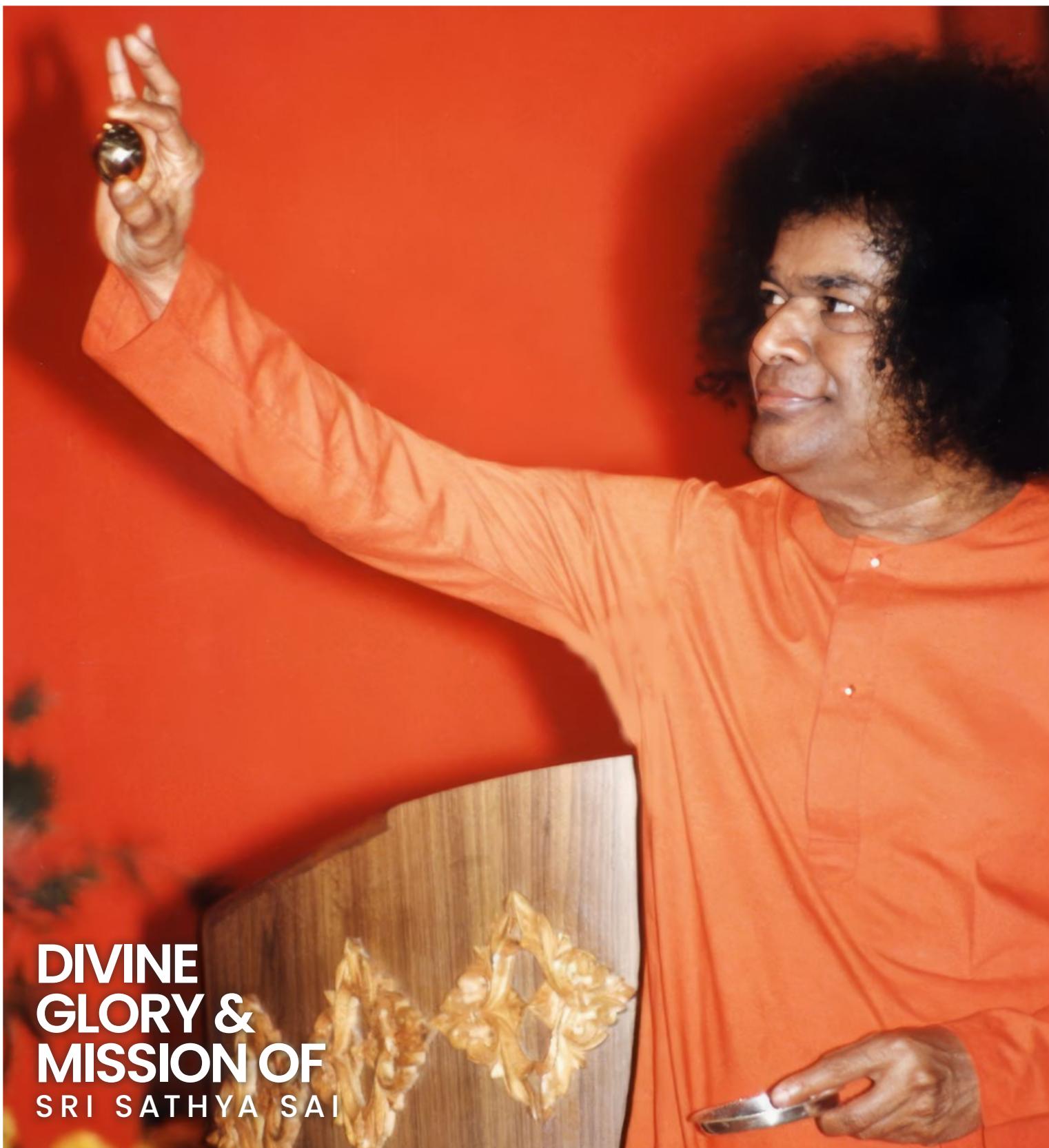


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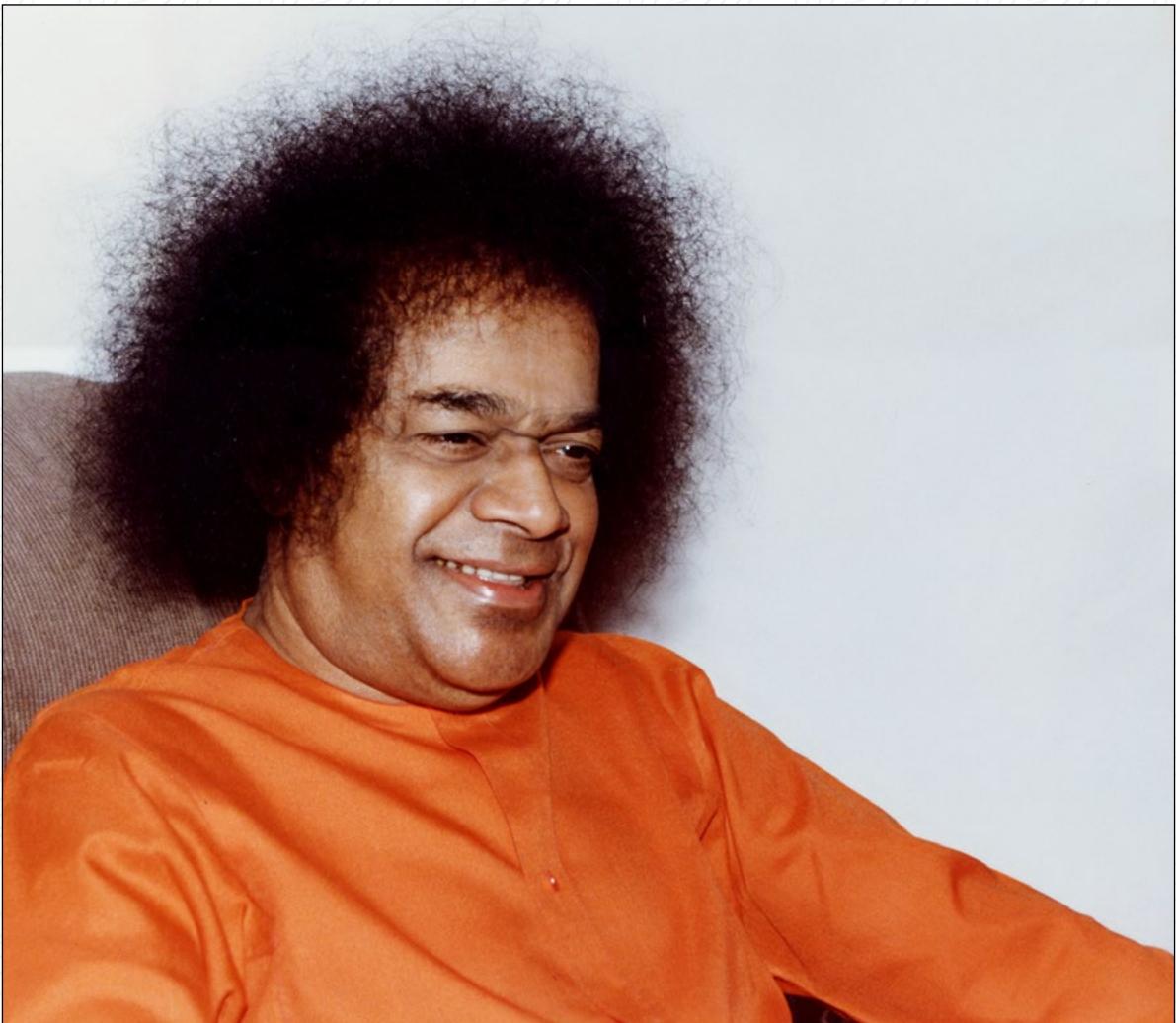


**DIVINE
GLORY &
MISSION OF**
SRI SATHYA SAI

“

On this holy Shivaratri, in the presence of Shiva Sai, resolve to visualize Lord Shiva as the inner power of all. With each breath, you are asserting ‘Soham,’ “I am He,” not only you, but every being that breathes, every being that lives, everything that exists. It is a fact which you have ignored for so long. Believe it from now on. When you watch your breath and meditate on that magnificent Truth, slowly, the I and the He (the ‘Sah’ and the ‘Aham’) will draw nearer and closer, until the feeling of separateness will fade away—and the Soham will be transformed into *Om*, the *Pranava*, the primal sound, the fundamental formula for God. That *Om* is the *Swaswarupa*—the reality behind this ‘relative reality.’

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Maha Shivaratri, February 1969



DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO
BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA





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publisher at info@sathyasai.org

Editor: Dr. Narendranath Reddy
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TWO MANTRAS FOR IMMORTALITY

Maha Shivaratri is one of the most sacred festivals celebrated worldwide by millions of spiritual seekers for inner transformation, awakening higher consciousness, and ultimately attaining liberation.

The Moon is considered the presiding deity of the mind. According to the Purusha Suktam of the Rigveda, from the mind of the Cosmic Being came the Moon, and from His eyes came the Sun. There is a close affinity between the mind and the Moon. Both are subject to decline and ascent. The waning of the Moon is a symbol of the waning of the mind. **All *sadhanas* (spiritual practices) are directed toward controlling the mind and, ultimately, eliminating the mind, so that one realizes one's true nature, which is the *Atma*. This can be easily achieved when the Moon exerts the least influence on the mind.**

Shivaratri (the night of Lord Shiva) falls on the fourteenth day of the Krishna Paksha,

or the dark half of every month. When the Moon is waning, only a thin sliver of the Moon is visible on the fourteenth day, and there will be no Moon the next day. This is called monthly Shivaratri or *Masa Shivaratri*. But Maha Shivaratri, or the 'Great Shivaratri,' is celebrated once a year during the dark half of the month of *Magha*, usually in February or March.

The scriptures and great masters proclaim that our mind is responsible for both bondage and liberation. Because the mind's influence is at its lowest during the Maha Shivaratri night, we can become free, liberated, and blissful when we turn our minds toward the Lord—here, Lord Shiva.

So, Maha Shivaratri is the ideal day for spiritual practices for seekers of enlightenment. On this day, people undertake many spiritual practices, such as chanting the Rudram and doing *abhishekam* (sacred, ritualistic anointing and bathing) to the Shiva *lingam*.

Om Namah Shivaya means, “I surrender my ego to the infinite consciousness that I truly am.”

The spiritual significance of the emergence of the lingam (*Lingodbhavam*) on this day—and also the significance of chanting the Rudram, various forms of *abhishekams*, and how to worship the lingam were all discussed in the previous Maha Shivaratri editorials of The *Eternal Companion* issues in 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Role of Mantras

In the vast landscape of spiritual practices, *mantras* occupy a central place. A *mantra* is a formula of mystical words and sounds that produce special vibrations, aligning the individual consciousness with the cosmic consciousness. **Among the countless mantras revealed through divine insight, two stand out for their extraordinary potency and association with immortality, healing, protection, and liberation: the five-lettered *Panchakshari Mantra* (Om Namah Shivaya) and the *Mahamrityunjaya Mantra* (Tryambakam Yaja Mahe).**

Both *mantras* are dedicated to Lord Shiva, also called *Devon Ke Dev* or *Mahadev*, the Supreme Lord of the Gods, also identified as the supreme *Parabrahman*. Through these two *mantras*, seekers across millennia have sought not only physical well-being and longevity, but also spiritual awakening and immortality, and transcendence over death itself.

Lord Shiva: Embodyment of Immortality

Lord Shiva is not merely a god, but is regarded as the supreme reality, the

supreme *Parabrahman*. He is also described as *Mahakala*, the great embodiment of time, and as *Kalatita*, the one beyond time. Death exists only within the scope of time. Lord Shiva transcends death altogether by transcending time. Lord Shiva's iconography in every aspect reflects this transcendence. He dwells in cremation grounds, symbolizing the impermanence of the physical body. He adorns His body with ashes, *vibhuti*, reminding devotees that all forms ultimately return to dust. Yet, He is also the Lord of immortality. His throat holds the poison, *Halahala* or *Kalakuta*, which not only indicates the sacrifice He made to save humanity, but also His mastery over death and destruction, because it cannot harm Him. His matted locks release the sacred *Ganga*, the river of life and purification.

Thus, *mantras* addressed to Lord Shiva are not only appeals to escape fear, suffering, and death, but are also invocations for attaining liberation. So, these two *mantras* serve as pathways to this realization.

The ‘Panchakshari’ Mantra

The Vedas are the most ancient scriptures, embodying all the wisdom necessary for the progress of humanity in all spheres of life. They are considered the very breath of God. They are revelations of the highest truth in the minds of the great sages or *rishis*, the seekers of truth. All these great truths are compiled and classified into four Vedas by the great sage Vyasa, who is revered as the first guru, ‘Veda Vyasa.’



Among all the Vedas, the Yajur Veda is considered especially important, and that is why Swami's residence in Prasanthi Nilayam is called Yajur Mandir.

In the Yajur Veda, the *Shatarudriyam*, also called *Sri Rudram*, a sacred hymn dedicated to Lord Rudra, holds a prominent place. In this *Rudram*, the eighth *anuvaka* (section) is considered very important since the *Panchakshari Mahamantra* 'Om Namah Shivaya' is found in the center of this *anuvaka*.

According to the *Shiva Purana*, the *Panchakshari Mantra* is the king of all mantras. It is the core of the Vedas. It is the boat that carries one across the ocean of worldly existence. *Panchakshari Mantra* literally means five-syllable mantra: Na, Ma, Shi, Va, Ya. But when you precede it with the primordial sound Om, it becomes the six-syllable mantra, 'Om Na Ma Shi Va Ya.'

The Vedas proclaim that all knowledge is contained within the *Gayatri Mantra* and that the essence of the *Gayatri* is contained within the *Panchakshari Mantra*.

Five Syllables, Five Elements, and the Five Faces of Lord Shiva

The five faces of Shiva are expressed in form, while the *Panchakshari* expresses Shiva in sound.

There are five faces described in the *Shivopasana Mantra* chanted during Sri Rudram. This is an important mantra that invokes the five faces: Sadyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora, Tatpurusha, and Ishana. Each syllable of the *Panchakshari* corresponds to one face, one element, and one cosmic function. When the mantra is chanted, the seeker is, in essence, invoking and worshipping all five faces of Shiva simultaneously.

They are as follows:

- 'Na' refers to Sadyojata, associated with the westward direction. Its element is earth, its cosmic function is creation, and its spiritual meaning is humility. Its inner significance relates to the physical body and material existence.
- 'Ma' corresponds to Vamadeva, associated with the northern direction. Its element is water, its function is preservation, and its spiritual significance is love and compassion. Its inner significance

relates to the mind and emotions. This aspect awakens devotion.

- ‘Shi’ corresponds to *Aghora*, associated with the southern direction. Its element is fire, and its function is the destruction of ignorance. It brings fearlessness and transformation, burning the ego, fear, and *karmic* impurities. It destroys past karma and ignorance.
- ‘Va’ represents *Tatpurusha*, associated with the eastern direction. Its element is air. Its function is *tirodhana*, the power of concealment, by which divinity is veiled so that human beings must make an effort through *yoga* and self-inquiry to realize the truth. This aspect regulates *prana* and breath, turning the seeker inward toward the reality.
- Finally, ‘Ya’ represents *Ishana*, the upward-facing aspect. Its element is ether. This face represents *anugraha*, divine grace, which grants liberation. While *Tatpurusa* represents concealment, *Ishana* bestows grace, with which one realizes the *Atman* as pure consciousness.

Thus, chanting the *Panchakshari Mantra*, one worships all five faces of Shiva, destroying ignorance, ego, and negativity, and transcending the body and mind gradually. Thus, the seeker moves from bondage to the state of pure awareness of the *Atma*.

Leading *Jivatma* to *Paramatma*

The mantra also describes the relation between the individual soul, *Jiva*, and the supreme reality, *Shiva*. ‘Na ma’ literally means ‘not mine,’ denying the ego. ‘Nama’ also means prostration and salutations. ‘Shi’ represents the Supreme Lord. So, one is making salutations to the Supreme Lord. ‘Va’ represents the grace of God that bridges the gap between *Paramatma* and ‘Ya,’ which represents the individual soul, *Jivatma*.

This mantra also expresses the essence of nonduality, or *Advaita*. ‘Nama’ signifies the negation of the ego and the surrender of the limited self. ‘Shiva’ refers to that which is eternally auspicious, pure consciousness itself. Thus, *Om Namah Shivaya* means,

Five Syllables	Five Faces of Shiva (Panchamukha)	Five Directions	Five Elements (Panchabhuta)	Cosmic Function
Na (ନ)	Sadyojata	West	Earth (Prithvi)	Creation, manifestation
Ma (ମ)	Vamadeva	North	Water (Jala)	Preservation, nourishment
Shi (ଶି)	Aghora	South	Fire (Agni)	Destruction of ignorance
Va (ବା)	Tatpurusha	East	Air (Vayu)	Concealment, discipline (Tirodhana)
Ya (ଯା)	Ishana	Upward / North-East	Ether (Akasa)	Grace and liberation (Anugraha)

"I surrender my ego to the infinite consciousness that I truly am."

Immortality, in this sense, is not something to be achieved sometime in the future. It is to be realized this very moment when identification with the perishable body and mind dissolves.

From the *yogic* perspective of the *kundalini* energy and the *chakras*, the 'Na' represents the energy in the *Mooladhara chakra*, the root *chakra*, and the ending syllable 'Ya' represents the energy in the *Sahasrara*, the crown *chakra*. Thus, chanting this *mantra* facilitates raising the *kundalini* energy from the *Mooladhara*, from the base of the spine to the *Sahasrara*, the seat of awareness and consciousness at the crown of the head.

In the *Panchakshari*, the most important word is 'Shiva,' which signifies auspiciousness. It is said in the *Rudram* that this is the highest degree of auspiciousness, chanted as '*Shivatama*'.

Spiritual Masters on the Panchakshari Mantra

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba teaches that the *Panchakshari* is a tool for *mano nasha* (the dissolution of the mind). In that, 'Na ma' is considered an important part of the *mantra* for the seeker. What is 'Na ma?' 'Not mine.' **If we give up the sense of 'I' and 'mine,' one becomes Shiva Himself. Shiva is the embodiment of sacrifice.**

Swami highlights that mantras should be chanted with one-pointed devotion and an understanding of their inner meaning.

The saint of Bengal, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, emphasized that for the *Panchakshari* to bear fruit, the seeker must have child-like faith, calling out to its parent with intense longing.

Swami Vivekananda said that chanting this *mantra* will ultimately lead one to the realization of '*Shivoham*'—that is, the realization that one is verily Shiva. Because chanting

Shiva's name helps overcome fear, Shiva is the embodiment of fearlessness.

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, the sage of Arunachala, is primarily an advocate of Self-inquiry (*atma vichara*). He held the name of Shiva in the highest regard, specifically in the form of the hill Arunachala. As Sai devotees, we chant this name in the *bhajan* *Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam*, when we sing 'Arunachala Shiva.' This is the first *bhajan* composed by Swami, in which He says, "Arunachala Shiva, Arunachala Shiva, Arunachala Shiva, Aruna Shivom." **This indicates that Arunachala itself is Shiva. Finally, one experiences 'Shivoham' (I am Shiva)—Self-realization through constant chanting of the mantra, 'Om Namah Shivaya.'**

Two Stories on the Panchakshari Mantra

The efficacy of the *Panchakshari Mantra* is illustrated through numerous stories in the *Puranas*. Here are two of them.

One is the story of the great sage Markandeya. He was the son of Rishi Mrikandu, born as a result of the earnest prayers of his parents, as a boon from Lord Shiva. He was an ideal child and always devoted to Lord Shiva. However, the boon specified that he was destined to die at the very young age of sixteen. When



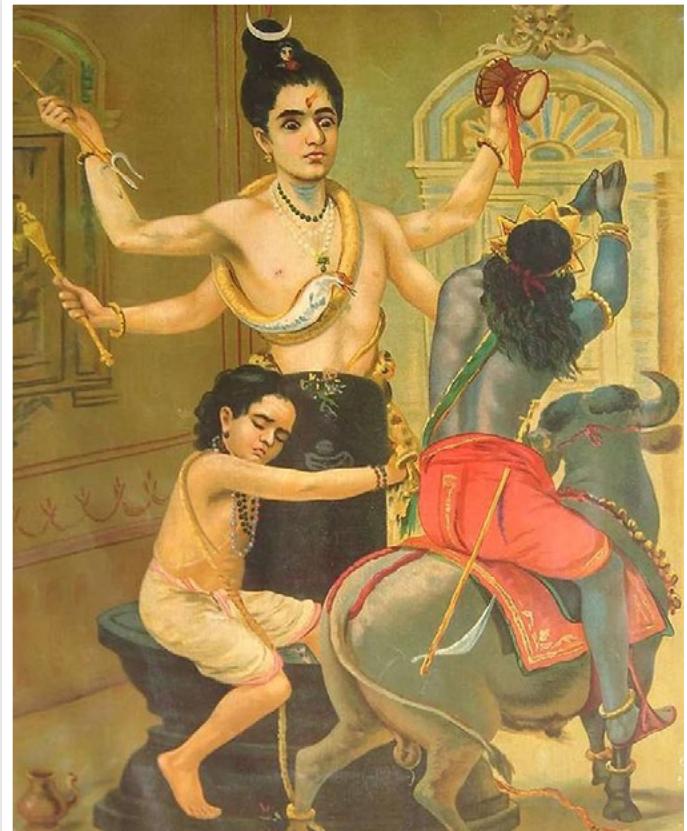
Arunachala Hill, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu

The *Panchakshari Mantra* is often described as a *Moksha Mantra*, capable of granting liberation even to those immersed in worldly duties.

the time of death approached, Markandeya took refuge in his beloved Lord Shiva, holding tightly on to the Shiva Lingam and chanting the sacred *Panchakshari* and the *Mahamrityunjaya* Mantras.

When King Yama, the Lord of Death, arrived to claim his soul, Shiva emerged from the lingam to protect His devotee. Not only did Markandeya escape death, but he also received blessings from Lord Shiva to become a *Chiranjeevi*, one with eternal life. This story signifies that the *Panchakshari* is the destroyer of death and time. **Swami explains in His divine discourse on March 8, 2005, that this episode teaches the relationship between devotion, destiny, and divine grace—showing how divine grace can overcome destiny itself.**

The second story of Upamanyu is a profound illustration of pure devotion to Lord Shiva. As a young boy, Upamanyu once tasted cow's milk at his uncle's home and longed for it thereafter. When his impoverished mother could not provide milk, she explained that all nourishment and blessings ultimately come from Shiva. Inspired by her words, Upamanyu resolved to seek Shiva directly. He went to the forest and undertook severe austerities, worshipping a Shiva Lingam and chanting the *Panchakshari Mantra*, 'Om Namah Shivaya' with unwavering devotion. Lord Shiva Himself appeared in disguise to test his faith, but Upamanyu refused to abandon his devotion. **Pleased with his single-pointed devotion and surrender, Lord Shiva revealed His true form and blessed Upamanyu with an abundance of not just milk for the body, but also milk of wisdom and spiritual insight.**



Shiva Panchakshari Stotra

The *Shiva Panchakshari Stotra*, traditionally attributed to Sri Adi Shankaracharya, the master of Advaita, glorifies the *Panchakshari Mantra* 'Namah Shivaya' with clear meanings for each syllable. The hymn explains the significance of each letter.

*nagendraharaya trilochanaya
bhasmangaragaya maheshwaraya
nityaya shuddhaya digambaraya
tasmai NA-karaya namah shivaya*

Na: Salutations to Lord Shiva, who wears the serpent as a garland, who has three eyes, whose body is adorned with sacred ash, who is the Supreme Lord, eternal and pure, clad in the directions themselves. **Salutations to Shiva, represented by the sacred syllable 'NA.'**

*mandakini salila chandana
 charchitaya
 nandishwara pramathanatha
 maheshwaraya
 mandara pushpa bahupushpa
 supujitaya
 tasmai MA-karaya namah shivaya*

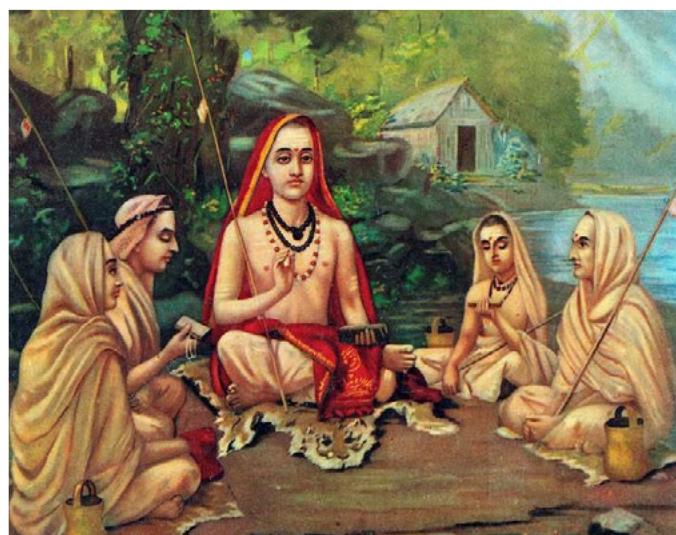
Salutations to Lord Shiva, who is based in the waters of the river Mandakini (Ganga), who is anointed with sandalwood, who is the Lord of Nandi and the *ganas*, who is worshipped with mandara and many other sacred flowers. **Salutations to Shiva, represented by the sacred syllable 'MA.'**

*shivaya gauri vadanabja brinda
 suryaya dakshadhvara nashakaya
 sri nilakanthaya vrishadhvajaya
 tasmai SHI-karaya namah shivaya*

Salutations to Lord Shiva, the beloved of Goddess Gauri, who shines like the Sun, who destroyed the sacrifice (*yajna*) of Daksha, who is the blue-throated Neelakantha, and whose banner bears the bull. **Salutations to Shiva, represented by the sacred syllable 'SHI.'**

*vashistha kumbhodbhava
 gautamarya
 munindra devarchita shekharaya
 chandrarka vaishvanara lochanaya
 tasmai VA-karaya namah shivaya*

Salutations to Lord Shiva, worshipped by great sages such as Vashishta, Agastya, and



Gautama, who bears the Moon, Sun, and fire as His eyes, the supreme object of reverence for the gods and seers. **Salutations to Shiva, represented by the sacred syllable 'VA.'**

*yajna swarupaya jatadharaya
 pinaka hastaya sanatanaya
 divyaya devaya digambaraya
 tasmai YA-karaya namah shivaya*

Salutations to Lord Shiva, who is the form of sacrifice, who bears matted locks, who holds the Pinaka bow, who is ancient, divine, eternal, and clothed by the directions themselves. **Salutations to Shiva, represented by the sacred syllable 'YA.'**

*panchaksharamidam punyam
 yah patheth shiva sannidhau
 shivalokamavapnoti shivena
 saha modate*

He who recites this Panchakshari in the presence of Shiva will attain the abode of Shiva and enjoy bliss.

This last sloka is the *Phala Shruti* (the declared fruit or result) of chanting the Shiva *Panchakshari Stotram*. It affirms the transformative power of chanting this *mantra* with devotion, awareness, and reverence. It assures the seeker that sincere recitation in the presence of Shiva leads to *Shivaloka*.

There is a beautiful episode about *Phala Shruti* recorded by Dr. T. Ravikumar in his autobiographical book, '*Chaksho Suryo Ajayatha*.' In 1975, as part of the *Bhaja Govindam* drama to be performed in Swami's presence, they were to sing the Shiva *Panchakshari Stotram*. One morning, they got the blessed opportunity to practice it while sitting at His lotus feet. They completed the song without singing the *Phala Shruti*. Swami Himself reminded them to sing it. That is when they realized that they had literally received the greatest blessing of singing the *stotram* in Lord Shiva's very presence! The divine reminder also reinforced the declared benefit of singing this *stotram*.

True
immortality
lies in realizing
one's true
nature as
the Atma.



The Mantra as a Path of Purification

Regular repetition of the *Panchakshari Mantra* purifies the *antahkarana*, the inner instruments—mind, intellect, memory, and ego. As impurities dissolve, the aspirant experiences increasing peace and clarity.

Human beings experience various kinds of fear. Fear arises due to attachment to the body, relationships, and identity. From birth, there are many fears, such as fear of old age, fear of losing health, fear of losing wealth, fear of losing many other things—power, name, fame, beauty, lordship, etc. Among these, the greatest fear is the fear of death.

The *Panchakshari* loosens the attachment to the body, and one begins to realize what one truly is—the Atma.

The *Panchakshari Mantra* is often described as a *Moksha Mantra*, capable of granting liberation even to those immersed in worldly duties. Here, immortality is experiential. One may still live in a physical body, yet inwardly abide in the unchanging witness, the Atma. This state, *Jivanmukta*, liberated while alive, is considered the highest fulfilment of the *mantra*.

The Mahamrityunjaya Mantra

*Om Tryambakam yajaamahe
sugandhim pushtivardhanam /
Urvaarukamiva bandhanaan-
mrityormuksheeya maamritaat //*

*(We worship the three-eyed Lord,
fragrant and nourishing all beings.
May He liberate us from death as
a ripe cucumber detaches from its
vine, and grant us immortality.)*

The *Mahamrityunjaya Mantra*, often called the great death-conquering *mantra*, stands as one of the most ancient and powerful *mantras* in the Vedic tradition. This is found both in the Rig Veda and the Yajur Veda as an invocation to Lord Shiva. **The rishis (sages) recognize this mantra as possessing extraordinary potency for physical healing, spiritual protection, and ultimately liberation from the cycle of birth and death.**

The story of Rishi Dadhichi, who sacrificed his body so that his bones could be used to create the *Vajra*, Indra's thunderbolt weapon, is also associated with the *Mahamrityunjaya Mantra*. Dadhichi's mastery over death, enabling him to consciously leave his body for the welfare of others, is attributed to his ardent practice of this *mantra*.

Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, whom our Swami blessed with a visit in 1957, documents numerous cases in his medical-spiritual practice where patients recovered from serious illnesses by regularly chanting the *Mahamrityunjaya Mantra*.

The *Mahamrityunjaya Mantra* raises profound philosophical questions about the nature of death and immortality. From the Advaita Vedanta perspective, as articulated by Adi Shankaracharya, death is ultimately an illusion arising from identification with the body. **The true Self, the Atma, is never born and never dies. It is eternal, unchanging consciousness. Chanting the mantra makes one aware of this ultimate truth.**

Detailed Meaning of the Mantra

The powerful *Mrityunjaya Mantra* is also contained in the *Namakam* of the *Sri Rudram*. Each word in the mantra has a deep significance. '**Tryambakam**' refers to Shiva, the three-eyed one. It symbolizes knowledge of the three times—past,

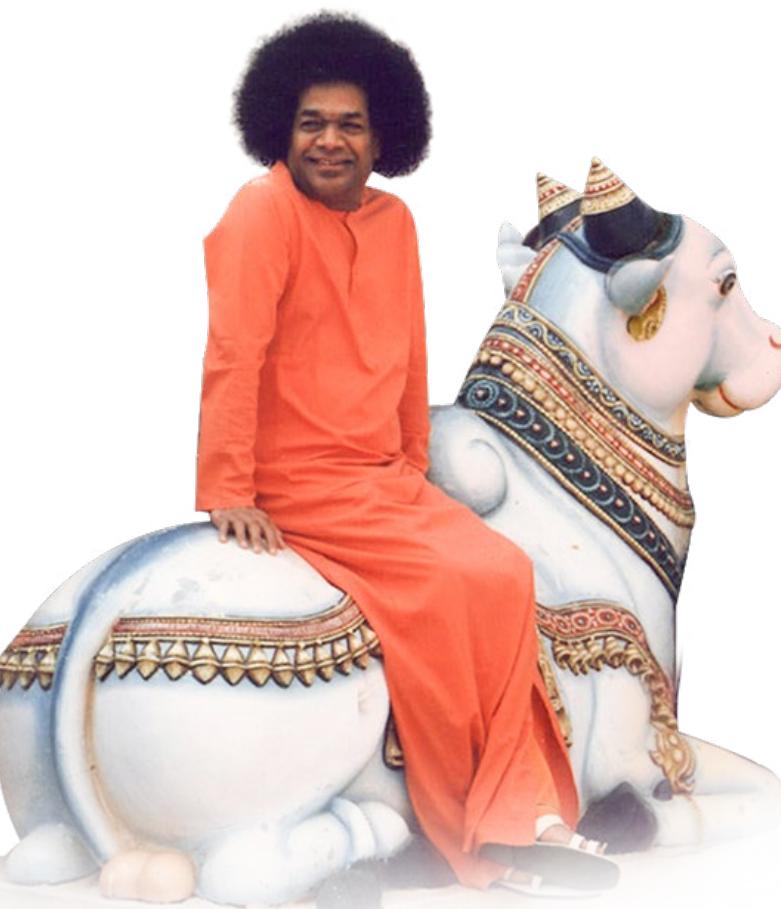
present, and future—and also transcendence of all three. It also symbolizes the Sun, the Moon, and fire—the cosmic sources of light, soothing coolness, and warmth. The third eye represents the highest wisdom that burns ignorance to ashes. In Vedantic parlance, this ignorance is ignorance of our true nature. By invoking Shiva's third eye, the *mantra* seeks illumination that destroys the darkness of ignorance, the root cause of mortality. The three-eyed Lord connects the practitioner with higher vision through the third eye, enabling one to see beyond the illusions of worldly existence and perceive the immortal reality.

'**Yajamahe**' means "I adore, I worship." '**Sugandhim**' means fragrance of the divine, which we feel when Swami is around us. Just as the fragrance spreads invisibly in all directions, divine grace permeates all existence. The word *sugandhim*, at a higher spiritual level, also means the fragrance of love and beauty. As Swami says, God is *Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram*—truth, auspiciousness, and beauty.

'**Pusthivardhanam**' refers to the one who provides spiritual nourishment (*poshana*), in addition to physical and intellectual nourishment that supports the seeker on the journey toward liberation.

An important part of the *mantra*—'**Urvaarukamiva bandhanaan**'—is the metaphor of the cucumber that drops naturally from the vine. This represents the ideal relationship between the soul and the body. **Just as a ripe cucumber effortlessly separates from the plant, the spiritually mature soul leaves the body without attachment or trauma when the time comes, experiencing death as a natural transition rather than a catastrophe.**

Here, the emphasis is not on making the physical body immortal or eternal, but on realizing that the Atma is eternal, while the



body and mind are temporary and destined to perish.

The final part of the *mantra* refers to this deeper understanding of immortality.

'Mrityormuksheeya' means "I am freed from death," while **'maamritaat'** means "not from immortality or deathlessness." We are eternal, we are *Sath-Chit-Ananda*. Therefore, it is a natural intuition in all of us that we were, we are, and we will continue to exist, because we are divine. Only in ignorance, as described in the *Puranas*, do demons seek immortality of the body—something that is not possible. **True immortality lies in realizing one's true nature as the *Atma*.**

Connection Between the Two Mantras

Swami says the purpose of life is to realize our true nature, which is immortal and divine. This is echoed in one of the most famous proclamations of the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, which declares—*Shrunvantu Vishwe Amrutasya Putraha* (Listen attentively, everyone: you are the children of immortality). One title that everyone is entitled to is that of *Amrutasya Putraha*—child of immortality. Chanting the *Mahamrityunjaya mantra* is crucial, as it is essentially a prayer for awakening to the deathless Self, which is one's inner reality and permanent, true nature.

Swami has also made this path very simple. The way to attain immortality is to remove immortality—by eliminating negative thoughts, words, and actions. This inner purification naturally leads one toward immortality.

Thus, the meaning of the *mantra* can be summarized as follows:

I turn toward the three-eyed Lord Shiva with reverence and worship Him. I seek the fragrance of auspiciousness that increases my purity and love. I pray to be freed from bondage as naturally as

a ripe cucumber separates from the vine. May I be released from death's grip, including fear of death and identification with the body. May I never be separated from immortality, remaining firmly established in it.

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* declares,

*Asatoma Sath Gamaya
Tamaso Maa Jyotir Gamaya
Mrityor-Maa Amritam Gamaya*

(Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality.)

The *Mahamrityunjaya Mantra* expresses this aspiration, seeking liberation from false identification with mortality, while the *Panchakshari Mantra* shows the way.

Together, these two mantras—the *Shiva Panchakshari* and the *Mahamrityunjaya Mantra*—constitute a complete spiritual path to Self-realization. **The *Panchakshari* leads the seeker toward liberation, while the *Mahamrityunjaya* bestows victory over death and fear. The former purifies and frees the soul; the latter protects and elevates it through life's difficult transitions.**

When practiced with devotion, discipline, and understanding, they guide the aspirant from worldly bondage to eternal peace, revealing Shiva not as a distant deity, but as the very essence of one's own reality—one's own eternal consciousness.

Jai Sai Ram



THE MIND HAS NO FORM

*Doing evil, one will not reap good.
Doing good, one will not face harm.
If you plant a lemon tree, will it
bear mangoes?
Can you grow lemons by planting a
mango tree?*

Embodiments of sacred Atma! The mind is a fascinating instrument. It is especially unique. Its actions are also highly strange. By its very nature, it plays a dual role. It has no form of its own. Whatever object it covers or takes hold of, it assumes the very shape of that object.

The mind itself is the source of sorrow; the mind itself is the cause of happiness; the mind itself is good; the mind itself is evil; the mind itself is negative; the mind itself is positive. **Recognizing the true nature of the mind is the foremost duty of a human being.**

The mind is like water flowing through a stream. The water takes the form of the

stream. The water has no inherent shape or form of its own. **Similarly, the human mind also takes on the form and appearance of illusory objects it perceives.**

There is fire. By kindling the fire, we can dispel the darkness. The light from the fire is helpful for carrying out many of our daily duties. We can also use it as a campfire to ward off the cold and find comfort. But when that same fire is set on our body or our home, it becomes a great source of harm and torments us. Is this the fault of the fire? Or is it the play of our own delusion? **Our delusions (*bhrantis*), our will power (*iccha shakti*), and our latent**

To do service, we must embody the trinity of love, compassion, and sacrifice.

tendencies (*vasanas*)—these are the root causes.

Suppose there is a knife in our hand. It is helpful for cutting fruit and eating it, as well as for chopping vegetables. Yet the same knife, when there is anger or hostility, can be used to injure others and thus becomes an instrument of harm. In the same way, the true nature of the mind becomes good or bad according to how we use it.

Therefore, it is the duty of every human being to strive to direct the mind along the righteous path, thereby making one's life blessed and fulfilled.

Underneath the earth, everywhere, a spring of water flows continuously. Yet the water flowing underground is not at all visible to us. What is the reason? Since there is a barrier of layers of dirt between us and the flowing water, blocking our view, the water is hidden from sight. Only when, through human effort and determination, the barrier of dirt is removed, can we see the water.

Similarly, within the inner senses and the inner instrument (*anthakarana*) of every human being, a stream of peace and prosperity flows continuously. But the main reason this sacred river of peace and prosperity flowing in the inner instrument (*anthakarana*) is not experienced is that a thick layer of dirt, in the form of lust, anger, hatred, and jealousy, has accumulated between us and that sacred peace, tolerance, and prosperity.

We are now unable to experience such a sacred treasure. **Therefore, it is the duty of every human being to eliminate impurities such as lust, anger, hatred, and jealousy through earnest personal effort and keep away from them.**

But instead of making the effort, merely lamenting, “there is no peace, no comfort, no joy, no good fortune,” and crying about it is the mark of ignorance.

Hence, understanding the nature of the mind properly, guiding it onto the righteous path, leading it firmly into that way of living, and thereby fulfilling one's responsibility, is the foremost duty of every person.

In everyone, *Atma* (Self) is one and the same. But we may notice differences in wealth, gold, possessions, and vehicles—as well as in an individual's behavior, and other characteristics. We may also observe many differences among people regarding happiness and sorrow, good and bad, and suffering. A person may also seem to be a millionaire.

Embodiments of divine *Atma*! In this tree called the universe, human beings appear as many types of flowers and fruits. **Recognizing the truth that the entire universe has emerged from a single seed, the Atmic principle is the true key to spirituality.** Therefore, all human beings should cultivate the feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood. **We must also understand the relationship between the brotherhood of humanity and the fatherhood of God**

together, as these two are the key to spirituality.

Since we have been given this sacred human birth, it is our duty to protect this body and lead a long and healthy life in order to realize this truth. But no matter how much we protect the body, one day it is bound to wither, collapse, and be consumed by fire, turning to ashes. This body, composed of the five elements, is weak and perishable. People may speak of it lasting up to a hundred years, but one should not trust such words. Quietly reflect that you do not know when you will have to leave it behind—in childhood, in youth, in middle age, or in old age. The only certainty is death. **Therefore, a wise person should strive to know oneself while in the body.**

In other words, this body has been granted to you for the purpose of realizing your true nature. It is not given to waste life eating, sleeping, in fear, and procreation; thereby making it unholy. It is essential to recognize the truth that this human birth was not given for such a purpose.

For us to accomplish even the smallest task in the world, health is of paramount importance. For the pursuit of the four goals of human life—*dharma* (right conduct); *artha* (wealth); *kama* (desire); and *moksha* (liberation)—health is the most fundamental requirement. Whichever path one may choose to pursue these goals, health is indispensable. A healthy mind develops from a healthy body. But if this body is to enjoy such complete good health, good character (*suguna*) is essential, and good character is a life-giving remedy, the true elixir.

Then, what is good character? There is no virtue greater than service. Service destroys the ego and has the power to transform a human being into a divine being. **To do service, we must embody the trinity of love, compassion, and sacrifice.** This spirit

of sacrifice bestows many kinds of yoga on a person, and through it, one can even find enjoyment.

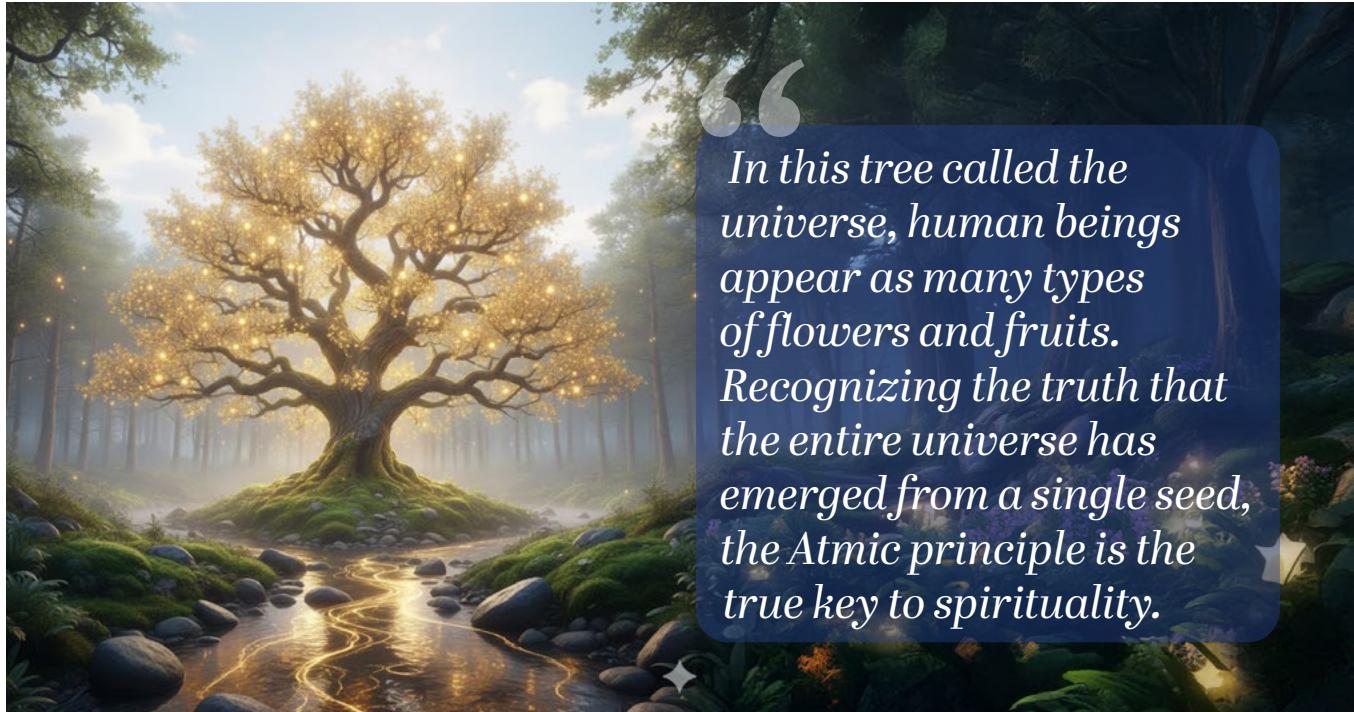
Service is not something that can be learned merely by studying books and then ‘doing’ it. In ancient times, the very institution that fostered and gave primary importance to such service was the ashram called *rishikul* (schools of the sages).

One must remember the episode when Sri Rama studied and acquired various forms of knowledge from Sage Viswamitra, and by serving the sage, He manifested His divinity. Similarly, we should not forget the episode where Lord Krishna and Balarama served their gurus in various ways, such as carrying firewood from the hills. They manifested their divinity as a result of such acts of service.

Today, not having such good fortune, human beings merely look at money, gold, possessions, and vehicles, and become swollen with pride. Not knowing what it means to work with their own hands, they have begun to forget their humanity and misuse both time and their bodies.

Service is truly a great divine boon to humanity. Whoever entered those sacred *ashrams* of earlier times would first be trained in tasks such as watering the plants and keeping the *ashram* clean. Only then would they receive initiation and instruction in *mantras* (sacred formulae).

Great souls have rendered this kind of service to overcome the ego that has enveloped them and thereby kindle the awareness of the Self (*Atma*). As long as the ego exists, Self-realization cannot be attained. The experience of the Self does not come through words. We must make a conscious effort. **We must renounce the fruits of our actions, dedicate ourselves to service, and strive diligently to serve the world and society.** The *ashram* traditions of that era fostered such sacred service.



In this tree called the universe, human beings appear as many types of flowers and fruits.

Recognizing the truth that the entire universe has emerged from a single seed, the Atmic principle is the true key to spirituality.

Today, however, under the guise of 'social work,' people undertake a kind of ostentatious service merely for the sake of name and fame. It was because of the sacred and selfless service the sages rendered, without expecting the fruits of service, that they were called 'Rishis.'

But over time, that 'R' was lost from *rishikul*, and it became '*ishikul*,' and later it emerged in the form of 'school.' Therefore, the kind of service that comes through such schooling is not true service. It is merely an artificial service. Moreover, it is a narrow and limited form of service.

Truly, among those who serve the world, the foremost place belongs to doctors. The service of physicians is extremely sacred. It is a form of service that can even reach the level of divinity. That is why doctors are considered the very embodiments of Narayana or God (*Vaidyo Narayano Harihi*), and they have been given this appropriate title.

Therefore, doctors should make sacrifice their foundation, cultivate love and compassion, and greet patients who come to them with sweet words, a sacred heart, and a smiling face—that itself

becomes a great medicine for the patient. Here too, as the saying goes, the mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation of mankind (*manayeva manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayoh*)—the very nature of the mind becomes a wonderful remedy for them.

When the doctors greet and treat their patients with a good heart, good words, good actions, and genuine love, their disease will likely be cured. Diseases will be cured faster than expected if the doctor uses a combination of 50% medicine and 50% love.

This is called Ayurveda—the Veda that gives life. And 'Veda' here doesn't merely mean a text. Its primary inner meaning is that one must practice one's ordained duties and right conduct. It is common and natural for a human being to fall ill and go to a doctor for treatment. But it is far better to adopt measures to prevent illness.

What is the basis for this? What is the way to prevent diseases? **When we inquire, the root cause of disease is food and lifestyle habits!** Moreover, it is essential for a human being to keep the entire surroundings in which one lives clean. It



Sathya Sai organizations must work diligently to take up service activities to create a clean, pure, and sacred environment for people.

is also essential that the clothes one wears are clean.

Even if we do not have nutritious food to eat, it is essential to eat food that is pure and clean.

Millions of germs are born in the very place where we live, even in an inch of space. Millions of living organisms emerge from every part of our body. Even from the outside atmosphere in which we move, millions of germs can enter and accumulate in our bodies. When we live in an impure and unclean place, there is an even greater chance for more germs to enter our bodies.

This is the fundamental reason for taking a daily bath. We may think we bathe only to keep the body clean. No, that's not the case. We bathe to prevent illness. When you ask someone why they are taking medicine, they usually answer that it is to cure an illness. But that is not the right answer. The correct answer is that we take medicine so that we do not need to take the medicine again.

Similarly, if someone asks, "Why are we born?" we should not say "in order to die." We should answer that we are born not to be born again. **Strengthening this resolve, developing a strong and healthy body, and cultivating a joyful mind within the healthy body are the correct spiritual practices.** If we neglect the well-being of the body and engage in meditation, *japa* (repetition of the divine name), or devotional singing, it will not yield the desired results. When one's health is not good, will there be any enthusiasm to do *bhajans* (devotional singing)? Will it be possible to sit in meditation? Or will it even be possible to chant with a rosary? It is impossible.

Therefore, all Sathya Sai organizations must work diligently to take up service activities to create a clean, pure, and sacred environment for people. In some small villages and communities where people live in huts under unsanitary conditions and a lack of proper wastewater drainage, diseases afflict children, women, and the elderly, leading to many painful situations. Volunteers and the officers of the Sathya

Sai organizations should go to such places, clean the surroundings, and explain to the people in a way that they can understand that “lack of cleanliness leads to ill health, and consequently, even death.” **Developing healthy bodies first and then guiding them onto the spiritual path is the correct approach to serving people in need.**

Embodiments of Divine Atma! As long as we live, however long that may be, we should strive to live those days in health and happiness. Even if we have only a short time left, we should try to live happily. In truth, there is no real happiness in this worldly life (*samsara*). We all know this, yet we go on living with a feeling and hope that there is some happiness somewhere. This whole world is full of sorrow. This body is a storehouse of disease. This worldly life is like a bed full of bed bugs. Is there anyone who can sleep peacefully on such a bed?

That is why a poet humorously remarked,

*Shiva lives upon the mountain;
The Sun and the Moon reside high in
the sky;
And the lotus-eyed Lord (Vishnu)
takes refuge on the ocean,
Surely, unable to bear the torment of
bedbugs!*

Why does Shiva stay on the snow-clad (Himalayan) mountain? He resides on the icy peak because bedbugs cannot come there. The Sun and the Moon reside in the sky—they are far above, where bedbugs cannot reach. Unable to endure the trouble of bedbugs, they remain up there. And the lotus-eyed Lord Vishnu, unable to bear these afflictions, reclines upon the ocean, as the bedbugs can't come near the waters.

But we must grasp the inner meaning of this verse. These are metaphors to reveal that they dwell in a state beyond worldly life. That is, transcending the *gunas* (attributes), they are pure, steady, and selfless, fully dedicated to the vow of using their

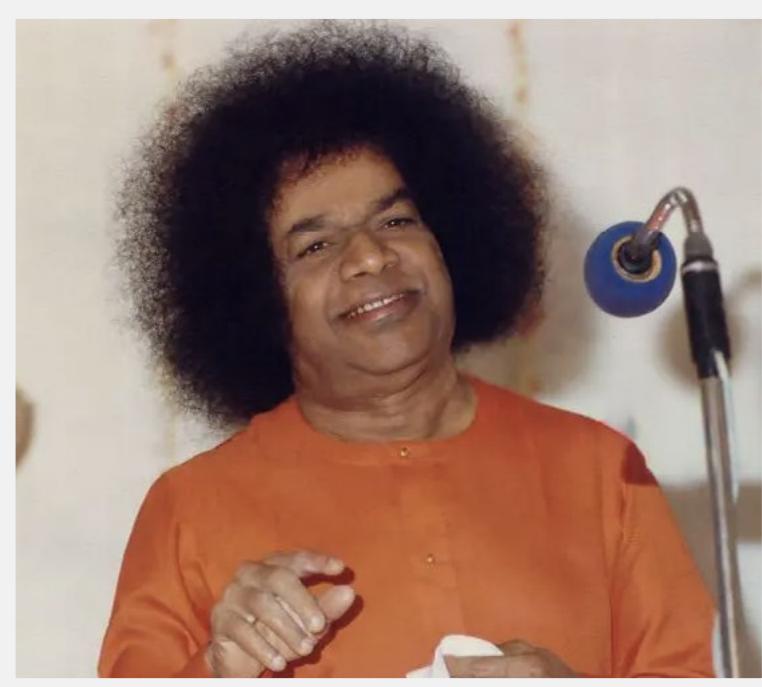
powers to serve others. We must recognize that this is the deeper meaning behind their literal meaning, seeking residence in such places.

That is why we should make an effort to gradually reduce and avoid desires. Only then can a person become God (Narayana). Hence the saying: life plus desire is *nara* (human), and life minus desire is *Narayana* (God). If we want to grasp the principle behind this saying, we should enquire who God is. **The principle of God is within us. The principle of God is present everywhere, both inside and outside (*antar bahishcha tatsarvam vyapya Narayana sthitaha*).** I have explained this principle to you many times in many ways.

Consider paddy (rice with husk). As long as there is husk over it, it is paddy. Once the husk is removed, it becomes rice. Rice and paddy are one and the same. But when it is paddy, no matter where it is placed, it will germinate when placed in water – it is subject to the cycle of birth and death (*punarapijananam, punarapi maranam*). When the outer husk is removed, even if it is sown in good and fertile soil and watered, it will not sprout—there is no rebirth (*punarjanma na vidyate*).

The individual soul (*jivi*) is like rice. Desire is the husk that covers it. As long as there is husk, repetition of birth and death (*punarapijananam, punarapi maranam*) cannot be avoided. **If we wish to be free from birth, become an embodiment of bliss, or attain the divine abode, we must strive to become like ‘rice,’ free from the husk of desire.** Our life is a long journey. Therefore, on a long journey, remember ‘less luggage, more comfort, makes travel a pleasure.’ Therefore, gradually striving to reduce the ‘luggage’ of desires is what Vedanta calls *vairagya* (detachment).

Embodiments of Divine Atma! Our life is sacred. God has bestowed on only human



beings the power to know their own Truth in this sacred birth. It is essential for us to recognize that it is the duty of a human being to ensure that this divine power is not misused. As long as we have this body, we should dedicate ourselves to the welfare of others and strive to make our lives meaningful and fulfilling. **At any time, under all circumstances, we should keep love as our foremost goal. No matter what obstacles we encounter, we must ignore them; instead, we should cultivate the principle of love alone.** We should strive to ensure that under no circumstance does this love become diminished in any way. This alone is the right spiritual path. All are My own.

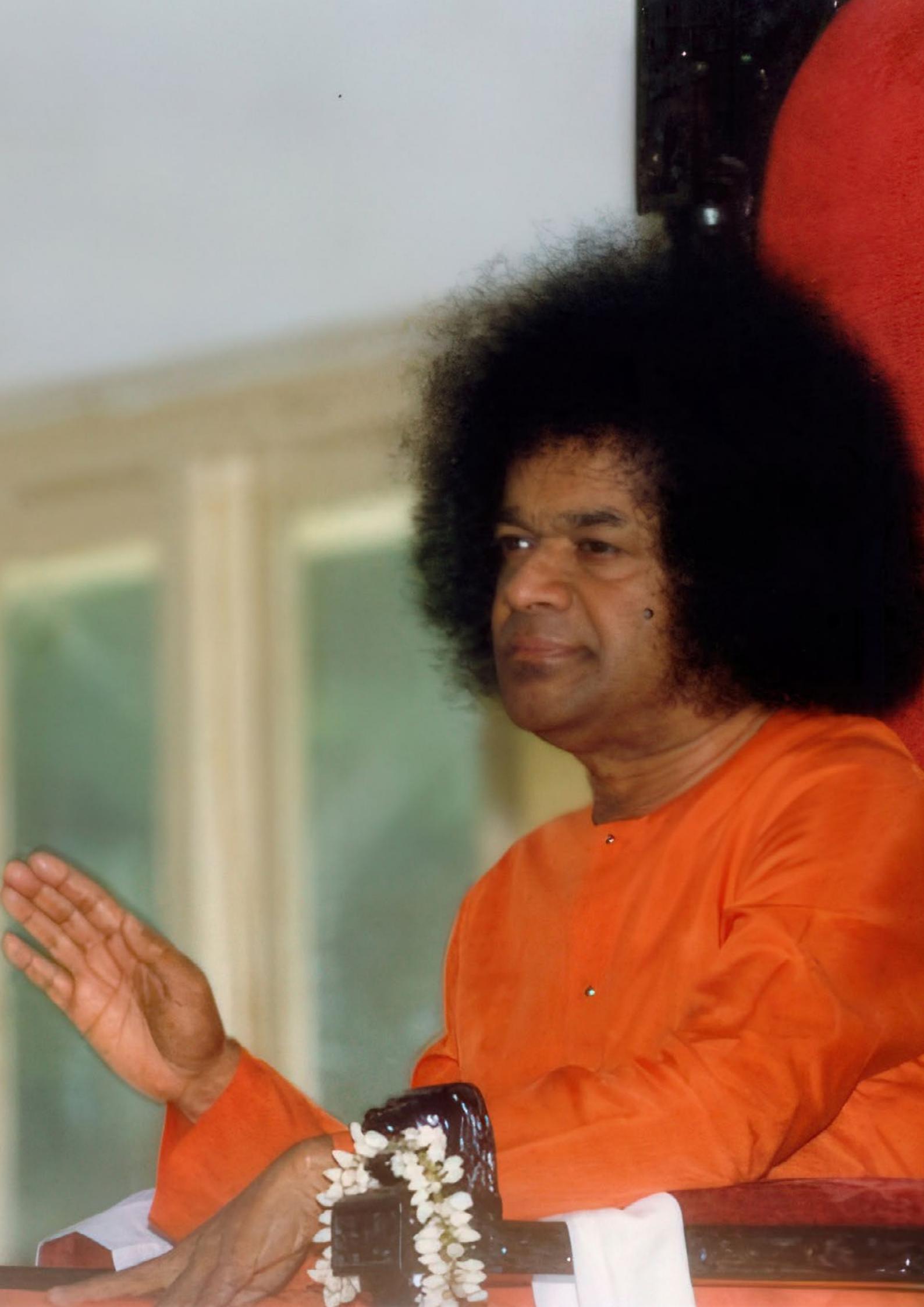
When we firmly hold on to the feeling that the *Atmic* principle in everyone is one and the same, then even if someone hurts us, harms us, or insults us, the mind will not be perturbed in the least. Here is a small example. While chewing a betel nut in the course of carrying on a conversation, the nut may slip to one side and get caught under the tongue, and we may bite the tongue. When the teeth bite into the soft tongue, blood may even begin to ooze out. Do we then punish the teeth for 'hurting' the tongue? No. Why? Because the teeth are ours, and the tongue is ours. So, we simply endure the pain and move on.

Likewise, if we truly believe in the principle, 'That which is in everyone is me,' then whatever anyone may do, we will not punish them, nor will we be inclined to abuse or condemn them in any way.

We must make the necessary effort to cultivate a broad mind. This does not come to us easily, but we must make some effort. **The very foundation for such effort, source, and support is the most supreme, sacred principle of love.**

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Dasara, September, 1976





The path, the goal



and the **Sathya Sai Organization**

(An interview continued from "Revelation of Consciousness" in the November 2025 issue)

Aravind: You said Swami blessed you with several interviews. But by the second interview, He had already granted you the ultimate experience! What happened in those other interviews, and how did the marriage with Diana happen? It seems like it was suddenly announced—how did you accept it?

Robert: If it had truly been sprung upon me, it would have been difficult; at least far more difficult than it actually was. But during the year that followed, I had the opportunity to be in close and frequent contact with Swami. Many times, during that year, He would ask me, "Do you want to be married?" **And my response was always the same:** "Swami, I want union with divinity. I want to merge with God."

He would then speak of a wife, a son (which symbolized truth), and a daughter (which symbolized peace). I took all of that in an

esoteric, symbolic sense—merging with truth and peace—until a point came when He made it clear that He was speaking quite literally.

With Swami, it's fascinating; every word He utters can carry both a symbolic and a literal meaning, and sometimes one doesn't realize for years which is the actual meaning. My wife-to-be, Diana, had the wisdom to grasp the subtleties of His message. Once, Swami told her that someone would "come back in eight years." It turned out that the person passed away exactly eight years later. That's when we began to understand how layered His words could be.

I remember one experience from 1978. During that time, Swami would often travel between Prasanthi Nilayam (Ashram in Puttaparthi) and Brindavan (Ashram in Whitefield near Bengaluru). As devotees,

*During His 50th Birthday in 1975, Swami declared that the sole goal of the Sathya Sai Organization is to let everyone know the Truth — that **there is only one God.***

we would simply follow, traveling any way we could. One morning, after darshan in Puttaparthi, Swami came up to me and asked, “*When are you going?*” I had no plans to leave, so I said, “Swami, only when You tell me to leave.” He walked away silently without saying anything.

The next morning, Swami suddenly left for Brindavan. Only then did I realize that His question had been a literal forewarning.

A few months later, in December 1978, He again came near me and asked, “*Are you leaving?*” I playfully asked, “Swami, are You leaving?” He smiled and walked away into the Mandir. During *bhajans* that evening, I somehow felt the urge to book a taxi for the next day. Sure enough, the following afternoon, Swami got into His car and left for Brindavan. Our car was the only car that followed Him!

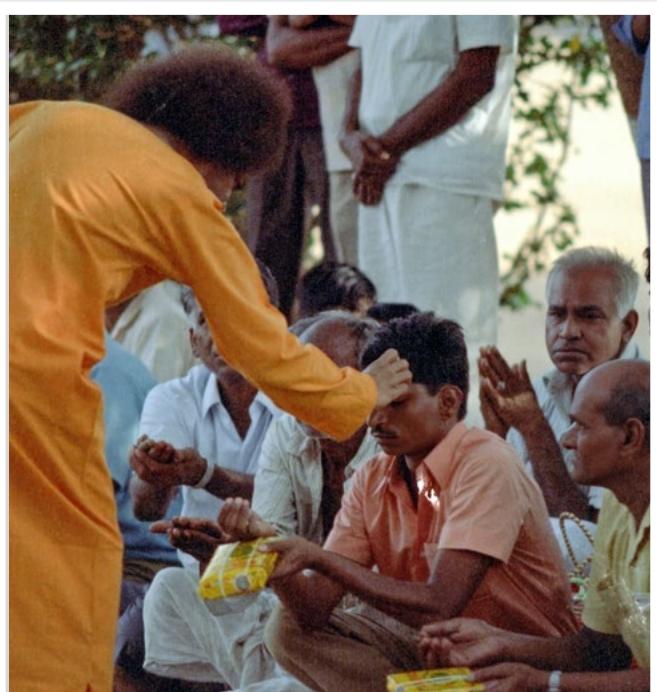
That journey remains one of the most moving experiences of my life. For four hours, we followed His car as hundreds of villagers lined the roads. Farmers would drop their plows and run toward the roadside, standing reverently with folded hands as His car passed. It felt like reliving the time of the Krishna Avatar—when the Lord’s chariot passed through the land, and devotees paid homage along the way.

Aravind: Coming back to your marriage, you said you thought His words were symbolic, but they turned out to be literal. How did that happen? Did Swami call both of you together?

Robert: Yes, very much so. Swami called me in and asked if I wanted to get married. I told Him, “Swami, I want a marriage with God, not a worldly one.” He said He had chosen a wife for me. I told Him I didn’t feel the need for marriage; I had come for Self-realization.

He called me again the next day. It was the same conversation. Then Swami said, “*Even great saints were married. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was married. Saint Tukaram was married.*”

The following day, He called me again; this time with Diana and her mother. He introduced us in the interview room and said that if I wished to consider marriage, I could speak with her. We spoke that evening. **Soon after, Swami Himself solemnized**



our marriage, a unique and divine blessing.

It was clear to both of us that this marriage was destined to be; perhaps even planned before this lifetime. Swami was the one who brought us together.

Aravind: By that time, He had already told you that you would get married and have children, right?

Robert: Yes, He had told me that. At the time, I took it symbolically. But later, it proved to be completely literal, just as He said.

Aravind: You left everything—a promising career, and a comfortable life in the USA—all in pursuit of the ultimate truth. And just when it seemed you had found it, Swami sent you back into the world—married, returning to the West. What went through your mind? Before this, did Swami explicitly ask you to stay back in India, or did you just decide to extend your stay?

Robert: Oh no, Swami very much wanted me to stay, and I wanted that too. He often gave me the impression that I would be in India for much longer than just two years. **Yet, during that second interview in 1978, He laid out a plan for my future—a plan that included returning to the West and resuming my law practice.**

When I got married, I believed that Diana and I would stay in India permanently. But Swami told Diana something very different. He said, *“After marriage, return to the United States.”* Her response was, “Swami, Robert thinks we’re staying here.” Swami smiled and said, “You tell him.” He wouldn’t say it Himself.

Aravind: (smiling) So you both returned to the USA, but as you mentioned earlier, you would still visit Swami two or three times a year.

Robert: Yes, though not immediately. Before marriage, both Diana and I, along

with her mother, had spent nearly two years in the Ashram. Interestingly, despite being there for the same duration, I had never seen her! The men’s and ladies’ sides were separate, of course, and my focus was entirely on the truth I was seeking. She, too, had seen me only once—during the 1978 Summer Course.

After our marriage, Swami called me, and said, *“Take padnamaskar.”* I did. Then He looked into my eyes and said softly, *“Are you leaving?”* That same afternoon, as He was about to depart, He told Diana, *“Take padnamaskar... and never forget Swami.”*

From that moment on, for the next four years and eight months, Swami never looked at me, spoke to me, came near me, or acknowledged my presence in any way. It was as if I no longer existed.

Aravind: That must have been difficult for you.

Robert: It was a very severe test. I have been told that almost every devotee who is close to Him experiences that phase at some point.

When we returned the following year with our newborn son, Swami completely ignored us for the entire month we were there. I didn’t expect to return again. I never forgot Swami, but I felt He didn’t want us there.

A few years later, Diana’s mother was at the Ashram, and Swami asked her about us—when we were coming next. That’s when we returned, four and a half years after our wedding.

Aravind: And how was that welcome? Was it as if nothing had happened, as Swami often does?

Robert: Exactly. He saw us several times during that visit. In the Poornachandra Auditorium, He looked at me and said, *“Have a son,”* which I already had, and then placed me in a state of bliss that lasted

twelve hours. [This has been described in detail in the earlier part of this interview, in the November 2025 issue of this magazine.]

Later, when He called us in, He looked at Diana and asked, "Why is your husband so thin?" She replied, "Because You've made him so miserable."

I added, "Swami, You've been very severe with us, ignoring us for all these years."

He smiled and said simply, "Swami gave you freedom."

That, I understood, was the freedom to choose; the freedom to never forget Him, or to take another path.

Aravind: That's beautiful and profound. Even in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna doesn't take control of Arjuna's life until Arjuna freely surrenders and says, "I will do as You say." Whether or not we believe in free will, God gives us that freedom, and what you just said captures that message so poignantly.

Robert: Yes, surrender and free will—it's a fascinating subject. I had the opportunity to discuss it with Swami several times.

I remember in 1979, Westerners could stay in India for limited periods because of visa restrictions.

I managed to renew mine multiple times in Anantapur, but eventually, I had to leave India to renew it abroad. So, I went to Colombo, Sri Lanka, twice; once in '78 and again in '79 to get a new visa.

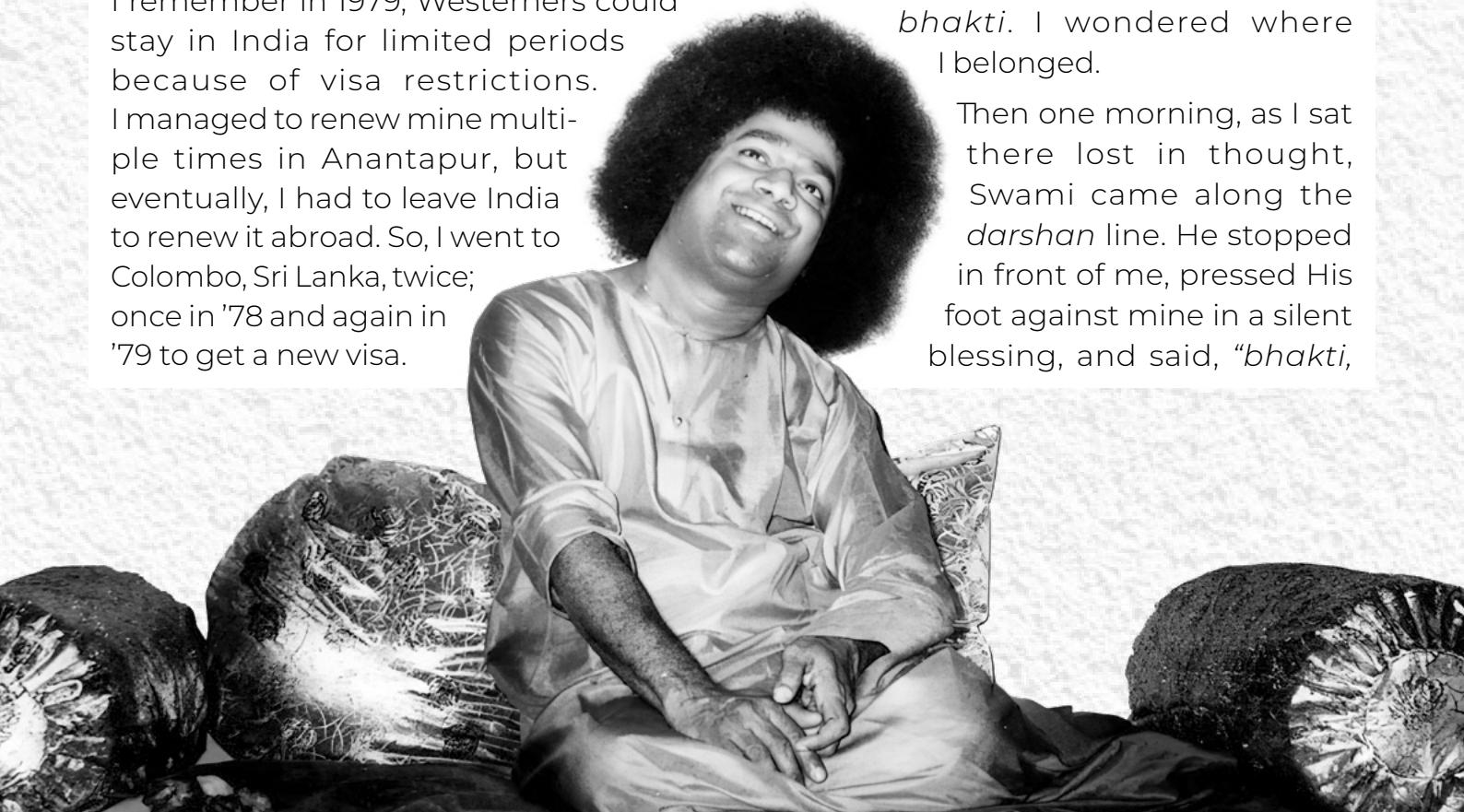
Before one of those trips, my visa was about to expire. Swami approached me in the Mandir and asked, "What is your program?" meaning, "What will you do?" I said, "Swami, I leave it up to You."

Immediately, He said, "Very good," and turned to walk away; then suddenly He turned back and said, **"What right do you have to leave it up to Swami? You think you are the body? You think you are the mind? When your body is hurt, you go to a doctor. When you know your mind is God's and your body is divine, then you can leave it up to Swami. Until then, you must decide."**

That was a profound lesson; that until we have truly surrendered, until we have realized our own divinity, we must take responsibility for our choices instead of expecting Swami to make them all for us.

During that period, I often sat during darshan and contemplated deeply, wondering which path was right for me: *jnana* (wisdom); *karma* (service); or *bhakti* (devotion). I felt I lacked the intellect for *jnana*, I was too self-centered for *karma*, and I didn't have enough love for *bhakti*. I wondered where I belonged.

Then one morning, as I sat there lost in thought, Swami came along the darshan line. He stopped in front of me, pressed His foot against mine in a silent blessing, and said, "bhakti,





“Swami always regarded the international organization as distinct from the Indian organization. He recognized that the needs of devotees in India differed from those abroad. That’s why He maintained a separation during His lifetime, a structure that continues to this day.”

bhakti, bhakti... devotion, devotion, devotion,” and walked on.

Aravind: So, He chose the path for you.

Robert: Yes. He made it unmistakably clear. That was to be my path: devotion.

Aravind: So, after those four years—that hiatus, which concluded beautifully with that experience of bliss—you kept coming back. And Swami... I might be fast-forwarding a bit now, but Swami got you involved and brought you into the organization, right?

Robert: Very much so. After that, we came back annually, often twice a year. If there was a special event and Swami permitted us, or invited us, we’d come back a third time.

Aravind: When you say Swami invited you, what do you mean? Did someone convey His message? Or do you mean it in a divine, intuitive sense, like an inner call?

Robert: I’ve never been one to rely only on intuition in my relationship with Swami. **My connection with Him was always very direct, with no intermediaries.** Usually, when we came, He would call us for one or more interviews, and during the last one, He would ask when we were returning or

tell us when He wanted us to come back. That was His invitation.

If there was a special program at the Ashram, He would instruct us to be there. You know, most devotees used to lament Swami’s unpredictability. He would say something like, “I’ll see you tomorrow,” and it might not happen. When they’d ask Him later, He’d smile and say, “But I saw you! You were in the darshan line.”

During an earlier trip, Swami had told us He would see us before we left. During our final *darshan* that trip, I found myself sitting about fifteen rows back. I thought, ‘He’ll never see me from here.’ During that *darshan*, He never looked up from His feet, not once. But as He came around the curve of the men’s line, without looking up, He suddenly pointed straight at me and motioned for me to go to the interview room.

Diana followed from the ladies’ side, as was the custom. In the interview room, Swami came up to me and repeated every thought I had been thinking during *darshan*—how He wouldn’t see me, how He wouldn’t know where I was seated. Then He said, **“Whatever Swami tells you will come true.”**

That was a boon. From that moment on, every time Swami told us He would see us, He did, without exception. It was pure grace, a divine assurance that turned uncertainty into certainty in our relationship. For that, I remain eternally grateful.

Aravind: That's extraordinary. I haven't heard of many people who received that kind of assurance from Swami; that every word He said to them would come true exactly as spoken. So, coming back to the question: how did you get pulled into the organization, and what were some of the remarkable things Swami told you during those interviews that kept bringing you back each year?

Robert: In the early 1980s, when we had begun visiting regularly, Dr. Jack Hislop, the first Chairman and President of the American Council, had an interview with Swami. Swami told him that I should become part of the American Council. Dr. Hislop conveyed that to me, and a few weeks later, during our visit to India, Swami confirmed it personally.

For the next two decades I had the privilege of working closely with Dr. Hislop, first as a Regional Director and Co-Chairman of the Sathya Sai Council of America. I also worked with him for the Sathya Sai Society of America, which is Swami's charitable Trust in the U. S. In 1984, Swami appointed me as a Director of the Sathya Sai Society of America, and I have served in that capacity ever since, for over four decades.

Almost every visit thereafter, Swami would discuss organizational responsibilities with me, guiding, correcting, and

inspiring us to carry out His mission in the West.

I recall one Christmas in the mid-80s when Western devotees were preparing their annual play. Swami walked up to the man directing it and asked, "**Are you the director?**" The devotee replied, "No, Swami. You are the director. I am only the assistant director." Swami promptly corrected him: "**Swami needs no assistants—only instruments.**"

That statement has guided me ever since. We are only His instruments, carrying out His will whenever and however He chooses.

Swami used every moment, even the most casual ones, to teach. His questions might have sounded simple, like "*Where are you from?*" but every word carried a deep meaning. Whether in interviews, or through quiet observation on the veranda, He was

constantly shaping, guiding, and deepening our understanding.

When Swami permitted me to sit on the veranda that sacred stretch outside the Mandir and His interview room, I had the blessing of witnessing countless moments of divine interaction. Through those moments and through private guidance, He patiently showed us how His organization in the West should embody His love and His teachings.

Aravind: That would be wonderful to know. What was Swami's vision for the organization in the West, and what was His vision for the organization as a whole? In a public discourse, for example, during His 50th Birthday in 1975, **Swami declared that the sole goal of the Sathya Sai Organization is to let everyone know the Truth—that**

"Almost every visit thereafter, Swami would discuss organizational responsibilities with me, **guiding, correcting, and inspiring us to carry out His mission in the West."**



Dr. Jack Hislop with Swami



Dr. Narendranath Reddy with Swami

there is only one God. There is no other objective. So, what guidance did He give for day-to-day functioning that ties back to that primary goal?

Robert: (smiles) That's probably the subject of a very long discussion. But in general, Swami wanted His organization and its leaders to serve as living examples. When He married Diana and me, **His instruction to us was: "Go back and be an example of a perfect devotee."** Of course, no one is perfect—but that was His ideal.

Over the years, there were many fine people who led Swami's organization. Sometimes, Swami would praise them as excellent examples. At other times, He would complain about some. Once, about one such leader, I asked Swami, "If he is such a terrible leader, and You appointed him, why don't You remove him?"

Swami's response: "Some are examples of how to behave. Others are examples of how not to behave."

That answer stayed with me. Swami's organization could never be perfect—no group of humans can. But the goal was always to strive for the best possible representation

of His message and teachings, through people who could embody them.

I feel deeply fortunate that for decades I worked closely with Dr. Jack Hislop, a remarkable human being and a true devotee. This was before the age of the internet. Jack would write us letters weekly, discussing Swami and organizational activities. He visited us often. **He lived Swami's teachings with no ego.** As my wife used to say, "There's no Jack!" Every conversation began with "Swami says..." He had fully imbibed and practiced Swami's message.

Over the past couple of decades, the Sai Organization has been blessed with another fine leader, Dr. Narendranath Reddy. It's been a joy working with him. He is a true instrument of Swami, a wonderful exponent of Swami's teachings with unshakeable faith in the reality of His divinity and of the fact that we too are divine and can realize that divinity.

Swami's purpose for the organization has always been the same: to help each of us realize our own divinity—through study, through the opportunity to serve others, and through devotion to the Truth. That

has been Sai's reason for establishing an organization, both in India, and internationally.

And as I've mentioned before, Swami always regarded the international organization as distinct from the Indian organization. He recognized that the needs of devotees in India differed from those abroad. That's why He maintained a separation during His lifetime, a structure that continues to this day.

Aravind: Yes, I remember watching a video of your talk about this. It gave me so much clarity. I recently watched the video again, about an hour and fifteen minutes long. The first fifteen or twenty minutes were about your experiences with Swami. It was so clear. That's why I didn't ask you too many questions about the organization, because you already answered them so well in [the video](#).

Robert: Many people don't know about Swami because they haven't had the chance to observe Him. **One of His unique qualities was the meticulous way He involved Himself in every detail, no matter how small or insignificant.**

I recall an incident when the Super Specialty Hospital at Puttaparthi was being built. I was blessed to be on the veranda then. After interviews, before *bhajans*, Swami would call in the people involved in the hospital's construction and operations. Unexpectedly, He called me in, too.

They were speaking in Telugu or Hindi, and Swami said, "We have a guest. Speak in English." They switched to English and began discussing details. Swami specified the color for the hospital bedsheets: green. He outlined how many furlongs and yards of grass to plant, where to source the plants for landscaping, the lighting, the entry-way—every detail.

I think the reason I was called was not just to enjoy the blessing of extra time with

Him, but also to witness the extraordinary attention He gave to every aspect of His work. That same meticulous care was extended to His international organization. He knew what existed and what He wanted. Before His passing, He made sure to leave everything in place for the future of the organization. Unfortunately, some people thought they had the authority to change what He had created. Fortunately, they did not succeed.

Aravind: Yes, that too is part of His divine play. I'm very grateful they haven't succeeded. Robert, you've said you've written down everything Swami told you or said in your presence. That makes me so curious. But as you said, that's a story for another day. Time has flown; we've been talking for almost a hundred minutes now! Before we end, can I get a promise from you that we'll meet again, virtually, or when I come to the USA in November, so you can share some of those treasures?

Robert: I recommend that you read Diana's books, *Divine Memories of Sathya Sai Baba*, and *Divine Lessons from Sathya Sai Baba*. Get the book *Divine Lessons*. It's a wonderful book that contains many of her experiences, which were much longer than mine, and many of mine from my notebooks and journals over the years. **It's a wonderful source of inspiration—a glimpse few people have had, because not everyone had the unique opportunity to spend so much time with Swami and observe Him interacting with others.**

Aravind: Before we conclude, my final question. You went to Swami in search of Truth. Swami told you, *bhakti yoga* is your path. Now that He's no longer physically present, what do you do now, in your quest for Truth and Self-realization through *bhakti*? I'm sure this answer will help many devotees.



from left to right: Mr. Robert Baskin, Mr. Leonardo Gutter, Dr. Narendranath Reddy

Robert: Although Swami is not with us physically, He is very much with us spiritually. You know, the last time we were in India was Christmas, just before He passed. We could see He had declined physically, but it never occurred to us that the end was near.

During that last *darshan*, as He was leaving Sai Kulwant Hall for His residence, He stopped His car near where Diana was seated by the gate. He had His driver stop the car, and **He said to her, "Swami isn't going anywhere."**

It was a prescient comment, given that He left the body only a few months later. But I think He said it to assure her, and all the devotees, that although He's no longer in physical form, He has never left us and never will. He hasn't gone anywhere. He's with us now and will be to the end of our days.

Aravind: Thank you, Robert.

Robert Baskin, Esq.
USA 



Robert Baskin, Esq. first met Swami in 1978. He came to India for an intended one or two-month stay for the 1978 Summer Course and stayed at the Ashram with Swami's encouragement for two years. He and his wife, Diana, returned to Prasanthi Nilayam to be with Swami more than 50 times. Their experiences are memorialized in her published books *Divine Memories* and *Divine Lessons*. He is a sincere seeker of spiritual truth and Self-realization and is devoted to Swami and His divine mission.

In 1983, after he returned to California, Swami appointed him as a director of the Sathya Sai Society of America (SSSA). As its longest-serving member, he has served as an officer and director and has provided legal counsel for four decades to the SSSA, SSSIO-USA, and the SSSIO at the international level. He was a regional director of the SSSIO-USA and served in various roles for many years. He is currently a director of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, which focuses on policy issues and legal matters of the SSSIO.



4 Commitments

FOR OUR DAILY SADHANA

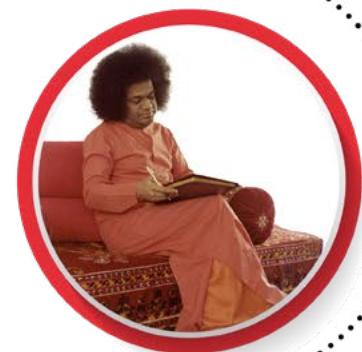


1 DAILY DEVOTIONAL PRACTICE

Prayer, repeating the name of the Lord, and/or meditation for at least 15 minutes each day, practiced with intensity, one-pointedness, and unconditional love.

2 STUDY AND PRACTICE ONE TEACHING EVERY DAY

Daily study of one teaching of Swami, reflecting deeply upon it and consciously putting it into practice in daily life.



3 ONE SERVICE ACTIVITY EVERY DAY

Performing at least one act of service daily, such as helping those in need, serving the sick, offering kind thoughts, sweet words, or sincere prayer.



4 ALWAYS SEE SAI IN EVERYONE, EVERYTHING, AND EVERYWHERE

Practicing awareness of Sai's presence in all of creation—people, animals, and nature—so that we recognize Him as the very basis of creation.

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL VIDEO](#)

[CLICK HERE FOR DAILY QUOTES](#)



Sai Knows Everything About Everyone

One day, in August 2001, after the evening *darshan* and *bhajans*, as I sat quietly amongst the men near one of the large pillars in Sai Kulwant Hall, I was tapped on the shoulder by the Registrar of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. He gave me the pleasant news that I had been blessed with the privilege of sitting in the coveted "veranda" into which Swami's interview room door opens. I was also told that the next morning, I was to join the line at the small, side entrance gate at 6 am. There was no need to go for the *darshan* lines on the hillock at 4 am!

My heart raced, and when I returned to our room, I told my wife, Sieglinde, that I was very excited and nervous. I was so used to getting up at 3 a.m. and heading off to join everyone in the large *darshan* queues. I was apprehensive that the *sevadals* (volunteers) at the

entrance to Sai Kulwant Hall would stop me from entering. But Sieglinde assured me that this was a beautiful gift from Swami and that I should accept what He has given and join the line at the small gate as instructed.

No Good or Bad

So, at 6 am, I arrived at the small gate. Half an hour later, when the gate opened, I entered the hall, a bundle of nerves. What hadn't helped was that the night before, in the Western Canteen, a devotee whom I knew came up to me and said that he had seen the Registrar tap me on the shoulder and asked what it was about. I told him I had been given a veranda seat, beginning the following day. He laughed and told me that Swami does not always know who gets to sit on the veranda, and that I could get thrown out one day. His remarks certainly did not make it easier for me!

He looked at me again, but this time with a serious expression, and said, “Your heart is not pumping properly!” and made a circular motion on His chest with His hand.

But when I entered, my nerves steadied a bit as Mr. Saha, in charge of the seating, approached me and told me to follow him. I introduced myself with my name, and he just replied, “I know who you are—come with me!”

Mr. Saha led me onto the veranda and pointed to a space at the top of the small stairway that led from the dais down to the flooring of Sai Kulwant Hall, on the right side, facing the crowd. He told me, “This is where you will sit, and you do not move from here. The students will be sitting on the steps and around you. Do not move down onto the steps!” I nodded nervously and told him I understood.

The Hall was already filled with the crowd awaiting His *darshan*, and before too long, the seating on the dais was full as well with students all around me and the older men devotees sitting behind them.

To calm down my nervous energy, I decided to write Swami a thank-you note. In this special seating area, we were allowed to take pens and writing paper, which I had done. I started to compose the note, and suddenly the *darshan* music began, and I looked up, and there He was. Floating softly through the gates from the women’s side, He started His beautiful *darshan* walk. As he passed through the ladies’ side and started coming toward the men’s side, my heart started to pound, and once again, my monkey mind began to wonder if I was meant to be here as He came closer.

He gently walked between the students at the front of the Hall, taking letters from some and speaking to others, making them all very happy. As He got closer to where I was sitting,

I held up my letter and prayed with all my heart. Suddenly, He was there! He stopped at the bottom of the steps, looked up, and held His hand out for me to give Him my letter. The students sitting on the steps quickly moved out of the way, and I leaned forward, and He gently took my letter and looked at it for a little while. Then He asked me sweetly, “Where are you from?”

I replied clearly without any signs of nervousness or heart palpitations, “New Zealand, Swami.”

He then asked me, “How is New Zealand?”

I replied, “Very good, Swami.”

He gave me a beautiful smile and just said, “Very happy, very happy,” and continued His walk. Suddenly, He stopped after a few steps, turned around, and came back. He looked at me and said, **“No, it is not good, it is not bad, it is!”** And He walked away.

I was in absolute bliss. Not only had He proven that the devotee who had put the doubts into my mind was wrong, but He also revealed that He knows everything, as He so aptly pointed out with those few words. Everything He has made and arranged is neither good nor bad. It is mankind that is responsible for how it is. From then onward, the dais seat was mine, and after a few more visits, I was allowed to move further into the veranda seating area, which is another story.

“I Will Fix Your Heart”

In early January 2002, Swami stopped in front of me on the veranda during *darshan* and told me, “Go inside.” I was not too sure what He meant, as I was so happy that He had stopped and spoken to me. But then,

Swami pointed clearly at the interview room and just said, "Go!"

So I rose nervously and entered the interview room. I stood awaiting His presence along with a student and his father, whom Swami had called earlier during *darshan*. I asked the student's father whether I should tell Swami that my wife was here, and he replied, "No, this is a men-only interview." Then Swami entered and told me to sit down while He took the student and his father into the inner interview room and closed the door. After about half an hour, Swami came out and stood in front of me. I was on my knees with my hands folded, while Swami remained standing.

He then looked at me with a serious expression and said, "You have a heart problem!" I just looked at Him and, not really understanding what He meant, replied, "Yes, Swami!" He looked at me again, but this time with a serious expression, and said, "Your heart is not pumping properly!" and made a circular motion on His chest with His hand. I was not at all aware that I had heart problems. So, once again I answered, "Yes, Swami!" He then looked at me with what I thought may have been a little exasperation. He took my hands in His and squeezed them so hard that I almost cried out. Then gave me a beautiful smile and said very quietly, "Do not worry—I will fix it." He made me stand up and rubbed my chest with His hand in a circular motion a few times, and then motioned us to leave the interview room. Before I left, He leaned over and placed a packet of vibhuti in my shirt pocket and said very sweetly, "For wife." I exchanged a meaningful glance with the student's father.

We left the interview room and sat down for *bhajans*. After the *bhajans*, Dr. Sara Pavan, who worked at the Super Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi, came up to me and asked me



about what had happened in the interview room. I told him that Swami had told me that I had a heart problem and that He would fix it. Sara said, "He wants you to go to the Super Specialty Hospital for heart tests, and we shall go tomorrow after *bhajans*." I told my wife, Sieglinde, what had happened. She just said to have faith in Him, as He told me He would fix the problem, even though I did not feel that there was any problem with my heart.

The next morning, after *darshan* and *bhajans* were over and Swami had returned to His residence, Sara took me in his car to the Super Specialty Hospital. He took me into a heart specialist's office, past several patients who were waiting to see someone. I tried telling him that I would be happy to wait my turn, but this was not to be! Sara told the specialist that Swami wanted my heart checked and asked whether he could arrange this as soon as possible. I tried to explain that Swami said that He would fix it, and that He did not say He wanted me to have heart tests. But I was ignored, and the heart specialist told Dr. Sara to take me upstairs for an Echocardiogram, ECG, and a treadmill stress test, which were done.

After the Echo and ECG, two staff members monitored my test on a treadmill. Toward the end, Sara came into the room and took the results to the heart specialist while I waited outside. On the way back to the Ashram, Sara was unusually quiet, and I began to get a bit worried. When I prodded him to tell

me what had happened, Sara just said that the specialist would give me the results at *darshan* in the afternoon.

That afternoon, while sitting on the veranda waiting for *darshan* to begin, I felt a tap on my shoulder, and an envelope was dropped onto my lap. It was the heart specialist from the hospital, and as he dropped the envelope, he said to me, "There is nothing wrong with your heart. You can climb Mt. Everest 50 times without any problem!"

A Heart to Serve Him

I was over the moon and soon realized that what Swami told me about fixing my heart was exactly what He did. He had seen a problem and repaired it, but wanted me to have the tests done so I could see for myself what He had done. Amazing!

But His miracle was revealed nine years later. Everything in His time. In early 2010, after I had been National Council President of the SSSIO of New Zealand for 10 years, Sieglinde and I were planning to move to Queensland, Australia, where we still reside today (2025). I had a medical checkup with my general practitioner (GP), who placed a stethoscope on my back and announced that I had a heart murmur. She then referred me to a heart specialist at Auckland Hospital for a check-up. **After the heart tests, the specialist told me I had severe aortic stenosis and that the aortic valve opening had**



shrunk to 7mm, and I would need valve replacement soon. I told him that we were moving to Australia. He said that I could get it done there.

In Australia, we found a good GP in Noosaville who ordered some tests once we had settled in. **Sure enough, the aortic valve opening had decreased to 5mm by then, so an operation was scheduled to replace the valve. It was performed on a Thursday in June 2011 at the Prince Charles Hospital in Brisbane and was successful. This was nine years after Swami saw the problem!**

I believe He arrested the progress of the disease so that I could continue serving in His noble, divine mission, until I finished my terms as the President of the SSSIO, New Zealand.

He knows everything!

Mr. Douglas Saunders
AUSTRALIA 



Mr. Douglas Saunders was born in New Zealand. After retirement, he and his wife relocated to Queensland, Australia, in 2010. He has been a devotee of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba since 1993 and has travelled to Prasanthi Nilayam many times to be in the divine presence of Swami. Mr. Saunders has been the Deputy Central Coordinator for Zone 3 since 2016. He also served as the National Council President of the SSSIO New Zealand from 1999 to 2010.

Douglas served in the Royal New Zealand Air Force and owned a printing company in New Zealand for 20 years. With Swami's permission, he printed graduation certificates for the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning from 1995 until 2005 and also arranged the printing of books by Swami's devotees.

LOVE IN ACTION



BRAZIL

United in Medical Service to Children

On October 17, 2025, a medical camp was conducted at the Nossa Senhora das Graças Nursery School in Salvador, Brazil, with love, care, and compassion. Fifteen volunteer doctors, residents in otolaryngology, orthopedics, and pediatrics from the Hospital Santo Antônio, offered free medical consultations to 164 children, providing diagnoses, guidance, and referrals. Several young patients will continue receiving specialized treatment at the hospital, including those who require surgery. The atmosphere became a sanctuary of compassion as teachers, volunteers,



parents, and members of the local community came together in harmony, transforming the school into a vibrant hub of service. **The entire event radiated joy, unity, and devotion—an unforgettable reminder that in serving those in need, we are truly serving God.**



THAILAND

Devoted Service to the Environment

At the Sathya Sai School in Thailand, members of the SSSIO joined hands to plant 75 trees, transforming the school grounds into a greener, more eco-friendly space. In fact, 10 volunteers traveled 200 km from Bangkok, singing bhajans throughout the journey, and were joined by teachers and local devotees, who made the tree planting and watering a truly blissful experience. After the activity, a soulful bhajan session was organized at the Baba House. SSE Students also shared their thoughts, reflecting the depth of the impact of this service. **One child, Maithreyi,**



expressed how the experience made her feel she was actively caring for the environment, while also recognizing the importance of continuing to do even more for our planet.

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



SRI LANKA

Cyclone Ditwah Flood Relief

In the aftermath of the devastating floods caused by Cyclone Ditwah, Sri Lanka was shaken by immense loss and uncertainty. Relentless rainfall, widespread flooding, and landslides affected nearly the entire island in late November 2025, with **22 out of 25 districts declared disaster-affected and over 1.46 million people impacted**. Thousands of families were displaced as homes, schools, and community infrastructure were damaged or converted into temporary shelters.

Amid this crisis, volunteers from the Sri Sathya Sai Centers from Western and Southern, Northern, North Central, and Eastern Regions came together in a spirit of love and unity. Working tirelessly, they cooked, packed, transported, and distributed food and essential supplies to families who had lost almost everything. The volunteers served in villages, temporary shelters, and adopted communities, carrying not just nourishment, but hope.

The initial focus was on the immediate supply of food. Warm cooked meals were offered to families without access to cooking facilities, supplemented by dry-ration family packs containing rice, dal, flour, milk powder, vegetables, and basic medicines. **Through this effort, over 7,600 cooked meals and more than 2,500 dry-ration packs were distributed island-wide, benefiting thousands of families and children.** In addition, the services expanded to include household essentials, hygiene items, mats, blankets, and mosquito nets, helping restore dignity and basic comfort to those in shelters. **Adopted villages received special attention for sustained support, reflecting the SSSIO's commitment to long-term recovery.**

Every act, such as cooking, coordinating, distributing, and praying, became part



of an unbroken stream of love. Guided by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's message that seva purifies the heart and reveals the unity of mankind, this collective response stood as a living example of compassion in action, strengthening communities and reaffirming hope during one of Sri Lanka's most challenging moments.



Glimpses of 100th Birthday Celebrations Worldwide









Beloved Lord Sai as Lord Murugan



Lord Murugan Statue,
Batu Caves, Malaysia

My husband replied respectfully,
“Swami, at that time I did not know You.
I prayed to Lord Murugan of Kataragama.”

Swami smiled again and said,
“It was I who came in the form of Lord Murugan.”

MY HUSBAND, JAYANTHA, SERVED AS A COLONEL IN THE SRI LANKAN ARMY during the infamous civil war in Sri Lanka that lasted from 1983 to 2009. In response to the anti-government uprising of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), he was sent on an operation with a thousand other soldiers and officers into the jungles of Eravur in the Batticaloa district. During the operation, four men, including my husband, had to leave the jungle for an urgent task. They stopped a bus on the road, asked the passengers to get down, and continued their journey with the driver and conductor toward their intended destination. After a short distance, a small group of LTTE fighters started firing at the bus. My husband and his companions returned fire in self-defense. Because the clash was sudden and unanticipated, the soldiers were unable to communicate with their battalion. In the chaos, the driver and conductor were shot, and the bus came to a halt.

A Prayer and a Miracle

At that moment, a grenade came flying into the bus through the shattered front window, leaving the soldiers with no hope of survival. My husband noticed the grenade headed toward him in what seemed like slow motion. **In that desperate moment, he immediately and intensely prayed to Lord Murugan (also known as Karthikeya or Subramanya) to save their lives. Miraculously, the grenade did not explode!**

Acting quickly, my husband instructed the others to open the emergency door, jump out, and run. To their astonishment, the emergency door had already been opened! They escaped from the bus and ran far away. Only after they had fled did the grenade finally explode inside the bus, blasting it into pieces! **That day, my husband called me and said, “I died and was reborn today. To thank Lord Murugan, I will come home soon. Let us go to the Kataragama temple and offer our gratitude to Him.”**

After my husband returned to the army camp, he realized that he had been shot in the arm and had sustained a few other minor injuries. But they were minor compared to what he had returned with—his life! Soon after, we went to the Kataragama temple as per his wish, to offer our gratitude to Lord Murugan.

Introduction to Sathya Sai Baba

About a month later, one morning, my husband told me that he had seen Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in his dream. At that time, we had only heard about Baba and had probably seen a few pictures of Him. But neither of us had any understanding of Him, so we didn't think too deeply about it.

Sometime later, my husband was assigned to duty in the Vavuniya area. On our way, we stayed overnight at the home of a friend who owned a large hotel in Anuradhapura. When I entered the house, I immediately noticed a large picture of Sathya Sai Baba hanging on the wall. My curiosity arose, and I asked my friend about Him. **She replied, “This is Sai Baba. Our parents believe deeply in Him. They say He is the living God.”**

When my husband returned, I told him about this incident. He became very interested and asked our friend more about Sai Baba, even inquiring whether we could go to India to worship Him. She answered, “We don't know much about that, but our parents who live in Colombo will be able to guide you.” So, we went to Colombo and met her parents. They were very kind and patiently explained many things to us and answered our questions. They even gave us a book titled ‘*Sai Baba: Man of Miracles*’, written by Mr. Howard Murphet. **They also stated, “If you go to see Sai Baba, you will definitely be granted an interview.”** Since the war was ongoing, it was extremely difficult for my husband to

obtain leave. Therefore, in 1986—the very year his life had been saved—we were unable to travel to Puttaparthi, though we deeply longed for it.

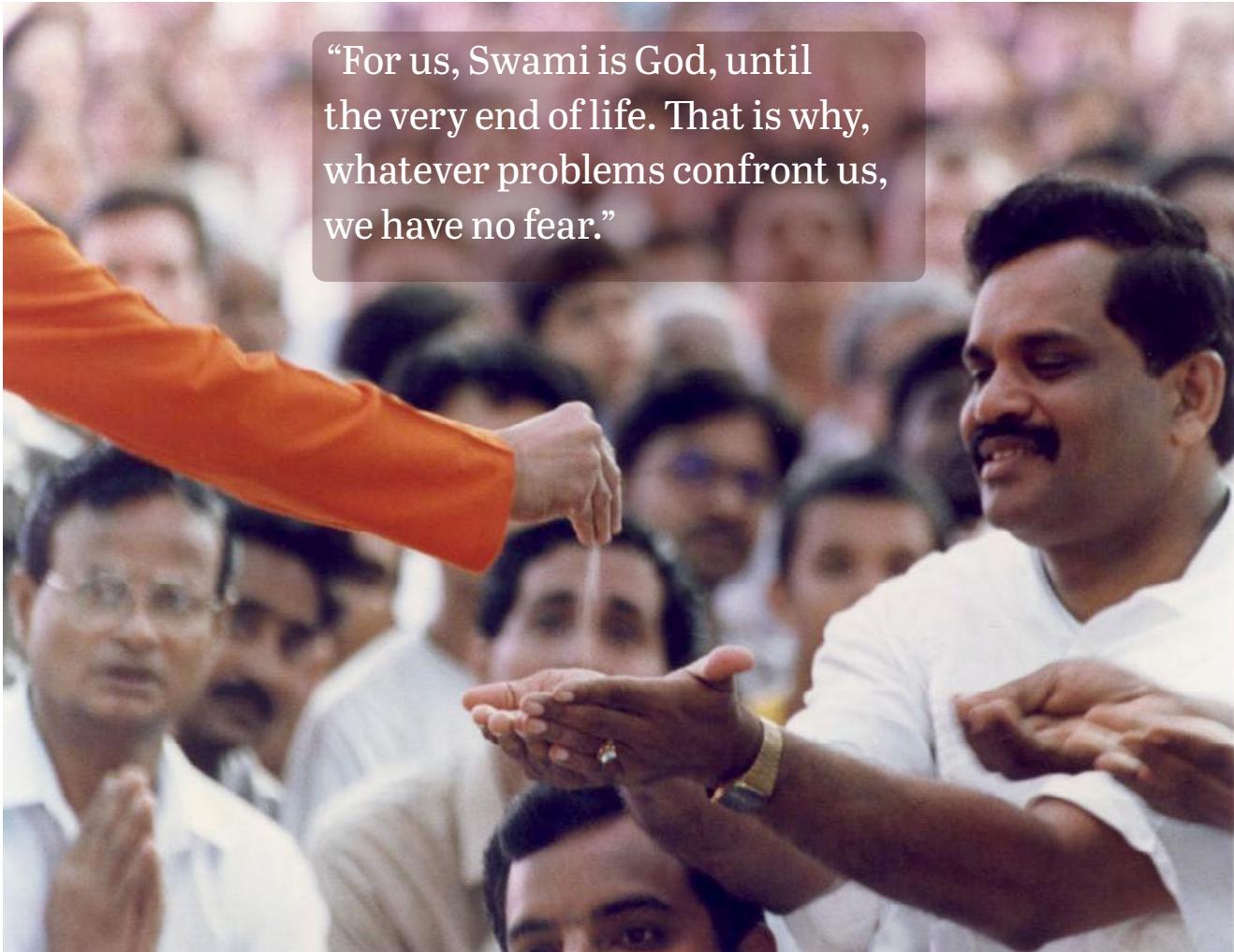
The Prophesied Interview

As I read the book, my desire to visit Sai Baba grew stronger. Finally, during the 1987 celebrations of Swami's Birthday, both of us, along with our children, traveled to India. We were told to address Baba as ‘Swami’ and also to let Him know that we had come all the way from Sri Lanka to see Him.

When Swami walked out of the building into the large grounds where we were all gathered, men and women separately, He walked toward the women's side. He came near me, smiled as though He had known me before. I, too, smiled back with joy. Then He moved to the men's side and asked my husband whether he was from Sri Lanka. When my husband answered in the affirmative, Swami gestured for him to come forward and proceed to the interview room. We went happily in for the interview.

As I recall, about twelve of us were in the interview room which had a fast-spinning ceiling fan. Swami sat on a beautiful chair and began to wave His hand in small circles. He materialized *vibhuti* (sacred ash) and gave it to all of us. What amazed me was that, despite the strong wind from the fan, the *vibhuti* was not blown away. I noticed this clearly.

Soon, we were engaged in a conversation with Swami, filled with great love and devotion. While speaking on various matters, Swami suddenly turned to my husband and said, “I am the one who saved you.” At first, we did not understand what He meant. Smiling, Swami reminded him, “Wasn't it in Batticaloa that the grenade failed to explode? Your



Colonel Jayantha Jayasinghe receiving *vibhuti* from Swami

life was spared, wasn't it? Because you are a good man, it was I who saved you."

My husband replied respectfully, "Swami, at that time I did not know You. I prayed to Lord Murugan of Kataragama." **Swami smiled again and said, "It was I who came in the form of Lord Murugan."**

Then Swami asked, "Why was it that when the bullet struck your hand, it only slid away? You were not hurt, you didn't even feel it... you remember, don't you?"

As soon as Swami said this, my husband broke down in tears. He cried openly, and we, too, cried. None of us had ever cried like that before.

Then my husband said, "All this time I believed it was Lord Murugan who saved me." Swami gently explained with a beautiful example. He asked my husband,

"When you serve in the military, what do you wear?"

My husband replied, "Swami, I wear my military uniform."

"And when you do PT (physical training)?"

"Swami, I wear shorts."

"And for ceremonies?"

"I have a separate ceremonial kit, Swami."

"And in day-to-day life?"

"I wear civilian clothes, Swami."

Then Swami smiled and said, "**Ah, just like that, I too change. I, too, come in different 'clothes' or forms. You prayed to Lord Murugan to save you—and I appeared in the form of Murugan to protect you. Just as you change your attire according to the occasion, I too take on the form needed for the occasion.**"

With that simple yet profound explanation, everything became clear to us. We felt immense joy.

There is something truly extraordinary when Swami speaks. Even though He speaks to us in such a light, casual manner, **the moment we stand before Him, we feel a deep sense of reverence. His presence is unique, His demeanor unlike anyone else, and even His gaze carries a special power.**

At the time of this very first interview, we already had three children. Looking at our children, Swami said, *“They are Prema Sai devotees.”* Hearing that filled our hearts with happiness. Swami then looked at me and said, *“Have another child.”* At that time, my youngest child was six or seven years old, and I felt no desire for another child. I replied, *“No, Swami. Please give this blessing to someone who has no children.”* Swami smiled gently and said, *“I will give you a child.”* Still, I refused. My husband remained silent.

The following year, when we came again, Swami said the same thing during *darshan*: *“Have another child.”* I stayed quiet. Those standing near me whispered to me, urging me not to refuse Swami. When Swami repeated it once more, I felt I could no longer say no. I finally agreed.

Swami placed His hand on my head and said, *“Bring the child. I will give the name.”* At that moment, my heart was filled with joy. I accepted it as a blessing. Eight years after my youngest child was born, I was blessed with another daughter. Swami Himself named her **Sai Gauri**. I received her with happiness, knowing she was a divine gift entrusted to me.

Why Fear When Sai is Here

After that first interview, Swami continued to guide us gently, as a loving parent

would—asking, correcting, blessing, and reassuring.

During one interview, Swami asked my husband, *“What do you want from Me?”* When Swami turned to him, my husband asked for love, nothing else. Then Swami looked at me and asked what I wanted. I said simply, *“Swami, I want to see You every year.”*

Swami smiled and replied, *“Yes, you can see Swami many times. Just keep coming and going.”*

I told Him honestly, *“Swami, I don’t have money to travel.”* Swami motioned His hand lightly and said, *“Don’t think about money.”*

From that moment onward, that worry left my mind. Somehow, I was always able to travel to see Him every time I wished.

A Moment of Grace that Changed Our Lives

On one occasion, while I was singing *bhajans* on the ladies’ side, Swami came near me. Hearing my singing, He remarked in Tamil, *“Rombha santhosham”* (very happy). Then He added, *“High pitch, very nice.”*

Soon after, Swami materialized a Shirdi Baba ring and gave it to me. When He held my hand and placed the ring on my finger, I felt overwhelmed. For a moment, it was as though I lost awareness of everything. I felt almost blind, drawn inward, as if a powerful current was passing through me. Swami’s divine power was unmistakable—I felt it flowing through my body.

Then Swami went to the men’s side and materialized a diamond ring for my husband.

From that day onward, something changed within us. After our first interview, we had no longer felt drawn to seek any deities except Lord Murugan at

Kataragama. From that moment when Swami blessed us with the rings, we have shared all our joys and sorrows only with Swami. For us, Swami is God, until the very end of life. That is why, whatever problems confront us, we have no fear.

Swami is Always With Us

Swami is constantly beside us. It feels as though there is no need even to pray. He is always watching. Whatever we need, Swami provides even before we ask. Let me share another incident.

I have diabetes, so I exercise regularly and eat carefully. One evening, after attending *bhajans*, I returned home without realizing that my sugar level had dropped dangerously low. I switched on all the lights, left the door unlocked, and lay down to rest. I fell asleep immediately.

My younger sister sensed something was wrong. She tried to speak to me, but

I did not respond. Alarmed, she called an ambulance and rushed me to the doctor. They found that my sugar level had fallen extremely low.

If I had taken my usual nighttime diabetes tablets, my sugar level would have dropped further, and I might not have survived. But before that could happen, Swami intervened. I had forgotten even to eat the food I had brought from the canteen. Whatever happens to us, Swami already knows beforehand!

Swami takes care of even the smallest details in our lives. Swami is my parent, my relative, my best friend, and my divine protector. Swami is everything to me. I have no secrets from Him because He already knows them all.

Mrs. Sandhya Jayasinghe
SRI LANKA



Mrs. Sandhya Jayasinghe is a long-time devotee of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. She is an accomplished bhajan singer who has sung in the divine presence of Swami many times. She and her husband had many intimate interactions with Bhagawan. She has been an active member of the SSSIO Sri Lanka for more than three decades and is always ready to serve with love and enthusiasm.

from the
International Sai Young Adults

On June 7, 2025, the YAs of SSSIO Barbados participated in the islandwide 'Clean Up Bim' ['Bim' is the colloquial name for Barbados] initiative for the first time, joining over 1,600 volunteers in a powerful demonstration of collective responsibility and service to the community. The event is an annual community-driven effort supported by the Future Centre Trust and forms part of the

global '*Clean Up the World*' movement, which aims to raise awareness of the impact of waste on the environment.

The SSSIO YA team focused its efforts on a section of the Lowlands that had become heavily polluted due to illegal dumping. The site contained a wide range of discarded items, including mattresses, car parts, car seats, televisions, clothing, shoes, household items, building materials, and general waste. Undeterred by the scale of the task, the young volunteers rolled up their sleeves and worked diligently for about one and a half hours, filling multiple bags of garbage and an entire industrial garbage skip (container).

Participating for the first time, the team contributed meaningfully to a nationwide effort to protect and restore the natural beauty of Barbados, fostering national pride. The experience not only strengthened environmental awareness but also reinforced the importance of unity, selfless service, and sustained community engagement.



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

Master + Mind = Mastermind

Zones 6 and 7 hosted the Young Adults (YA) European Retreat and SSEHV Summer School at Sai Prema in Athens, Greece, from August 16-24, 2025. The program's theme was 'Master the Mind, Be a Mastermind.' A total of 42 participants attended, including 14 Young Adults, 16 children and teenagers, three kitchen staff, and teachers and parents. This 'Summer School' brought participants together for a week of learning, growth, and connection through educational workshops, interactive games, creative arts, mindfulness practices, and excursions. Young Adults served as masters of ceremonies, taking shared responsibility for running sessions, while parents collaborated with children and the organizing team across activi-

ties. Daily *bhajans* in the morning and evening, including a special session on the beach at sunrise, fostered spiritual connection and reflection.

Children and teenagers explored emotional intelligence and self-awareness through storytelling, role-plays, art projects, team games, treasure hunts, KLANZA (a Polish method of creative group work and learning), value-based games, and movement-based icebreakers. Creative activities such as poster-making, costume creation, and exhibitions allowed participants to express individuality while celebrating collective learning. Excursions included visits to Athens, the Zoo, Sounion, and daily trips to the beach, along with team-building water sports that promoted social bonding.



Workshops and sessions provided practical tools for mastering the mind, addressing fears and habits, strengthening attention and energy, managing finances, and understanding the dynamics of masculinity and femininity. Participants reflected on how these factors influence daily life and learned strategies to replace limiting patterns, release negativity, and rise above challenges.



Day One Dealing with Anger

Participants engaged in a role-play game to identify anger triggers, explore reactions, and practice healthier responses. After each scenario, they reflected on alternatives such as mindful breathing, walking away, humor, or assertive statements. The session emphasized that while not every conflict can be resolved, inner calm and steadier responses can be chosen.

Day Two Mastering Anxiety and Worry

This session explored how anxiety manifests in thoughts and the body. Participants shared personal worries and supported one another in developing steadier responses by questioning thoughts, reframing, and practicing healthier approaches.

Day Three Mastering Desire

The story “*What Is the Real Gem to Look For?*” was read, illustrating a hermit’s calm response to a thief who came to steal his gems, but later returned, realizing that true treasure is inner peace. Participants discussed true wealth as inner freedom, reflected on their own desires, such as excessive phone use, and explored playful ways to reduce their hold.

Day Four Relationships and Connection

Participants examined the people in their lives, identifying sources of support, joy, and challenge. Through reflection and discussion, they learned strategies for nurturing healthier, more balanced relationships and strengthening connections. The camp concluded with games, karaoke, and feedback sessions. Participants, many of whom arrived as strangers, left as a unified community, having formed new connections rooted in love, spirituality, and shared experience.

Throughout the week, key takeaways included the opportunity to step away from daily routines, reflect deeply, and learn practical ways to master the mind. **The workshops were thought-provoking and heart-touching, helping participants understand how fears, habits, energy, attention, finances, and social dynamics influence personal growth, and how to replace limiting patterns with positive actions.**

The Summer School offered a meaningful opportunity for self-discovery, family bonding, and spiritual growth. Children, parents, and Young Adults alike learned practical methods to train the mind, cultivate inner harmony, and foster positivity in their lives.

THE TALE OF FIVE CITIES

During October 2025, the Young Adults of SSSIO México carried out the national initiative, ***Loving Service Offering***, as an expression of gratitude, love, and devotion to commemorate the Avatar Declaration Day (October 20) of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The service activities were conducted on October 18, 25, and 26, coordinated across several regions of México in close collaboration with the National Service Wing. **Over the course of the month, five service projects were implemented in multiple cities, directly benefiting families, children, elderly residents, hospital patients, and local communities.**

In **Tijuana**, volunteers served the Sánchez Taboada neighborhood by distributing food hampers containing essential items to needy families. Beyond meeting immediate material needs, the service emphasized personal interaction, empathy, encouragement, and the sharing of hope through compassion.

In **Chihuahua**, volunteers distributed freshly prepared meals to hospital patients and their relatives who were waiting for long hours. This act of kindness provided nourishment, comfort, and emotional support during moments of physical and emotional strain.

In **México City**, at the Iztapalapa Community Center, children participated in recreational and value-based activities. Through games, shared snacks, and personal interaction, the service brought joy, learning, and warmth, fostering a sense of belonging and positive values among the children.



In **Tuxtla Gutiérrez**, volunteers conducted a public park cleanup, removing trash, and restoring and beautifying shared community space. This project promoted environmental awareness and reinforced the importance of caring for common spaces as an expression of love for nature.

In **Monterrey**, volunteers visited a home for the elderly, spending time in devotional singing, games, conversations, and heartfelt companionship. The service created moments of joy, emotional connection, and comfort, strengthening intergenerational bonds and reaffirming the value of love and compassion.

During October 2025, 46 volunteers, including 21 Young Adults, participated in all these activities. The service initiatives directly impacted 132 beneficiaries, including families, hospital patients and their relatives, children, and elderly residents.

The 'Loving Service Offering' initiative brought together participants of all ages with one unified purpose: to serve with love, humility, and gratitude, and to meet the local needs of their communities.

Gentle Moments, Everlasting Connection



Dr. Hiranya S
USA



My family's connection with Swami began even before I was born. My parents' journeys took them from Tamil Nadu to Mumbai, India, and later to Singapore. While my mother was in Chennai and my father was in Singapore, both were independently introduced to Swami by different people in different places at nearly the same time. **What drew them was not a search for miracles but Swami's simple universal message of love, service, and selflessness. From then on, Swami became the quiet anchor of our lives.**

I am the younger of two daughters. When my mother was pregnant with me, she was admitted to a hospital in Singapore on November 9 and discharged without the delivery of the baby. When she returned later in severe pain, doctors advised delivery on November 22. Despite her discomfort, my mother requested that they wait one more day. By Swami's grace, I was born on November 23—Swami's Birthday.

When it was time to name me, the name 'Hiranya' arose spontaneously within my mother, inspired by Swami's Hiranyagarbha Lingam. It was not planned or reasoned; it felt like an inner prompting. Swami explains that Hiranyagarbha represents divine love—eternal, all-pervading, and ever right. While the physical heart is temporary, divine love lives through giving and forgiving. My name serves as a constant reminder that this divine love is always within me.

Growing up in a household devoted to Swami, spirituality was woven seamlessly into daily life. *Bhajans* filled our home, seva was second nature, and activities at the Sai Center shaped our values. One childhood memory remains especially close to my heart. During Navaratri celebrations at the Rudrakaliamman Temple, after the cultural programs ended, I was asked if I wished to sing. With childlike joy and no fear, I sang a *Sai bhajan* on stage. That moment sparked a devotional bond with music that has stayed with me ever since.

In Singapore, I attended *Bal Vikas* (Sai Spiritual Education) classes at the Moulmein Sai Center, where I learned *bhajans*, *Vedic* chants, and Swami's teachings. The lesson on 'Ceiling on Desires' left a lasting impression, reminding me that unchecked desires bind us and draw us away from the divine.

Many question how one can feel connected to Swami after seeing His physical form only once. **For me, Swami was never confined to the body. His form was a vehicle; His essence, Brahman, is omnipresent and eternal. When one learns to see God in everyone, there are no enemies, only reflections of the same divinity.**

There have been moments when this presence felt especially tangible. As a child in Chennai, I once promised a devotee that I would learn a *Vedic* chant and recite it the next time we met. I practiced earnestly, with innocent sincerity, even wondering whether Swami might bless me with a *lingam* if I did well. The very next day, the devotee unexpectedly handed me a *lingam* and said, "Good job." It taught me that Swami understands even the subtlest intentions of the heart.

Later in life, I travelled across countries for education, medical training, and work. There were periods of uncertainty, financial strain, and emotional challenges. Yet each time, Swami was there for me undoubtedly, providing exactly what was needed—often through people who became instruments of His grace. These experiences deepened my faith in surrender and patience.

One such moment occurred in Grenada. During a beach outing, I found myself in deep water, unable to swim, losing

my balance, and sinking. In that instant, the only thought that came to mind was Baba. By His grace, I found the strength to move and reach a safe place. **It was a powerful reminder that even a single sincere remembrance of God can be a lifeline.**

More recently, during a visit to India for a family emergency, I prayed at a Shirdi Sai Baba temple, asking Baba to take care of my family and to be with me as I returned to the United States. As we stood there, the priest unexpectedly called me to come forward and handed me a bag containing Baba's picture, flowers, and *vibhuti*. In that moment, I felt Baba's assurance, "I am with you."

As a physician, I may not always find time for formal prayer. But Swami taught us that work is worship and duty is God. This understanding transformed my profession into a path of devotion. During an in-flight medical emergency, when I volunteered to help a passenger with cardiac symptoms, I felt a calm clarity beyond myself. I knew I was not the doer, but merely an instrument of His compassion. Guided by this spirit of service, I was inspired to start Hiranya Medical Service, a nonprofit organization for doctors to conduct free health camps for underserved communities in rural India, often in Shirdi Sai temples.

These experiences are not dramatic miracles but gentle moments in which Swami has lovingly guided, protected, and reminded me of His constant presence. **They have taught me to hold my faith steady, to surrender completely, and to remember Him not only in times of difficulty, but also in moments of joy.** When each day begins with gratitude and every action is offered back to Him, life itself becomes sacred.

SAIESWARA



DHAATRI K | GROUP 2 | USA

A TRIBUTE TO OUR SAI

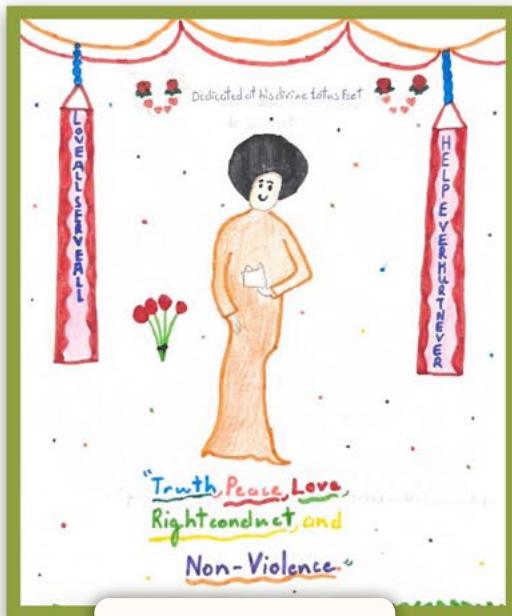
As his unseen hands who lift hearts in need
Swami encourages us to do his holy deed
His presence rests in us like a Divine seed

Dear Sai our love for you will only grow
With every breeze our feelings flow
Our hearts will shine this you know
Like the rivers that forever flow
In every heart your presence is sure to show

KRISHNA A | GROUP 2 | AUSTRALIA



DHAATRI K | GROUP 2 | USA



TIA K | GROUP 2 | CANADA



HAMSINI K | GROUP 2 | USA

SSE PROJECT

ADI SHANKARA

Hamsini K & Dhaatri K | Group 2 | USA



Long ago, in the land of Kerala, a young boy named Shankara was born. From a very early age, he showed remarkable intelligence and a deep interest in spiritual questions. As he grew older, he became fascinated with understanding the nature of the universe and the Supreme Reality. One day, Shankara decided to undertake a journey across India to learn from great sages and scholars. During his travels, he engaged in debates with learned philosophers, always defending the teachings of the Upanishads and the philosophy of non-dualism (Advaita). Despite facing many challenges and opponents, he remained steadfast. He traveled to sacred places like Varanasi,

Dwarka, and Badri, spreading his teachings and establishing monastic centers called mathas. Through his efforts, he clarified complex spiritual ideas, composed hymns and commentaries, and inspired countless followers. Shankara's mission was to show that the true Self (*Atman*) is one with the Supreme (*Brahman*), and that understanding this unity leads to liberation. His life was a testament to devotion, wisdom, and the pursuit of truth. Today, he is remembered as one of India's greatest saints and philosophers, whose teachings continue to guide millions on their spiritual path.

IMPORTANT FACTS

- He was born in a tiny village called Kaladi, which is now a special place for visitors and pilgrims.
- When he was very young he had memorized and recited the Vedas and wrote his own poems
- He was really good at talking and explaining his ideas, and he could win debates by making smart points.
- His mother loved God, and she encouraged him to learn. He took his mother's permission before dedicating his life to spiritual pursuits.
- He was a little boy who knew a lot about holy books when he was just 8 years old!
- He walked all over India, visiting many places to teach people about spiritual principles.
- He wrote many poems and books to help people understand spiritual ideas better.
- Stories say he could do magical things, like calming storms or seeing divine visions.
- He started four big centers for learning, called *mathas*, in different parts of India so people could keep learning after him.

MORAL

To respect your parents, you should listen to them and be kind. Say thank you when they help you and do what they ask with a good attitude. It's important not to argue or be rude. When you show respect, it makes your parents happy and helps everyone get along better. Remember, your parents love you and want the best for you, so it's always good to treat them nicely.

Upcoming SSSIO Events

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

Date of Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
February 7-8, 2026	Saturday-Sunday	Worldwide Akhanda Gayatri
February 15, 2026	Sunday	Maha Shivaratri
April 18-19, 2026	Saturday-Sunday	Worldwide Akhanda Gayatri
April 24, 2026	Friday	Aradhana Mahotsavam
May 1, 2026	Friday	Buddha Poornima



Streaming on sathyasai.org/live and YouTube



Stay in touch with SSSIO news and activities, by visiting the SSSIO websites and following/subscribing to the various communications channels below. **Click on each icon or name to visit the site.**



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

“

Shiva is known as *Mrtihyunjaya* (He who vanquishes death). And, He is also the *Kamari* (the destroyer of desire). These two names show that he who destroys desire can conquer death, for desire breeds activity, activity breeds consequence, consequence breeds bondage, bondage results in birth and birth involves death. *Eshwara* is also symbolized in the *Linga* form. *Linga* is derived from the Sanskrit root, *Li*, which means *leeyathe*, ‘merges’; it is the Form in which all forms merge. Shiva is the God who blesses beings with the most desirable gift of meaning in the universe. That is the end, beyond death, which one should strive for, the end which Shiva can vouchsafe.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

March 5, 1973



sathyasai.org

Love All • Serve All
Help Ever • Hurt Never

