a new life. They first migrated to South Africa, where I was born. Laszlo held an MS in electrical engineering and spoke some English; my mother was a trained technical draftsperson but did not speak English. In 1969, when I was two years old, we immigrated to the United States and eventually settled in Southern California.

My memories of my father from the early years were only brief glimpses on holidays, my birthday, or family trips. His dream was to become a successful engineer, have a beautiful wife and son, a nice home, and a sailboat for sailing the seas. To satisfy these desires, he worked long hours, and it took a toll on his health. Eventually, my father's desires came true, but he also became very distant and quiet. A spark had gone out of him!

My Father's Transformation

One day, without saying a word to us, my father left the house. It was strange. In the afternoon, we checked and found that our sailboat was also gone. My mother was very worried and later contacted the U.S. Coast Guard. On the third day, the phone rang, and it was my father. He said he was fine and would sail back from Catalina Island, about 25 miles off the coast of Los Angeles. He arrived that afternoon, and we met him at the dock. He smiled and gave us a big hug. I noticed something was totally different about him. His eyes sparkled, and there was a depth of love in him I had never felt before. Was this really my father?

A transformation had occurred in him. He began spending quality time with me. I felt that he genuinely loved me and cared about me more than ever before. He even stopped coming home late from work. Our family atmosphere improved, and there was no tension in the house anymore. But within months, around 1978, we suddenly moved to Ojai, California, where I enrolled in the Oak Grove School, founded by Jiddu Krishnamurti.

It wasn't until 1997 that my father shared with me what had happened to him on Catalina Island. He had kept it a treasured secret until then. He explained that he felt empty even after getting everything he ever wanted: wife, son, house, boat, name and fame, etc. He was in an existential crisis and started asking himself, "What is the purpose of life?" He wasn't suicidal, just empty, after realizing the futility of trying to find happiness by acquiring material possessions, name, and fame. So, he took the boat and sailed to Catalina. In the morning, he reached the shore and walked through the dew-covered fields of the island.

As he came up to a hill, he suddenly felt a powerful presence behind him. Peace, serenity, and love enveloped him like a warm blanket. The colors around him became vibrant and ethereal; everything glowed with an inner light. He slowly turned around, and before him in the air were three glow-



It was love immeasurable, fathomless, absolute, intimate, and familiar. It was me, it was Him, yet we were One.

ing balls of pure light forming the corners of a triangle. He was filled with bliss, knowing, and a pure fulfillment he had never felt before. The experience transformed him, expanded his heart, and filled him with a new purpose in life. He later realized he had been in the presence of the Holy Trinity described in the Bible: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When he returned from the island, he felt a true responsibility for his family, society, and the world. He also needed to digest this experience and integrate it into his life as best as he could. He searched for the right guide to help him do that.

My father found that Krishnamurti's teachings of inquiry and meditation aligned with his spiritual aspirations. However, Krishnamurti's path did not appeal to my mother, and no matter how much I tried to follow that path, it was not meant for me. My heart pined for an intimate living relationship and union with God, like Jesus with the Father. Years later, in an interview, Swami pointed to me and said to my mother, *"Too much father in him, not enough mother."* Swami was reiterating to me that my path was like my mother's path–full of love, deep devotion, and yearning for union with God, just as the Gopikas yearned for Krishna. I remember times when I couldn't contain the deep feeling of devotion and pain of separation from Him. I would cry out, "Where are You? I want You! Only You!" I had no idea that in a few years that plea would be answered in His physical presence here on earth!

My father's transformation, like my mother's spiritual awakening, was part of a larger unfolding that I could only begin to understand years later. We think we are in control of the story of our lives, but we are all part of the grandest divine story, written by the Lord Himself: "His story." Now, in March 1992, I stood at the threshold of my own transformation. Exhausted by my search and with nowhere left to turn, I was finally ready to surrender everything to Swami.

The Moment of Surrender

March 4, 1992, was the day I was reborn and realigned. It was the last day of my old life. I woke that morning feeling like a zombie, not from despair but from having exhausted every effort of my own. I could not imagine what would come after *darshan* (sacred sight of the Divine); it was blank; I was blank. At *darshan,* I wrote on a small piece of paper from the depths of my soul, "Dear Lord, I don't know who You are or what You are, but I give my body, my mind, and my spirit to You." Swami came near me and took my letter. I again asked, "Swami, interview, please." And again, He said, *"I will see, I will see,"* and started to walk off. "No! You can't do this." From the very depths of my being, a cry came to my lips, "Swami. Please!" Instantly Swami stopped, turned around, and with the smile of Lord Krishna and a twinkle in His eyes, said, *"Go!"*

The Much Sought-After Interview

I was exuberant, the first to arrive on the veranda. Then came my mother, the California group, and a group from Italy. Swami ushered us into the outer interview room, with some shedding tears from joy and gratitude. I was the last to enter. As I entered the outer interview room, it was packed wall to wall. I found the only place to sit was at the very back, against the wall. Then Swami entered.

What I saw and experienced wasn't a five feet, four inches man in an orange robe, a guru, God, or an Avatar. My mind, which had ruled my life, was gone, and what was left of my sense of individuality was less than a speck in the presence of the Divine. Swami had lifted ever so slightly the veil that hid His infinite divine power. **Words could never do justice to what was in the room; it was love immeasurable, fathomless, absolute, intimate, and familiar. It was me, it was Him, yet we were One. I was finally home, having reached the end of the road; no more searching, no more questions, no need for answers.**

"All I Want is You, Swami"

In the outer interview room, Swami closed the door, switched on the lights and the ceiling fan, and sat down. He turned to a father with his son sitting next to him and asked, *"What do you want?"* The man replied, "Could you please find a wife for my son, Swami?" Swami replied, *"I will see you separately."* I could almost see sadness and disappointment in Swami's face.

Swami then turned to a young man and asked, *"What do you want, Sir?"* The man replied, "I want to know more about God." Swami then explained the five knowledges of God. I don't remember what Swami said. I was lost in bliss; my face hurt from smiling so hard. Still, Swami looked disappointed, as if He was looking for someone who would ask what Sai has truly come to give.

What a drama Swami was playing out in this small room! But aren't these the very things I desired so much and asked God to give me? I had asked God to give me my wife; did that lead to happiness? No. I had desperately read numerous religious and spiritual books, including Swami's books, for knowledge of God, to get to know God. But did that knowledge give me true happiness? No. What then leads to true happiness? The answer was clear, and it had to come from my own mouth. The answer is already within us.

Swami looked past everyone and spotted me at the back. Pointing at me, He asked, *"Hey, boy! What do you want?"* What came from my lips did not come from my mind; it came straight from my heart and out of my mouth: "All I want is You!" Swami rose from His chair and, with a big smile, happily exclaimed, ***"Good boy, good boy, come here!"*** I got up and walked towards Him.

He waved His right arm in a wide circle, and a silver object instantly materialized in the air, which He caught deftly in His right hand. He showed it to me. It was a silver ring with Shirdi Sai Baba's picture embossed on it. He wanted to put it on my hand. Automatically, I pulled my hand back and said, "I don't want it." I heard a gasp go through the room. People were surprised that I wouldn't take a gift from Swami. For me, the ring represented all the things of the world, but did they make me happy? I did not want any part of creation. All I want is the Creator!

"No, no," He said, *"I made it for you."* I still said I didn't want it, and then Swami put the ring into my shirt pocket. He guided me to sit down in front of Him, near His chair, and asked, *"How do you get to God?"* I told Him, "I don't know." He then said, ***"Follow the three Ps: patience, perseverance, and purity."*** We make spirituality so complicated, and it gets us nowhere; Swami says you don't even need to practice all three; just practice one, and the rest will grow from it, like a



Now I realized instantly that God is not some far-off observer; He is the very conscience that held my hand back! *Sai Baba was and is my conscience.*

tree. He asked me over and over again what I wanted. I just kept replying, "You."

He took some of us into the smaller, private interview room, and guided me to sit right in front of Him. He took the ring out of my pocket and asked again what I wanted. When I said, "You, Swami," He brought the ring to His mouth, held it between two fingers, leaned close to my face, and blew on the ring three times. I could feel God's breath on my face! I don't know how I kept myself composed! On the third breath, the silver ring instantly transformed into a golden brooch with Swami's picture enameled on it. Then He reached past me, His robe brushing against my face, and gave the brooch instead to an Italian lady, saying, *"Madam, this is for you."* The lady wept with joy, saying, "Thank you, Swami, thank you, Swami!"

Then He asked me again, *"What do you want?"* I replied, "You." He raised His arms in the air and said, *"Take Me!"* Without a second thought, I leaped straight into His lap and threw my arms around Him. He sweetly exclaimed, *"No, no, no..."*–and instantly the message hit me: I can't carry Swami home with me like an object! What I want isn't His form, but the inner experience of union with Him that He was allowing me to have. The sweet divine form of Swami is but the doorway to our own heart, where He has always been residing.

Sai is Our Conscience

As He ushered us back into the outer interview room, He turned to me, His hand circling in the air again. A solid golden bracelet with an Om symbol appeared. I tried to say I didn't want it, but He caught my arm and gently clasped it around my wrist. He didn't let go of my arm and gently pulled me into the private interview room. Closing the door, He pointed at the bracelet and said, *"This is not a trinket."* I noticed my arm was almost numb from the energy coming from the bracelet! It was still hot, as if it had just been forged. Then He told me exactly why my marriage wasn't working, and, astonishingly, re-enacted past events, gesture by gesture. He also recounted a childhood incident from my memory–that of a boy showing me how to slip candy into my sock to shoplift, something I had never told a living soul! I remembered I had not been able to do that. **Now I realized instantly that God is not some far-off observer; He is the very conscience that held my hand back! Sai Baba was and is my conscience.**

Throughout that entire private session, He would not sit down; rather, He paced up and down as if trying to contain something within Himself. I don't know how I knew

this, but the realization hit me that I was like the prodigal son in the Bible. I went out to experience the world, lost everything, and came back home asking only for the father's acceptance and love. Swami was pacing now, and I knew why: He was ready to give me the keys to His entire kingdom and would gladly give everything to me right then and there. Yet He could not, as it would break the rules He had set. It was not time yet, and I was not ready for it yet.

He indicated that the interview was ending, so I turned around and walked back to open the door to the outer interview room. As I walked to the door, I heard a different voice, the powerful voice of the Lord Almighty behind me, granting me exactly what I had asked for in that first letter He took from me, namely, "All I want is to live a divine, magical, mystical life." Swami said, ***"I will give you liberation."*** I turned around to face Him, and His eyes were like those of Shiva, resplendent with power. It was the Will of God speaking. He continued, ***"I will give you liberation. I will give you a peaceful life; a divine, peaceful life."*** My legs nearly gave out under the weight of it all. Swami literally held me up, carried me out, and sat me down in the other room. I was gone, dazed, swimming in bliss, my arm numb from the energy emanating from the bracelet. Swami had put me back on track, back onto the direct path Home to inevitable and complete merger with Him. I no longer owned this vessel called Leslie; it was now fully His possession. He now palpably and continuously resides in my heart, the Charioteer. What more can be said?

In the outer interview room, Swami turned to my mother and said, *"You run the Western Canteen and your son will help."* Thus, Swami granted the three things my mother asked for: she found God, she was living with Him, and now, she would serve Him. More than that, her wish for her son to come to God had been fulfilled. What more can a mother ask for? So, what happened next? What was to be a six-month stay for me turned into a five-year spiritual odyssey of continuous living and serving in the physical presence of the Lord. In the last year of my stay, Swami graciously appointed me as a public relations officer to speak to visiting Western devotees.

Our lives do not belong to us. That is just an illusion. It is all His story–a divine *leela* (divine play) meant to awaken pure love and yearning for Him in our hearts. It is for us to return home; to realize we never left home. We have just been looking so hard in the wrong places. Our mother Sai has always been within us, guiding us, chasing us, playing both the seeker and the goal in the divine game of "hide and seek" we call life. We are all part of a grand awakening, His ushering in of the golden era of union with God–the Golden Age!

Mr. Leslie Farkas
USA



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.

The Lord's Descent for Devotees' Ascent

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.

Through this section, the readers are brought closer to the heart and vision of the *Kavinaam Kavi* (poet of poets) 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.

అవతరించుట అనుటలో అర్థమేమి?
జనులపై ప్రీతి వాత్సల్య పరత తోడ
వారి స్థాయికి దైవంబు వచ్చు భువికి
జీవప్రజ్ఞతో పాటుగ దైవప్రజ్ఞ.

avatarinchuta anutalo arthamemi?
janulapai preethi vatsalya parathatoda
vaari sthaayiki daivambu vacchu bhuviki
jeevaprajnato paatuga daivaprajna.

What does the Lord's descent mean?
It means that out of love and
deep affection for the people,
the Lord comes to their level on earth
from His heavenly abode;
Divine consciousness descends
along with human awareness.

విశ్వ మెల్లడ వ్యాప్తియై వెలయువాడు
భక్త జనులకు ప్రాపుడై బరగువాడు
ముక్తి నొసగి రక్షించెడి శక్తిమయుడు
పర్తివాసుడు మిమ్మేల యెత్తికొనడు.

vishwamellada vyaaptiyai velayuvaadu
bhakta janulaku praapudai baraguvaadu
mukti nosagi rakshinchedi shaktimayudu
Parthivaasudu mimmela yetthikonadu.

He who pervades and shines
throughout the entire Universe;
He who stands as the refuge
and support for the devotees;
The powerful One who protects
and grants liberation;
Why won't the dweller of Parthi
hold you in His arms.



Calling for Your Articles, Poems, Audios, Videos!

Anything that is associated with 'His' Story alone is worthwhile to preserve as 'History.' We are all blessed to have experienced the love and grace of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and continue to experience the same in our daily lives. That is why Swami is our Eternal Companion.

The editorial team of the *Sathya Sai – The Eternal Companion* magazine warmly welcomes articles and poems based on authentic personal experiences with the Avatar of the Age, our beloved Bhagawan. You may send in your contributions as a document, audio file, or video file. Apart from being published in the magazine (if selected), these contributions may also be published in the SSSIO's digital media channels. All of these contributions will be safely stored for posterity in the SSSIO's digital archives by the SSSIO Archival Committee.

It is time to open up your hearts and share the treasures gathered from Swami. These treasures only grow by sharing.

Please upload materials at: https://sathyas.ai/upload

LOVE IN **ACTION**

AUSTRALIA

Swami's Grace Wrapped in a Blanket

Early in 2026, the SSSIO National Community team in Australia requested a company that cleans airline blankets to provide used blankets for its annual winter service programs. Instead of used blankets, the team received 200 brand-new, premium blankets reserved for use in business-class and first-class cabins! A courier company then moved the blankets from Sydney to Queensland at minimal cost.

In Queensland, about 20 SSSIO members from the Woolloongabba Sai Center, partnering with the Brisbane charity, Merciful Servants, distributed 100 of these premium blankets along with puffer jackets, beanies, and warm socks to people in need. In



New South Wales (NSW), these blankets reached people through the Normanhurst Center, the Wentworthville Center's weekly feeding program at Parramatta, the NSW Region's outreach in Sydney's central business district (CBD), and the Wollongong Center's community distribution. **In all, more than 300 blankets were distributed across the two states, with NSW Region members donating additional blankets of their own.**

GUYANA

Gifts of Breakfasts, Dinners, and Wheelchairs

The Sri Sathya Sai Centers in Guyana provide regular service nationwide. **Every Monday, the Adventure Sai Center in Essequibo Region 2 serves breakfast to about 60 elders. Every Saturday evening, 20 members of the Sri Sathya Sai Center of Georgetown prepare and distribute hot dinners and water to 50 homeless people in the heart of the busy city.** Devotees from the Center also donated five wheelchairs to



a public shelter in New Amsterdam, Berbice, to help its residents with mobility. Volunteers offer each act of loving service with gratitude to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for the opportunity to bring smiles to people's faces.

KAZAKHSTAN

Service for All



In early October 2026, 14 devotees from two Sai Centers and two groups of SSSIO Kazakhstan joined in *narayana seva* (serving food to those in need), serving lentil soup with bread, tea, candies, cookies, and milk to residents of a local rehabilitation center. **At the barracks for the poor, they delivered 32 breakfasts, consisting of fruit, rolls, and candies, as well as 11 food packages containing rice, buckwheat, sugar, pasta, vegetable oil, milk, bread, and cookies.** Near an Orthodox church, the volunteers served 12 portions of buckwheat porridge with vegetables, bread, tea, milk, and gingerbread. They also lovingly fed stray dogs at a local shelter. The recipients were grateful, and the volunteers thanked Swami for the opportunity to serve.

MALAWI

Grocery Hampers Travel Miles to Bring Smiles



Moved by the distress of the underprivileged, a dedicated SSSIO volunteer in Malawi traveled to three rural villages in Zomba District–Kumpasa, Chalera, and Chifisi–in early October 2026 to distribute 116 grocery hampers to elderly and indigent residents. Each hamper contained 5 kilograms of maize flour, 1 kilogram of sugar, 5 packets of soya, 1 liter of cooking oil, 500 grams of salt, and 5 soap tablets, all purchased by her. **Despite personal hardship and limited resources, she and the small group of devotees in Malawi continue to serve those in need, embodying Swami's message, "Love All, Serve All."**

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

No Need to Fear, There is Only One



I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD EVEN BE POSSIBLE TO MEET A PERSON, A BEING, AN ENTITY LIKE SATHYA SAI BABA. My introduction to Him was unlike anything I expected. I used to sing in a choir at my church, Christ Universal Temple. One day, a friend of mine, Harvene, was sitting beside me reading a book, *Sai Baba Avatar*. I was reading over her shoulder when she turned the page before I'd finished. I asked her what she was reading, and she said, quite nonchalantly, that it was about the Avatar. Well, I had never heard the word avatar before, so I asked her, "So what is an Avatar?" She responded, "He is the full incarnation of God."

Well, my church had always taught that God is everywhere, ever present, and I thought that must be what she meant. But then she said, "He's here in a human body right now," and that stopped me cold.

God, in a body, right now!

That was the part that got me, because I had always secretly wondered why this couldn't happen! **Why did I always have to read about God and Jesus, and never get to truly experience Him?**

"There is Only One"

Harvene asked me if I wanted her to bring me a book, and she did at the next rehearsal. I took it to work and read it during my lunch break, alone in the lounge, the way I always did. Partway through, I got nervous and started teasing myself, "Come on, Crystal, you don't even have Jesus figured out, and now you're reading about some Avatar, some guru? Next thing you know, you'll be shaving your head and playing a tambourine in the airport."

I closed the book, and at that moment, with no one else in the room, I heard a voice as clear as if someone were standing beside me, *"There is no need to fear. There is only One."* I told myself that I wasn't the type to do something so dramatic anyway, and then I heard the voice again, just as clearly: *"There is no need to fear. There is only One."*

So I opened the book again, and as I did, **I could see, in the outline of Baba's face on the page, the face of Jesus! It was not printed there. It was simply what I saw!**

I finished the book in two days.

Impact of Video *Darshan*

I showed up at the very first Friday meeting of Sai Baba's followers I could get to. The woman who answered the door–Harvene again–looked at me strangely and apologized. She explained that people usually had to be begged to attend, and here I was showing up for the meeting at the first chance I had! Inside, about a dozen people were eating a meal together, and it turned out that most of them sang in my own choir.

We watched a video of Swami slowly walking among people, taking letters, and I felt something in my heart. I could swear that He looked right into the camera, right at my face, even though I still don't know if that really happened. When the video ended, everyone turned to me, the newcomer, and asked what I thought. The first thing out of my mouth was, "How do I get there?"

It took about a year before I finally could!

Miracle Picture at Sai Retreat

In the meantime, the group planned a Sai retreat. Just before I left to attend it, I was standing at my kitchen sink, washing dishes in front of my yellow-flowered wallpaper, and I got teary. I still couldn't say "Swami"–I was calling Him Sathya Sai Baba Sir. I said out loud, "Please don't let this be another one of those situations where everyone else gets theirs, and I'm the one sitting in the back, not getting it."

Then I let it go!

At the retreat, the keynote speaker was Dr. John Hislop, an ardent devotee of Swami and a leader of the Sathya Sai organization in the USA. I was seated far in the back, but I got up on one knee and took his picture. When I had the film developed, I gasped out loud at the picture that came back–a band of orange light streaming down the front of the photograph that was not there

when I took it! Professional photographers I later showed it to insisted it must have been there, but I know what I saw through the lens, and it wasn't there!

That was Swami's answer to me before I even asked Him: this was not going to be one of those situations that passed me by. I made about 500 copies of that picture and handed them out to anyone who wanted one. Years later, in India, someone told me that someone from Fiji had a copy of that very picture.

First *Darshan*

I had never been out of the country, so my family looked at me as though I had lost my mind when I went on my first trip to Puttaparthi alone. I packed two army duffel bags, as tall as I was, stuffed with everything anyone had ever warned me I might need–including a broom and a mop!

I wore a melon-colored sweatsuit for the cold conditions during the flight and arrived roasting in it in India! When the taxi pulled up at the *ashram*, people were already walking in one direction, and the driver kept telling me, "Go, go have *darshan* (sacred sight of the Divine)!" My first instinct, being a girl from Chicago, was that he'd drive off with everything I owned the moment I walked away. But I told myself that I was not in Chicago and left my luggage on the roof of the taxi. I got as far as the *ashram* gate before it closed for the day. I stood there and said quietly, "Okay, Swami! I'm here. I don't know what to do or what to say, but I'm here."

That very moment, watching from the gate, I saw Swami walking the short distance between the gate and the Poornachandra Auditorium. He turned and looked directly into my face, as if to say, *"I know. I've got you."*

First Interview

A voice behind me said, "Hello, sister." It was a woman named Eltrue Sorensen, whom I'd met once before, at a retreat back home. Neither of us had known the other would be there. For a long stretch, we were the only two African American devotees on the grounds, and we spent the whole trip together as if it were one long slumber party. Swami, I always say, "hooked us up."

My first interview happened because of her nerve. I would never have had the courage to ask for an interview! She told Swami, "Interview, Swami," and when He came back and asked how many, she replied, "Four: two ladies, two gentlemen." He said, *"Go."*

Before I'd left home, I had privately told Swami (and no one else) that if He truly was who He said He was, He would say something to me so private that it could never be mistaken for an accidental remark! During the interview, with Christmas decorations going up all around and Swami talking about how beautiful they were, He suddenly leaned over, looked me straight in the eyes, and said: *"Rumpelstiltskin."* I was stunned. It was the very magic word I had in mind! "Rumpelstiltskin" is the secret name a queen must guess in a German fairy tale. Swami just sat back up and kept talking right on as if nothing at all had happened!

Then He turned to Ms. Sorensen and asked when she was leaving. She explained that her husband, Scott, wouldn't let her extend her stay unless Swami Himself told her to. Swami looked up into the air, as if pulling the words out



Photograph of Dr. Hislop taken by the author at the Sai retreat

of my head, and said, *"No. Twenty-seventh, after Christmas,"* which was exactly what I was thinking, word for word! We stared at each other incredulously! She and I had had that very conversation the night before. I was leaving on the 27th, after Christmas; she was leaving a week sooner. Oh, my God!

Later, we went to the village to make a phone call to Scott, and all I could hear on the other end was him giving in, saying, "Okay, then you stay until the twenty-seventh after Christmas." We celebrated all that night. I finally understood that I was not going to be the one in the background. I was getting my love too!

The Wondrous Days

Over the following years, I made six trips to Puttaparthi and had eight interviews with Him in total, and I have never once looked back or doubted that He is who He says He is.

For a long time, I could not bring myself to say "Swami" because it felt "foreign." I didn't think of Him as a guru, only as Sathya Sai Baba. It came gradually, until one day it simply felt natural. Around that same time, I grew curious about how He actually manifested *vibhuti* (sacred ash) with His hand. Seemingly in response, one day, He walked straight up to my seat in the front row, looked at me as if to say, "All right, knucklehead, you wanted to see this," pulled back His sleeve, and showed me exactly how it was done, right there, unasked!

I saw other wonders over the years: rings materialized for two fellow devotees who had first noticed Swami's photograph on a restaurant wall during their travels and asked, half-joking, "Who's that brother with the Afro?"; a silver bowl He materialized, which another devotee passed on to me as a gift; and, most strikingly, a man brought to an interview in a wheelchair, who stood up after Swami touched his legs twice!

In an interview one day, Swami asked someone, *"Who is God?"* The person answered humbly, "You are God, Swami." **Swami looked at him and said, *"No–you are God."* That teaching has stayed with me above all the rest. I have repeated it to myself in every low moment since, because if He said it, it has to be the truth, whether or not I have fully learned to believe it yet.**

"Trials still come, plenty of them, but I go back, every time, to the same simple thing: Swami, whatever You do, I can handle it–only because I have met You, and I have seen You face to face."

One evening after choir rehearsal at Puttaparthi, a woman asked me if I had seen the angels. I had no idea what she meant. She told me to stand still and look up. When I did, I saw a single flash of light cross the darkening sky, and then another, until the whole sky was full of them, twinkling and flying past, before they slowed and thinned and the sky went dark and ordinary again. It was Swami who made sure I saw that!

I also helped shape one of the cultural programs in Puttaparthi. I told the men who organized it that I didn't want to hear every nation simply sing *bhajans* (devotional songs)! I wanted to feature each country's own music, whatever it truly was. They accepted the idea, and it became a two-day program, so full and so beautiful that Swami asked the group with the Chinese dragons to stay back a few extra days, so that the children could keep enjoying them!

Lessons from Swami

Two stories taught me that Swami's relationship with each of us needs no permission from others. A woman I knew loved her jewelry until another devotee told her that Swami disapproved of women wearing anything so showy. She packed it all before her next interview. The very first thing Swami said to her was, *"Where's your pretty jewelry? Don't listen to all of that! Swami has His own relationship with you."*

My own turn came when the *ashram* office refused to extend my stay, even though others who'd been there just as long were allowed to remain. Rather than make a fuss, I simply found a room in the village. A friend of mine, an African gentleman by the name of Dare, later told me that Swami called him in and, out of nowhere, asked, *"Where is she?"* When my friend explained that I hadn't wanted to break any rules, Swami told him plainly, *"You get her back in."* He would not even let me go collect my own belongings! He sent members of the *sevadal* (volunteers) to bring everything to me instead. From then on, I had a room all to myself at the *ashram*.

One day, I pulled a good token number for the *darshan* line but arrived to find the best spots already claimed by those everyone called VIPs. I was livid, complaining to Swami mentally that I hadn't flown all the way to India to be treated as less important than someone else, exactly the way I sometimes was treated at home. I marched back to my room afterward and stood in front of a full-size picture of Swami, ranting.

But, in the middle, some words came into my head that were not the way I normally talk at all: *"These people come here, and they clamor after the form. I give them what they want. Now tell me what you want?"* I never lined up again for the rest of that trip. I simply came when I came, sat where I sat, and I was happy the entire time.

Some of it caught up with me only after I came home. Back in the choir, rehearsing a hymn I must have sung at least 25 times over the years, I suddenly heard it as if for the first time and called out to Harvene beside me, "Did you hear that?" Everyone looked around for a sound from somewhere. The words to this song I had sung so many times before were:

In the stars His handiwork I see,
On the wind, He speaks with majesty...
'Til by faith I met Him face to face,
And I felt the wonder of His grace...

I had sung those words dozens of times without ever understanding what they meant. Now I did!

I have a nephew who once told me he wished he'd had experiences like mine with Sai Baba, that maybe he'd simply been too young. I told him to be still. There will be people on this earth who never once hear the name Sathya Sai Baba and will still have their own real experience of God, if they are only still enough to know it is already here.

I have been a devotee for nearly 40 years now. I became a vegetarian the day I laid eyes on Him, not because anyone told me to, but because it was already part of who I was underneath.

Trials still come, plenty of them, but I go back, every time, to the same simple thing: Swami, whatever You do, I can handle it–only because I have met You, and I have seen You face to face.

Ms. Crystal Harris
USA

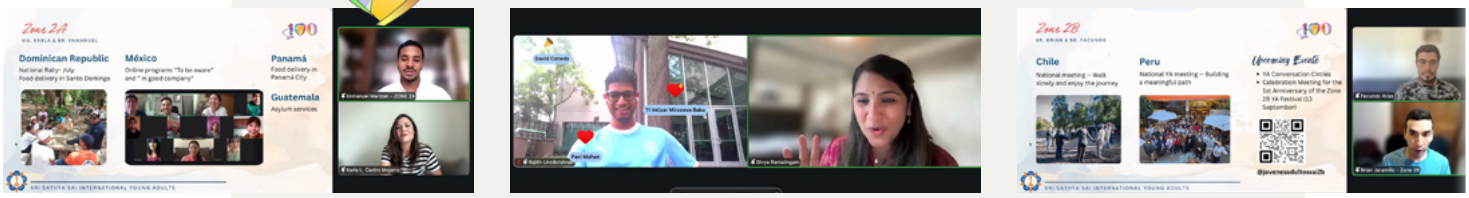


Ms. Crystal Harris *has been a member of the SSSIO for nearly 40 years. She first visited Swami in the late 1980s and made six trips to Prasanthi Nilayam. In 1995, she helped create a two-day international music program, which was offered to Swami. From October 1995 to December 1996, she lived in Prasanthi Nilayam.*

Crystal is President of the Sri Sathya Sai Center of Southeast Chicago and has served at regional Sai conferences as convener, speaker, and music coordinator. She is certified in early childhood education and Sathya Sai Education in Human Values. For more than 15 years, she sang with the Grammy-nominated Christ Universal Temple Ensemble, a church-based gospel choir.

from the International Sai Young Adults

SECOND INTERNATIONAL YOUNG ADULTS CALL



On August 29, 2026, 115 Young Adults (YAs) and advisors from across 10 zones of the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO) gathered for a Zoom call–a *satsang* (spiritual gathering)–to connect, share experiences, and strengthen bonds of love and brotherhood.

Ms. Vahinie Pillay, International Young Adults Coordinator, opened the call by welcoming everyone and highlighting Bhagawan's clarion call for youth to serve society as an expression of gratitude. Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman of the SSSIO, encouraged each YA to inspire a hundred others, while Mr. Leonardo Gutter, Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, reminded the audience of each person's role in the Organization. He urged YAs to continually reflect on whether they were doing enough at the individual, family, and community levels.

Zone YA Coordinators shared updates on activities and upcoming events in their regions and offered ideas that could be adapted and implemented across zones. Project leads from the Empowering Leaders, Veda, Creative Media, and Serve Sai initiatives also presented opportunities for YAs worldwide to contribute remotely. A lively game show featuring *bhajan* (devotional song) quiz rounds in different languages added to the spirit of the gathering, reflecting how Bhagawan's love has reached every corner of the world.

The call also featured the **exciting announcement of the International YA Festival**, planned for Sri Lanka, in August 2027.

The gathering concluded with a clip from one of Bhagawan's divine discourses, in which He emphasized the oneness of all beings. Despite differences in countries, bodies, feelings, and ideas, the principle of *Atma* (divine Self) remains the same. This principle of unity is what young people must carry forward and share with the world.



Blossoming of Inner Peace

From September 24 to 28, 2026, SSSIO Young Adults from Zones 6 and 7, representing the countries of northern and southern Europe, gathered for a retreat centered on the theme "Blossoming of Inner Peace." The group stayed at a guesthouse in Chřibská, Czech Republic, amid beautiful autumn scenery.

Six Young Adults and eight adults came together to connect with nature, explore inner peace, share experiences, and spend meaningful time together. After arriving on Thursday evening, they shared dinner and ended the day with devotional singing, setting the tone for the days ahead.

Each morning began with prayers and devotional singing, and each evening ended with devotional singing. On Friday, the group set out on a five-hour hike through the Czech countryside, taking in the autumn colors and peaceful atmosphere. That afternoon, during the study circle, the participants explored how to find peace within themselves and shared personal experiences and reflections. They also took part in an **EASE** workshop on healthy living, which highlights four simple practices: **E**xercise regularly, maintain a positive **A**ttitude, **S**leep deeply, and **E**at responsibly.

Saturday and Sunday were dedicated to tree planting in Lichtenhain, Germany. Working from morning until late afternoon on both days, the group planted 1,140 trees, including larches, Douglas firs, and pines. The work was challenging on the steep hillside, but the sunny weather, laughter, and spirit of unity made the experience especially rewarding.

For the participants, planting trees became a meaningful reminder of Swami's teaching that **the present is like a seed that grows from the tree of the past and will itself grow into the tree of the future, with a mighty tree hidden within every tiny seed**. In the same way, each sapling planted and each small act done with love holds the promise of something lasting. **The trees stand for growth, renewal, and a gift to the future, reflecting the retreat's theme of "Blossoming of Inner Peace."**

On the final morning, after prayers, exercise, and breakfast, the group cleaned the guesthouse together before checking out. The Young Adults left the retreat with new experiences, meaningful connections, and a deeper appreciation of nature, community, and inner peace.



From I to We

On September 11–13, 2026, the Zone 2A Young Adults Retreat, titled "From I to We," was held in El Salvador. Every talk and activity centered on unity at different levels (within oneself, in the family, in society, and in the Sai Organization) and on the understanding that unity is divinity.

The retreat was held at Centro Loyola, a setting of lush vegetation that invited introspection. Thirty-six young people from six Zone 2A countries participated: Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Panama.

The program included talks and activities on topics such as:

- Unity of thought, word, and deed
- A living museum of religions
- Why am I here?
- Devotional ceremonies and guided light meditation (*Jyoti* Meditation)
- A mindful walk and the experience of silence
- Seeing God in everything

Ms. Vahinie Pillay, International Young Adults Coordinator, who lives in South Africa, joined the participants. Her talk, "Unity," was inspiring and reminded everyone of Swami's words that there is only one language, the language of the heart, and there is only one religion, the religion of love.

The retreat concluded with service to the community at Hogar Reina de la Paz, a residential care home for the elderly, where the YAs served residents living with AIDS. They formed three groups. The first group attended to the women, offering hairstyling, makeup, and manicures. The second group gave the men haircuts, shaves, and personal grooming. The third group brought joy through song and dance. Throughout the visit, the YAs experienced Swami's presence and guidance.

The event was designed by and for the youth, with invaluable help from adults in the host country, who had worked alongside them for several months beforehand. Adults from other countries in the region also joined the event and served as volunteers throughout the retreat, always with a smile. The youth especially recognized the unwavering support of Mr. Oscar Morado, Zone 2A Chair, whom they described as an extraordinary instrument of Swami.

The following are the experiences of three Young Adults who attended the retreat.



Mr. Mario López

National Young Adults Coordinator, Guatemala

Sometimes life places us among people and in settings that feel familiar, even if we do not fully understand why. Perhaps we have been there before, and something within us recognizes what we are experiencing. That is how I felt at the Sai Youth Retreat in El Salvador: a mixture of surprise and familiarity, along with a deep sense of connection to something precious that had always been within me.

Every activity was transformative, but I especially want to share what happened during Mr. Oscar Morado's talk, "Seeing God in Everything." As part of the talk, each of us drew an object from a cloth bag. I was at the back, watching the brothers and sisters ahead of me take out combs, mirrors, and glue. When my turn came, I pulled out an object, something transparent I could see through clearly. As I looked at it, something deep inside me shifted, though I did not know what it was.

Mr. Oscar Morado asked us to reflect on what the object we had chosen at random might mean in our lives. I thought about it for a moment, but I had no idea. Later, a *bhajan* we had sung that morning came to mind. Its lyrics said, *"Give me a new heart, Lord, clear as crystal."* At that moment, something very special arose within me and slowly welled up in my eyes. I began to look at everyone around me and saw something extraordinary in them–an overwhelming, radiant feeling. As I watched them, I sensed something gentle emerging from them, little by little, with profound force. It moved me deeply. I did not understand what it was, but I felt so much, including great admiration for everyone.

The retreat continued, and the feeling grew stronger and stronger. Then came the silent reflection led by Mr. Miguel Montes (National Young Adults Coordinator, Mexico), which helped us connect with nature without the distraction of our phones. I sat beneath a tall, beautiful pine tree. The



Mr. Oscar Morado

atmosphere was calm, silent, and peaceful. The afternoon was drawing to a close, and the setting sun was coloring the sky orange.

Suddenly, a distinct current of wind came through. I felt it surround me as I watched the tree above me sway slowly. **I knew within myself that I needed to let go of things I had carried for a long time, things that had kept me from moving forward. I felt the wind carry them all away, leaving me lighter and lighter, until I could feel the tree's swaying as though I were an extension of it, as if the tree and I were part of the same rhythm.** Gradually, the wind grew stronger until I heard the powerful sound of *Om* within it.

Then I remembered that the previous day, Friday, while lost in a pair of beautiful eyes, I had wondered whether it was possible to love across distance, despite borders and miles. After the final gust of wind, these words came to my heart: "You can love through the wind." The exercise ended, and we remained silent as that overwhelming feeling kept growing. Then I realized that what **I was seeing in all my brothers and sisters was purity: a deeply moving, clear, and comforting purity. I understood that this was the crystal's message and that purity was now my work**.

The feeling kept growing. The next day, we served at a care home for older adults, where it grew even stronger. I felt it not only with my Sai brothers and sisters but also with the residents. I felt a kind of ecstasy. I took some photographs, and when I looked at them later, I discovered that they had captured something of the purity I experienced in that moment. I am deeply grateful to everyone, because I was able to feel their presence through Sai's love. Even as I write this, I still feel that beautiful emotion. Thank you, Swami.



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Mr. Diego López

Service Coordinator, Pachuca, Hidalgo, Mexico

If I could sum up the 2026 Zone 2A Young Adults Retreat in El Salvador in a single word, **it would be "transformative."**

Before arriving, I was certain that Swami would bring me safely to El Salvador. Yet even a little traffic along the way was enough for my restless monkey mind to disturb my peace and show me that I had not yet surrendered everything to Him. Once I arrived in El Salvador, everything began to flow. The warm welcome from the devotees, the delicious pupusas (a traditional Salvadoran dish) we enjoyed with a wonderful view, and the reception hosted by Mr. John Behner (former Zone 2 Chair and a senior devotee of Swami) at his home the day before the retreat made me feel Swami's love all around us.

Reuniting with sisters and brothers from other countries with whom I had shared earlier experiences was filled with affection. One thing I love is that, whether it is your first retreat or your fifth, you meet new people at every event. Though we may look different on the outside, the same current flows through us on the inside. That is what makes us feel so close and united. Whether you have just met someone during an icebreaker or while singing devotional songs, they treat you with the love of someone who has known you all your life.

I never thought a red crayon could bring me so much bliss. Yet Swami gives us the chance to experience His love, so perfect that it feels as though He is there entirely for you. Is Swami pleased with my work? Am I doing enough service to meet His expectations? If not, do I deserve His love and blessings? These were the questions I asked myself during Mr. Oscar Morado's talk, "Seeing God in Everything," and the activity that involved drawing an object from a bag. Whatever you pulled out represented the message from Swami for you. **I know that my spiritual practice of service is connected to seeing God in everyone, so I can overcome my ego.**



I pulled a red crayon from a bag filled with many things, and it immediately reminded me of the three children I teach on weekends in Mexico. They come from vulnerable situations, and I have tried to support them with the love and patience that Swami would show them. I felt Swami say to me: *"I am there, with you and with them, always. Do not worry about anything. I will take*

care of it. You all belong to Me. You are doing well."

As the retreat came to a close, it far exceeded my expectations. The service we did at Hogar Reina de la Paz was incredible. I felt that Swami had been quietly preparing me for a long time to do it with all His love. I also left with a commitment to continue working in the Organization in my role as service coordinator and, in my city, to do more service and do it better.

Today I understand Swami's message more than ever before:

"You must have freedom not only from fear, but freedom from hope and expectation. Trust in My wisdom: I do not make mistakes. Love My uncertainty! For it is not a mistake. It is My intent and will. Remember, nothing happens without My will. Be still. Do not want to understand; do not ask to understand. Relinquish understanding. Relinquish the imperative that demands understanding." (*Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*, Vol. 3, Ch. 4)



Ms. Vahinie Pillay

International Young Adults Coordinator, South Africa

Love All, Serve All: One of the most memorable and heart-warming moments of the Zone 2A YA Retreat was the service we did at the asylum. I have always found serving the community intriguing, exciting, enjoyable, and fulfilling, so this was the activity I was most looking forward to, especially because I could learn from the local team in another country and help those in need.

We began our bus trip from the retreat venue with a prayer to Swami, and I felt deeply connected with Him, being His instrument and surrendering to Him. When we arrived at the asylum, one of the *sevadals* (Sai service volunteers), who is also a YA mentor, reminded us of the retreat's theme, "From I to We," which stands for seeing the unity and oneness in everything, and always seeing Swami in those being served. Little did I know that this profound reminder would stay with me throughout the *seva* (selfless service) and shape my entire experience.

The women's facility was run by nuns, and one of the sisters met us. She explained that all the women had AIDS along with other illnesses and asked us to take precautions: wear gloves and masks at all times and disinfect our hands with medical sanitizer afterward. At this point, my monkey mind really started to jump around, especially since I had volunteered for the grooming and manicure team. Thoughts

about unwarranted contact and risk of contamination raced through my mind. Coming from Africa, we have always been cautioned about AIDS, and there is also a stigma attached to those living with it. **I was unsure of what was in store for us, but the reminder to see God in every person came back to me, and the "All" in "Love All, Serve All" was definitely tested.**

We finally met the ladies, and each of us was assigned to care for someone. It just so happened that I was assigned to the only lady who spoke English; the rest spoke Spanish. In that moment, I was reminded that Swami is in control. As I cut her nails and talked with her, I thought of Swami and tried to connect with the Divine within her. It was a sincere conversation in which she shared her feelings and her story. She told me how much she looks forward to visitors, company, and being pampered, and how the women yearn for someone to talk to. She lit up when it came time to choose a color for her nails, as happy as a child on Christmas morning.

Another YA sister was caring for a resident who was blind and had AIDS. Her daughter had left her there some years ago and had not come back to visit her. Another lady had both cancer and AIDS, and as a result, she had developed a hole in her face, as the cancer was eating away the flesh. She was very sad that people sometimes do not come to see her. These stories and experiences not only taught me, in a practical way, what "From I to We" means, but also put life into perspective. I was filled with immense gratitude for the blessings we sometimes take for granted, such as health, family, and our senses.

The ladies at the facility were so excited when the YA music and entertainment



team began performing. They danced and laughed. Despite their hardships, pain, and challenges, they still held a glimmer of hope and found great joy in life's simple things. It struck me that Swami had brought me all the way from Africa to El Salvador to experience the divinity in all beings. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to serve, and this *seva* has had a deep impact on my life: learning to love and serve ALL!

Leaving was quite emotional for the team as we reflected on our interactions. **I was so proud of this international team of Young Adults for the incredible service and work they do, and extremely grateful to be part of a Sai family that lives and practices His values and teachings without hesitation.**

As we left, the nuns gave us a card with this quotation:

"The fruit of silence is prayer,
The fruit of prayer is faith,
The fruit of faith is love,
The fruit of love is service,
The fruit of service is peace."

–Mother Teresa

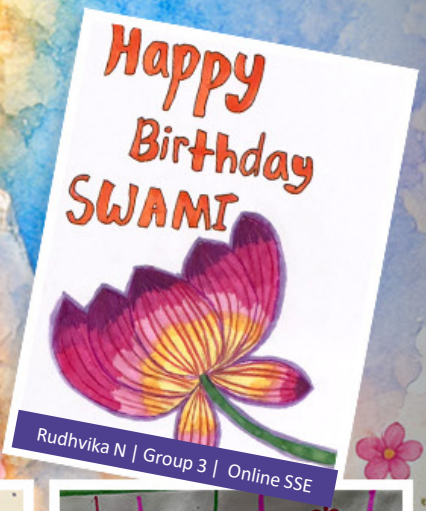
Through silence, prayer, faith, love, and service, we found peace in seeing God in each and every recipient. Swami has always been and always will be my guide, and His life's example continues to inspire me to do good and be good. Only through His love are we able to be worthy servants and instruments.

Sathya Sai Education

Happy Birthday Swami



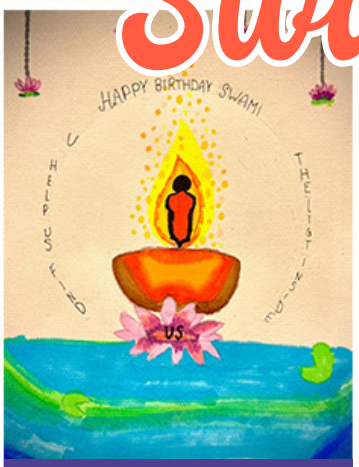
Parvati C | Group 4 | Online SSE



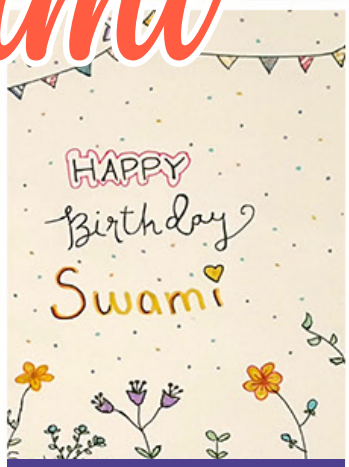
Rudhvika N | Group 3 | Online SSE



Aaradhya V | Group 1 | Online SSE



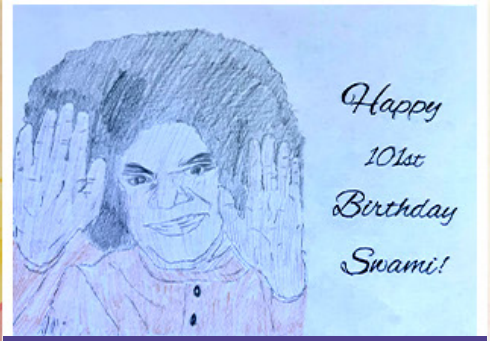
Adelina S | Group 3 | Online SSE



Sachi N | Group 4 | Online SSE



Anvi K | Group 2 | USA



Sreya V | Group 3 | Online SSE

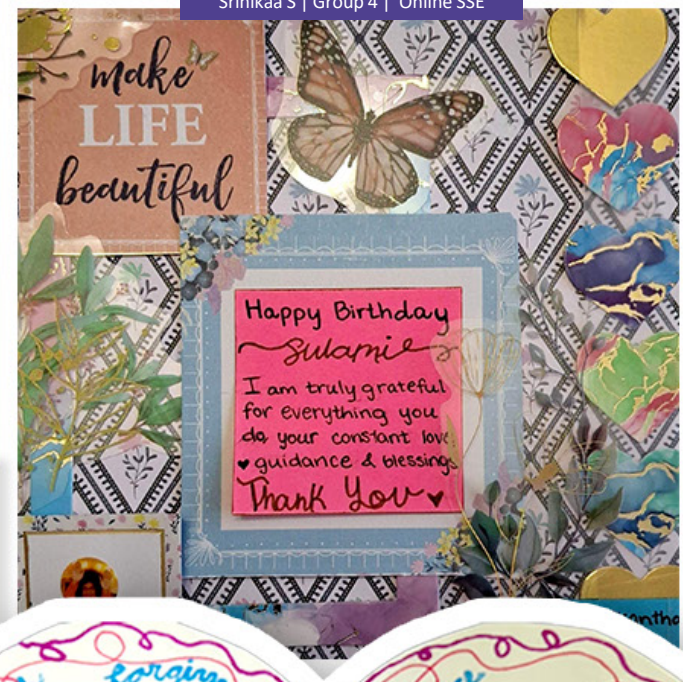


Mayilone S | Group 1 | Online SSE



Archi S | Group 1 | USA

Srinikaa S | Group 4 | Online SSE



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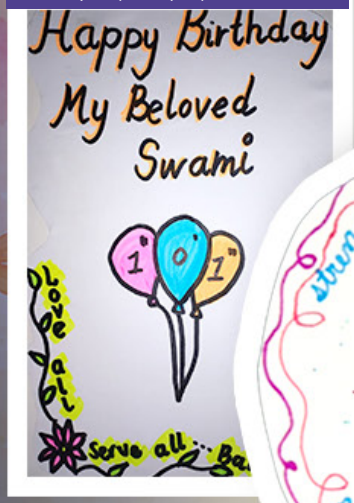


Jaswitha P | Group 4 | Online SSE





Saanvi B | Group 4 | Online SSE



Aditi A | Group 4 | Online SSE

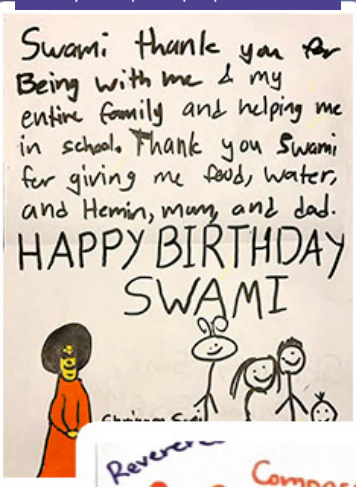


Neel C | Group 2 | Online SSE



Mayilone S | Group 1 | Online SSE

Shriyaan S | Group 1 | Online SSE



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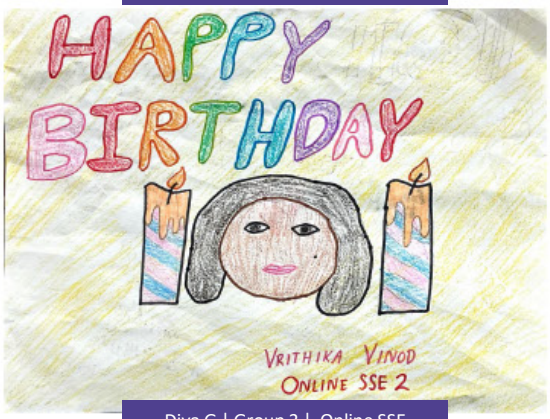

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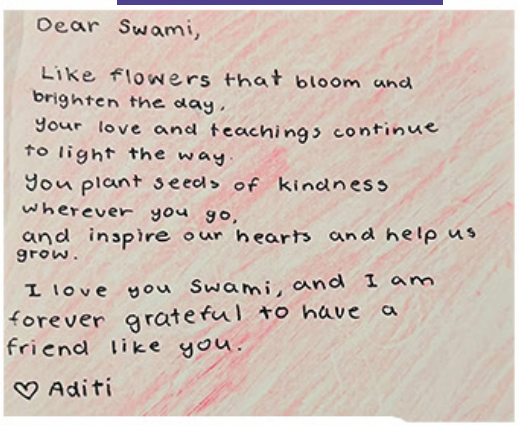
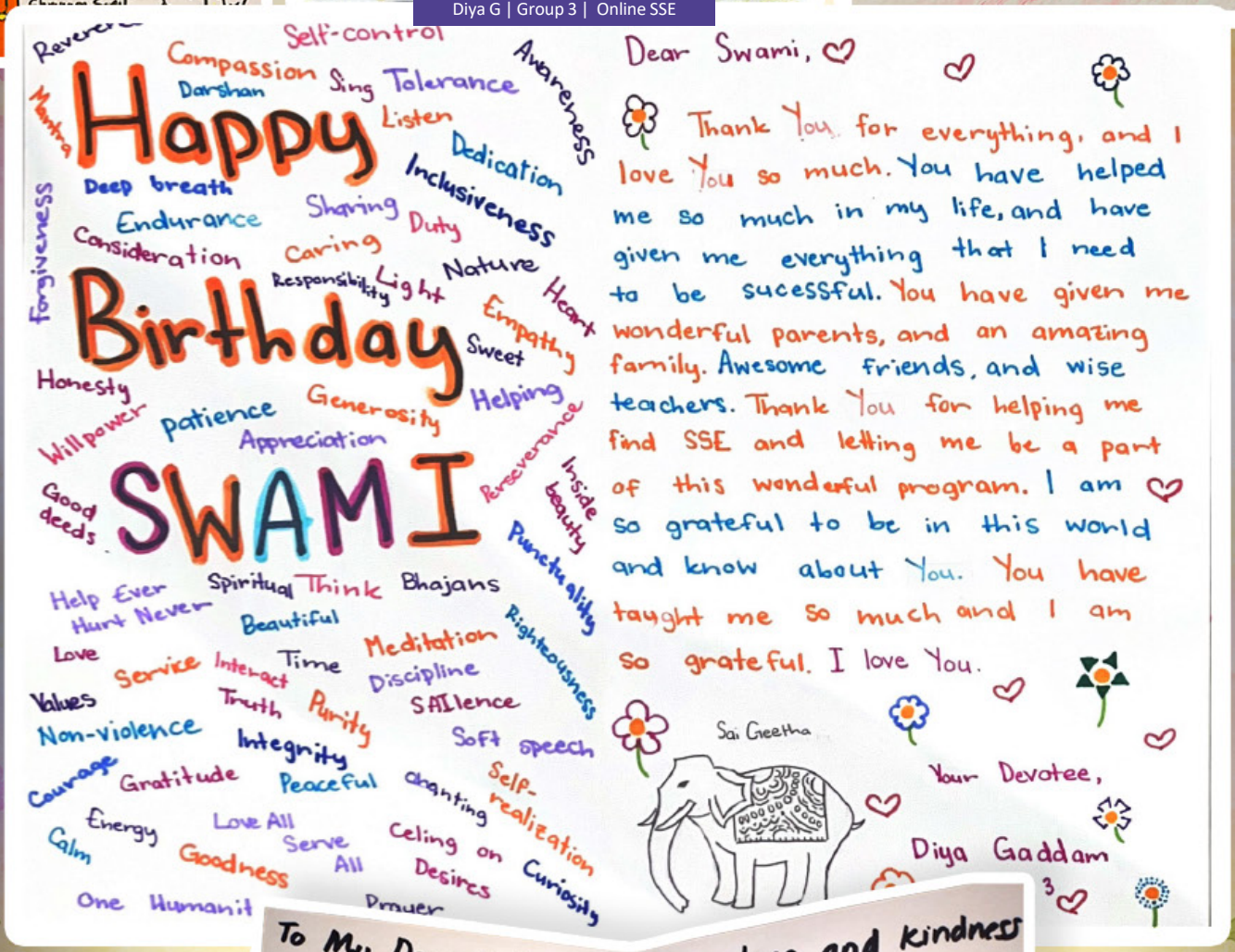
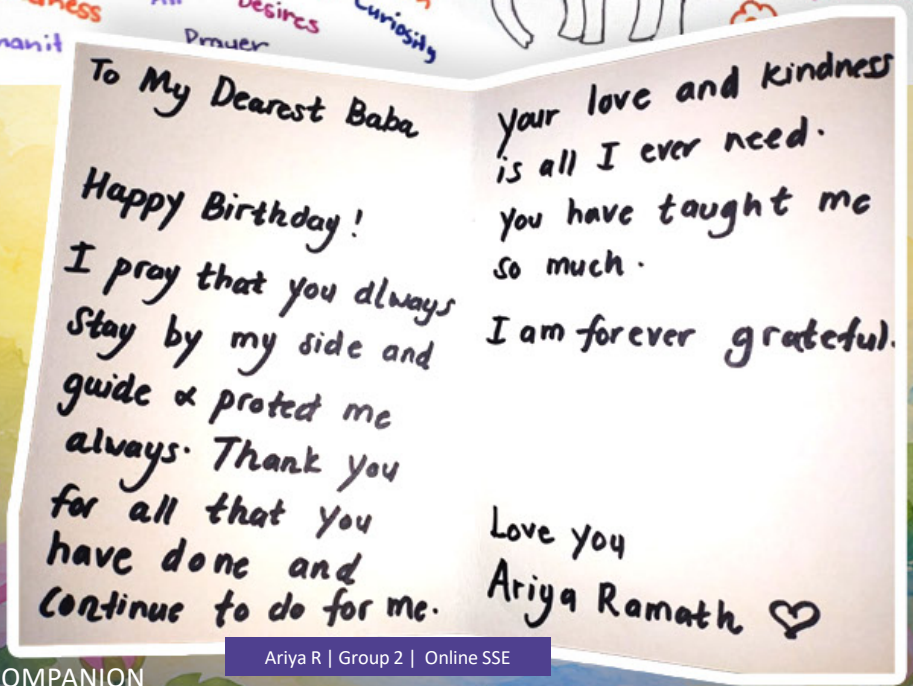
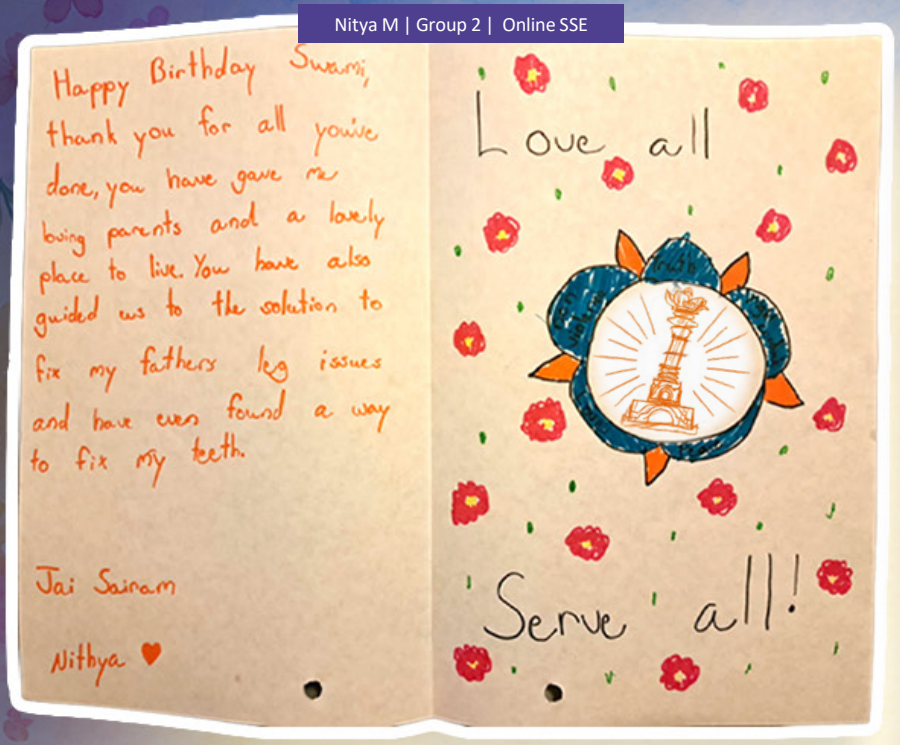


Diya G | Group 3 | Online SSE

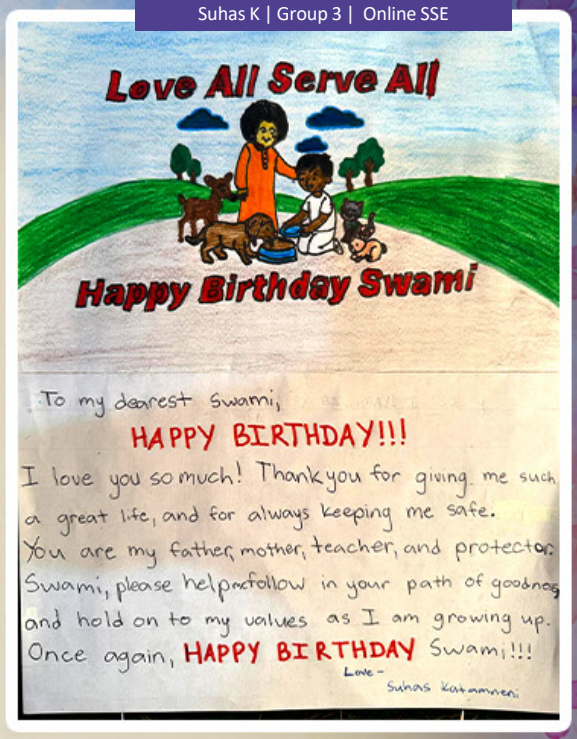




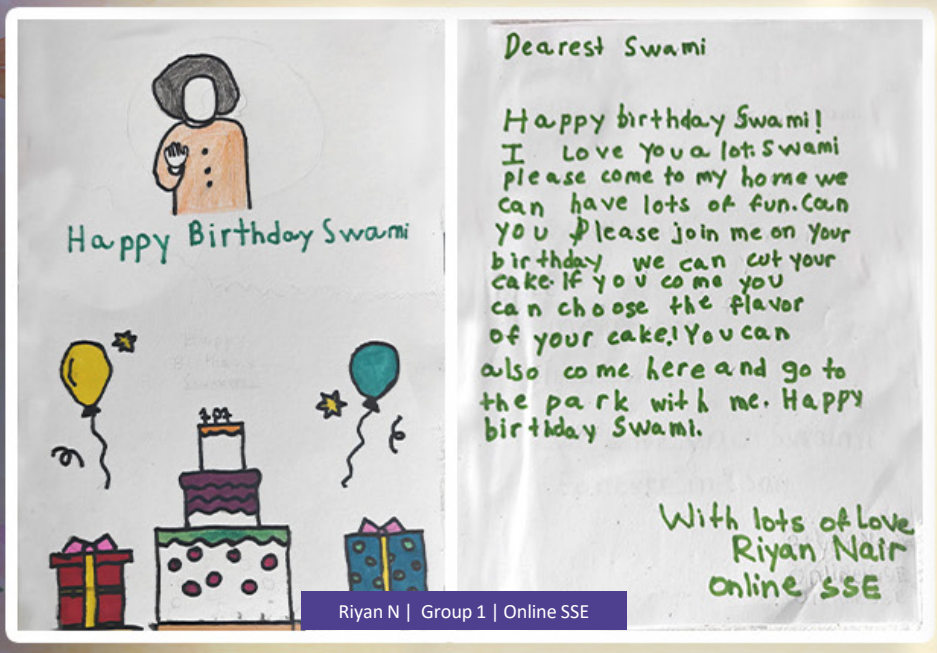
Ariya R | Group 2 | Online SSE



Nitya M | Group 2 | Online SSE



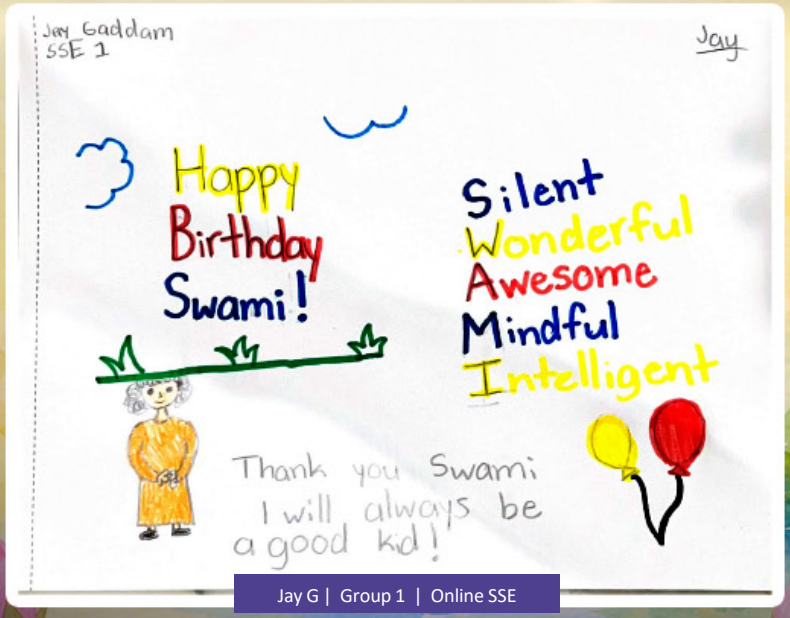
Suhas K | Group 3 | Online SSE



Riyan N | Group 1 | Online SSE



Nidhi A | Group 1 | Online SSE



Jay G | Group 1 | Online SSE

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Date of Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
December 12-13, 2026	Saturday-Sunday	Worldwide Akhanda Gayatri
December 25, 2026	Friday	Christmas
February 13-14, 2027	Saturday-Sunday	Worldwide Akhanda Gayatri

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- Sri Sathya Sai Universe
- Sri Sathya Sai Humanitarian Relief
- Sri Sathya Sai Young Adults
- Sri Sathya Sai Education

Each one has to examine for himself whether he is clinging to trinkets or conserving gems. A lamp kept on a mound illumines the area; if kept in a pit, it is as if it were not there. A virtue that is practiced is a lamp that shines for all; good thoughts and good deeds have a way of influencing others. The gems of wisdom, the light of intuitive experience, should not be kept away from fellow men. They have to be shared, even at the cost of one's life. That was the lesson Jesus taught and symbolized.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
December 25, 1982



sathyasai.org

Love All • Serve All

Help Ever • Hurt Never