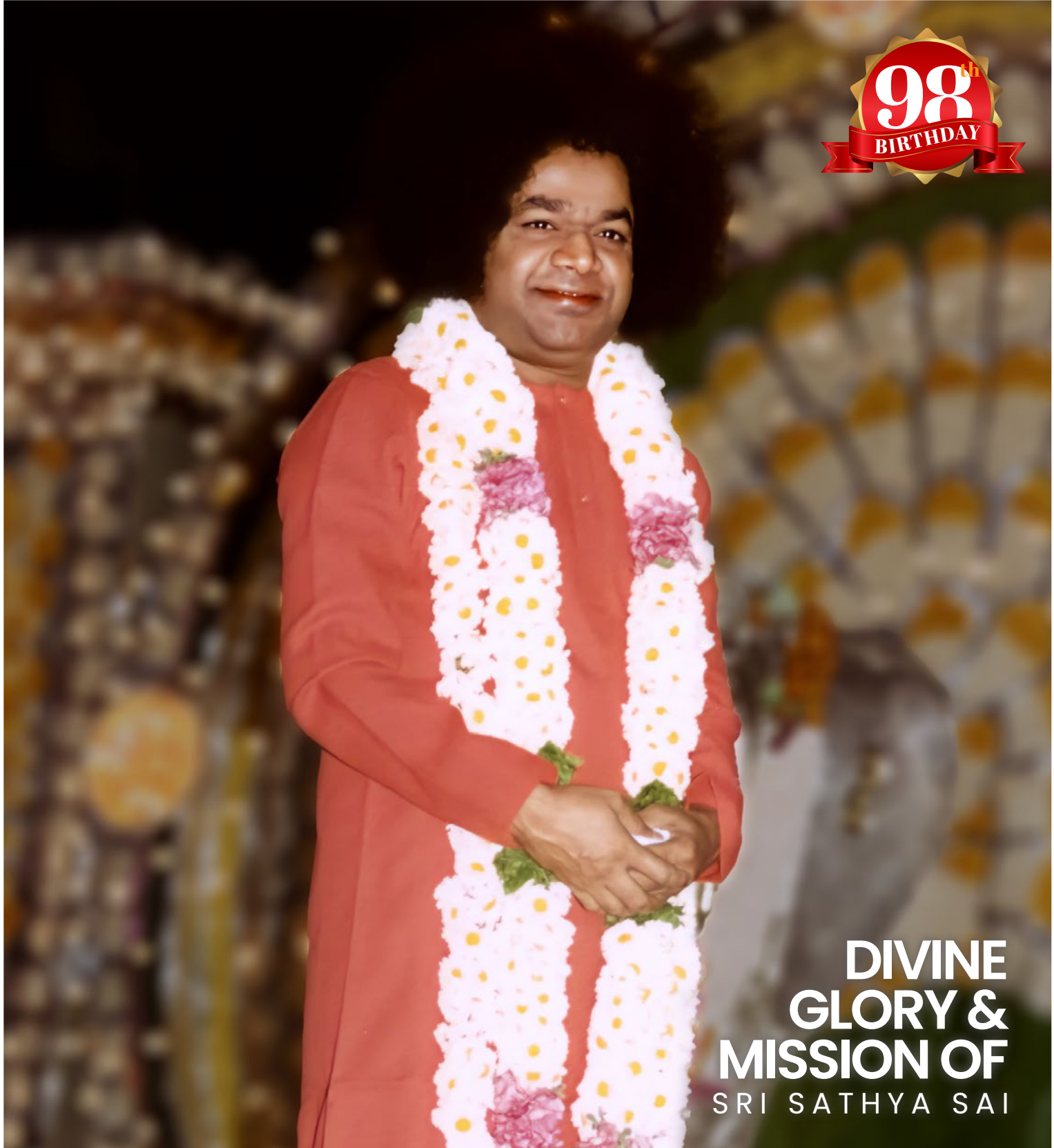


SATHYA SAI  
THE  
**ETERNAL**  
COMPANION



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NOVEMBER 2023



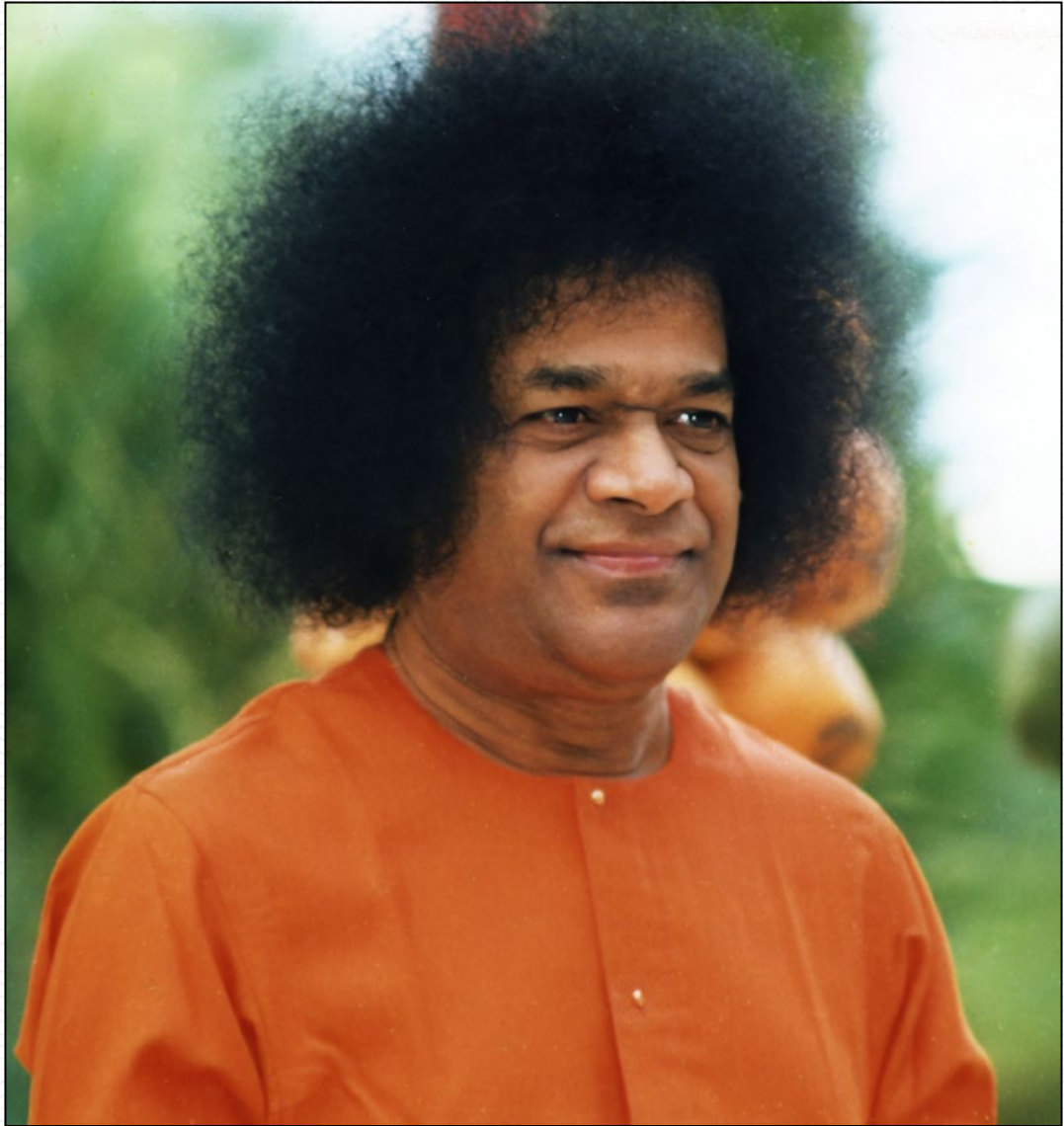
**DIVINE  
GLORY &  
MISSION OF  
SRI SATHYA SAI**



If one has no birth, there is no death. If there is death, then one must have been born. Birth and death are action and reaction. I am beyond both. The body has no permanence. It is like a bubble on the water; it arises in water, expands in water and merges in water. Man is like the bubble; Narayana (God) is the water. Without water the bubble cannot come into existence. Like bubbles, all humans are born in Narayana, grow in Narayana, and ultimately merge in Him. Why rejoice over the birth of the bubble or mourn its disappearance? As long as you have a body, engage yourself in sacred tasks, dedicate all your thoughts, and actions to the Divine. Embodiments of the Divine! I must ask you to give Me as a birthday offering, only one thing—reduce your selfishness; abate your wrong desires. Foster your spirit of sacrifice and grow into noble human beings.

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**  
November 23, 1980

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DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO  
**BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA**





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# LOVING SERVICE— THE WAY TO SELF-REALIZATION

On the occasion of the 98th Birthday celebration of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba we offer this bouquet of love focused on His message of service as the *sadhana* for liberation.

Swami says that selfless service is the greatest *sadhana* for self-realization as it helps to get rid of our ego and purify the heart. That is why Swami introduced service as an important aspect of the organization. He led by example, starting outstanding humanitarian services in education, health, drinking water, and housing, among many others, to benefit millions worldwide.

**He exemplified His own statement, “The best way to love God is to love all and serve all,” by serving people from His childhood till He left the mortal coil. He continues to guide devotees around the world in doing loving, selfless service.**

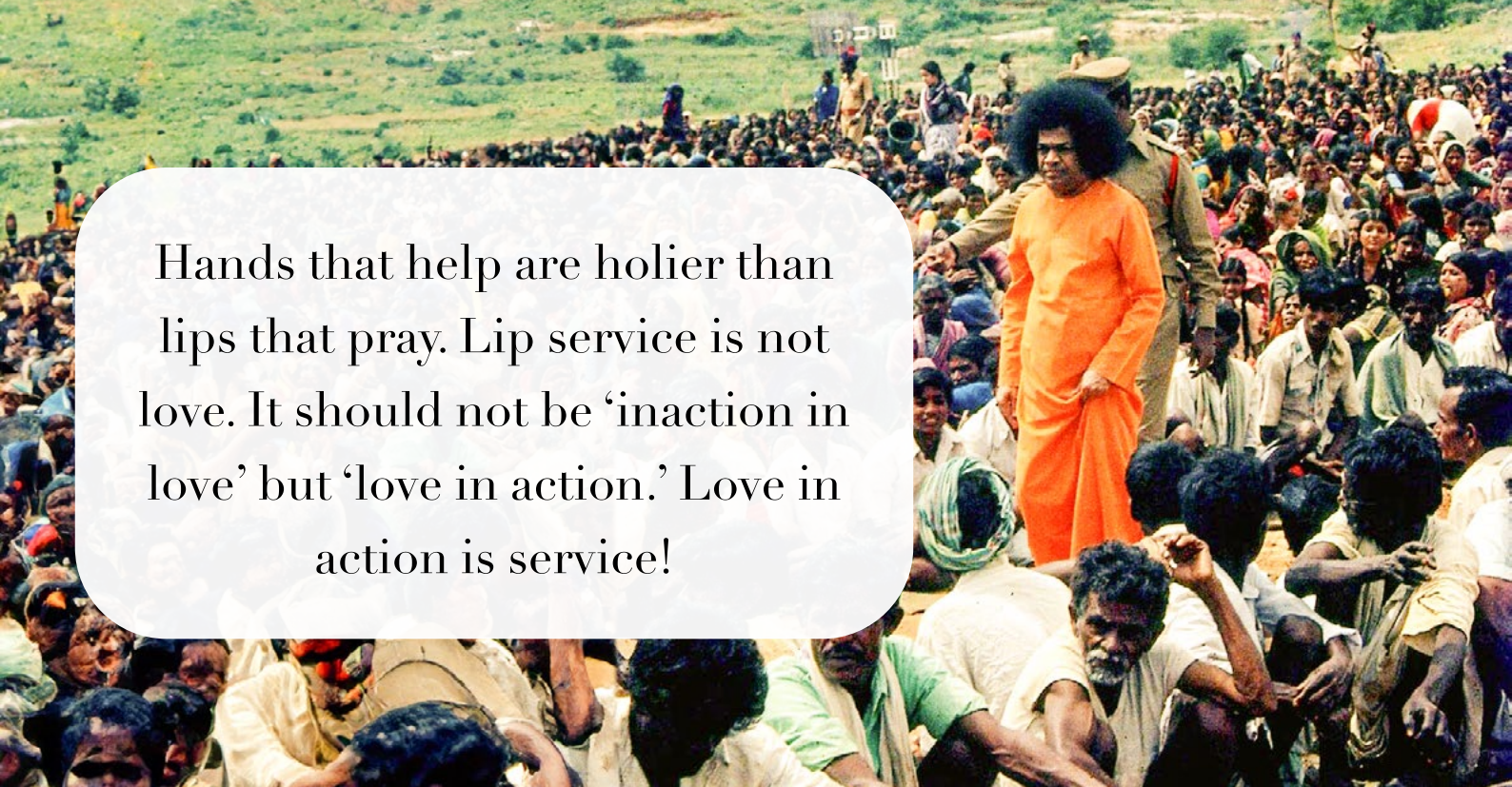
Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, “If you cannot practice remembering Me with devotion, then just try to work for Me. Thus, performing devoted service to Me,

you shall achieve the ultimate state of liberation.” (Bhagavad Gita 12:10)

**Both Chapter 3 (*Karma Yoga*) and Chapter 5 (*Karma Sanyasa Yoga*) of Bhagavad Gita deal with *Nishkama Karma* (selfless action) as the means to attain Self-realization.** But as Swami and Krishna both emphasize, even ordinary or mundane activities become *Nishkama Karma*, i.e., transform from ‘*karma*’ (work) into ‘*yoga*’ (worship), when we:

1. Do every task with one-pointed attention.
2. Perfect every action with attention to minute details.
3. Dedicate all actions to God.
4. Maintain equanimity to accept success or failure, profit or loss, praise or blame with fortitude and joy.





Hands that help are holier than lips that pray. Lip service is not love. It should not be ‘inaction in love’ but ‘love in action.’ Love in action is service!

This aspect is also emphasized in the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus tells the disciples, “When you feed the hungry, give shelter to the needy, help the sick or visit the people in prisons, you serve me. When you serve the least of your brethren, you serve me.” Swami also says the same thing, as, “*Manava Seva is Madhava Seva*” or “Service to Man is Service to God.” Similarly, Swami says, “*Grama Seva is Rama Seva*” or “Service to villages is Service to God.”

**In Islam, one of the five pillars is giving charity to the poor to please God. According to the Jewish faith, it is said in the Torah, Leviticus 19:34, that it is important to serve the neighbor and everyone as one’s own self. By personal example and precept, Lord Buddha has shown that compassion and kindness to the less fortunate is one of the best paths to *Nirvana* (enlightenment). All these examples by the great masters reflect what Lord Krishna says, “I regard them to be perfect yogis who see the true equality of all living beings and respond to the joys and sorrows of others as if they were their own.” (Bhagavad Gita, 6:32).**

### **Service is Love in Action**

Professor Kasturi relates an incident wherein he was walking in the village of Puttaparthi. He saw a landlord who had been reduced to poverty and was eating peanuts to live. He was moved, and the next time he got an opportunity, he told Swami about the man’s pitiful state. He thought Swami would be touched by his soft heart that had melted at the man’s difficulty. Instead, Swami admonished him, saying, “Couldn’t you give the man some jaggery (unrefined sugar)? At least it would have sweetened his meal and tasted better.”

**Hands that help are holier than lips that pray. Lip service is not love. It should not be ‘inaction in love’ but ‘love in action.’ Love in action is service!** We have heard Swami say, “Wherever my glory is sung, I install Myself.” In later years, Swami would also say, “Wherever My work is done, I install Myself!”

### **Chanting His Name is Good; Doing His Work is Better**

In His divine discourse of February 8, 1990, Swami narrates an episode from the Ramayana. Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana and a noble devotee of Rama,



always chanted the name of Lord Rama. When Hanuman leapt across the ocean and entered Lanka in search of Mother Sita, he could hear the name of the Lord emanating from a house. That was Vibhishana's home, which Hanuman visited. After a heartfelt conversation, Vibhishana confessed his envy of Hanuman, saying, "Hanuman! Although you are a mere monkey, you have been the recipient of the Lord's grace. Although I have been ceaselessly engaged in the contemplation of Rama, why have I not secured His grace?" Hanuman replied, "Vibhishana! Indeed, you are ceaselessly chanting the name of Rama. But to what extent are you engaged in the service of Rama? You cannot receive Rama's grace by merely contemplating the name of Rama. When your brother Ravana abducted and imprisoned Sita Devi, what help did you give her? Did you do anything to alleviate Rama's distress, even partially?"

**It is not enough if we chant God's name. We must also do God's work to be near Him and gain His grace. In fact, when we do such work, God will come near us in many ways.** Services were rendered to homeless people during the SSSIO Pre-world Conference in Hong Kong in 2015. Just as one of the volunteers wondered whether Swami had received the service, a car bearing the registration plate 'SIVOHAM' passed by as if it was a

sign from Swami! Similarly, during a food distribution service in St Petersburg, Russia, a volunteer discovered a potato in the shape of a heart—a symbol of love, signaling God's omnipresence!

### **His Life is His Message**

In Viveka Chudamani, the greatest treatise on non-dual philosophy (*Advaita*), Adi Sankaracharya says there are three great blessings one can receive only by God's grace. The first is human birth. The second is to have yearning for God. The third is coming in contact with a great, enlightened master. We are most blessed and fortunate to have come in contact with the supreme Lord Himself, the Avatar of the age, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. However, there is a fourth greatest blessing. It is a tremendous and unique fortune to be able to do His work! **The opportunity to serve the Lord comes rarely; when we get it, we should grab it with both hands.** In fact, by His actions, God always demonstrates how one should serve.

During the Summer Course in 1973, Swami narrates the example of Lord Krishna. When the Rajasuya Yagna (sacrificial offering and worship) was performed, Krishna asked Dharmaraja (emperor and eldest brother of Pandavas) to give Him some work. Dharmaraja turned to Krishna and said no work was appropriate for His stature. However, if Krishna Himself iden-





tified suitable work, it would undoubtedly be allotted to Him. Krishna said that He would be thrilled to clear the leaf plates used for eating after the attendees of the Yagna finished their meal!

During the Last Supper, we see Lord Jesus lovingly washing His disciples' feet, with humility. Similarly, when the Akhanda Bhajans were held in the 1950s in Bangalore, Swami would personally ensure that the devotees' footwear was appropriately arranged and kept safe. Even in later years, Swami would meticulously examine all the arrangements made for the devotees for all events. He is the perfect host. When He hosts a dinner, He makes sure the choices of food for His devotees are carefully handled. When He invites anyone, He makes the arrangements lovingly, with meticulous attention to detail, from their arrival at the airport to their departure, including their accommodation, food, travel, and other needs. Indeed, His life is His message, and He teaches us how to serve.

**It is noteworthy that Swami did not say, "Love some and serve some." Love and service are meant for all, including plants and animals.**

### **The Desire to Serve**

It is essential to have the desire to serve. That is what qualifies us to serve. In His discourse of February 1, 1977, Swami emphasizes this quality, taking the example of Hanuman, an exemplary devotee and servant of the Lord.. After the Coronation celebrations, Sita, Rama, and the brothers sat together, reminiscing past events, when some of them expressed a desire to have a more significant role in serving Rama. Bharatha and Shatrughna were the most eager. So, a list was drawn up of services that could be offered to Rama and assigned to those present. Hanuman was not present on that occasion, and when he arrived, the others

announced, with a certain amount of glee, that he had no tasks left for serving Rama as everything was assigned to others.

Hanuman became was disappointed and pleaded with them, "Pray, go over the list of tasks again. Give me any service to the Lord that might have been missed, however small." They were sure nothing had been overlooked, so the list was handed to Hanuman. To his utter joy, he noticed that one item had not been allotted– the customary rite of snapping one's fingers in front of one's mouth when one yawns. Of course, typically, the person who yawns usually does it himself, but in the case of Rama, the Emperor of Ayodhya, it would surely be beneath His dignity if He did it Himself. Hanuman pleaded for the duty of snapping his fingers whenever Rama yawned. The others agreed for they thought that there was little chance of Rama yawning. For Hanuman, however, it was a godsend. Since yawning was unpredictable, he would always have to be with Rama, his fingers ready, waiting for the golden chance to perform the rite that was his blessed duty!"

**The hunger to serve the Lord is essential.** My wife Hyma and I were blessed to be Swami's guests at His ashram in Kodai-kanal in 1994. Swami one day asked me, "*Narendra, take me for a drive in the car.*" "Swami, I don't have an international driver's license!" was my response. Before I could realize my foolishness in thinking about a license when God was giving me an opportunity to serve, the chance was given to some other lucky soul. Later, my wife chided me, saying, "You always use your head. Use your heart." This was good advice. No wonder Swami says, 'WIFE' stands for '**Wisdom Invited For Ever!**'

A few days later, we joined Swami on a picnic. Seeing a woman carrying a load of firewood, Swami asked me for 100 Rupees to give her. Swami added, "*My robe has*

*no pockets and no money.*" I jumped at the opportunity and quickly gave the money which He gave to the lady. Once we returned to Sai Shruti, His residence, Swami called me and gave me 500 Rupees! I pleaded with Him that everything belonged to Him and protested that He should not give me the money. I refused to take the money, but after a few minutes of back and forth, Swami said, "*If you do not accept it, I will not talk to you.*" Not ready for the harsh punishment, I immediately accepted the money!

**In the final analysis, the lesson is that we never 'work' or 'sacrifice' for God. Whatever we do for Him is an 'investment' that gives us manifold returns! As shown above, my offering of 100 rupees was returned as 500 rupees, multiplied five times in a few hours! Swami says, "If you walk one step toward me, I will take a hundred steps toward you; if you shed one tear for me, I will wipe hundreds of tears from you."**

A devotee who lived in Madanapalle got the blessed opportunity to host Swami and offer Him lunch once when He was on His way to Madras from Puttaparthi. For the rest of her life, whenever she visited Puttaparthi, Swami ensured she was His guest and received food at His expense!

**We need only to have a sincere and intense desire to serve.**

### **Ways to Serve are Many**

The primary way of Service, enthusiastically carried out by Sai devotees around the world is providing food for the hungry, clothes for the needy, and medical relief for the suffering. By Swami's blessings and grace, the SSSIO has been serving regularly in 114 countries, and the recipient communities have welcomed the help and gratefully appreciated the loving attitude of SSSIO members who serve. For instance, after the earthquake struck Haiti

in 2010, the SSSIO was one of the first to arrive and continued serving the afflicted nearly a decade after the event. In recognition, the Haiti government commended the SSSIO as the best Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that offered 'sustainable' service.

**The second way** to serve is simply saying a kind word or sharing a smile. I once had a patient who had an overactive thyroid despite the best medical treatment. When I probed further, I discovered she was highly stressed hearing her mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I counseled her to be strong, concluding with Swami's advice, "Don't worry; be happy." That was the last I saw her for a while. When she visited me after a few months, she gifted me a hat with the words "Don't worry; be happy" embroidered on it. She said that those words had given great courage and strength to her mother, who embroidered them on many hats to distribute in the cancer hospice and other places where people needed courage and encouragement. She passed away peacefully, and the daughter came to offer me a hat in gratitude. This touching story illustrates that a small act of kindness goes a long way. **Service is more about the attitude rather than the act.**

**The third way** we can serve is by praying. When we chant, "*Samastha Loka Sukhino*



Service in Haiti

# 'Quality'

refers to the heart  
and feelings of  
the devotee.



*Bhavantu*" (may all the worlds be happy), it is a service to the whole world. The power of prayer often goes unrecognized, but cyclones and typhoons have sometimes been averted by sincere prayers and singing bhajans. So, singing bhajans is a service. (Sometimes, not singing is also the best service if the singer cannot sing in melody and rhythm!)

**The fourth way** to serve is by bringing people to the Godward path. Swami Himself suggested this as a service activity to an exemplary devotee, Mr. Gopal Rao, the former Chairman of Andhra Bank in India. Swami felicitated him in Sai Kulwant Hall with a grand celebration on his 100th birthday. Swami would always advise him to serve. So, even after crossing 90, he would go to the canteen and serve water to the devotees. Finally, a stage came when he could not do that due to physical limitations. Then, he asked Swami how he could serve Him? Swami advised Mr. Gopal Rao to talk about God and share with everyone his experiences with Swami, which would be a way of service.

**The fifth and probably the best way** to serve is to inquire and know who we are! In the 1990s, Swami delivered a series of discourses on the life and teachings of Shirdi Sai Baba. Since these discourses were only in Telugu, I was eager to translate them into English for the benefit of all devotees. I offered this service to Swami. He advised

me that a far better service would be for me to explore 'Who am I?' I pleaded that such an inquiry was very difficult. Swami said, *"No! A cave might be in darkness for thousands of years, but when you strike a match, the darkness of millennia is banished in a moment. When there is sincerity and divine grace, you will get enlightenment in a flash."* **Ultimately, all service is to know Our reality.**

## The Feeling That Counts

Swami always emphasizes quality over quantity. On one occasion, He asked me how the Arcadia Sai Center was progressing. I replied that it had grown from 5-10 members to about 50. He seemed a bit disappointed and said, *"Is that all you have learned from Me?"* Then He remarked, *"A handful of good people is enough."*

**'Quality' refers to the heart and feelings of the devotee.** Lord Rama lovingly accepted and relished the half-eaten berries served by Shabari, His ardent devotee. With the same eagerness, Lord Krishna accepted the banana peels that Vidura offered Him while refusing the royal hospitality of Duryodhana. When Swami was constructing the Super Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi, He was overjoyed with the 100 Rupees a student offered Him. This student saved his pocket money by washing his clothes himself and offered the savings to Swami. Swami valued his

contribution over many donations of thousands of dollars. Even Lord Jesus valued the heartfelt offering of a penny from an old lady over all the money from the temple's coffers.

### Types of Service

There are three types of service—*Thamasic*, *Rajasic* and *Sathwic*.

**Thamasic** service is when we offer what we find unfit for ourselves to others. An example is giving away old clothes or left over food rather than throwing them away.

**Rajasic** service is when there is pride and ego in doing the service, since it is done for name and fame, pomp, and exhibition.

Swami gives a humorous example of *Rajasic* service in His discourse given in July 1999. Swami narrates, "At a place where I was about to give a discourse, one person switched off the fan. I asked him, 'Why did you switch off the fan? We need it now. It is very hot here.' The person replied that he was the one who donated the fan, and his name was written on the fan blades; unless the fan was switched off, his name would not be readable."

**Sathwic** service is described in the Taittiriya Upanishad (ancient scripture) as:

*sraddhaya deyam |  
asraddhaya'deyam | sriya deyam |  
hriya deyam | bhiya deyam |  
samvida deyam |*

*(Give with faith and reverence. Do not give without faith. Give as much as you can according to your wealth. Give with modesty. Give with respect. Give with empathy.)*

The anecdote of Mr. James Johnson from Cleveland, USA, comes to mind. He led a simple life and struggled to make ends meet. He lived on Social Security (pension), and a few devotees helped him with essentials. When the Super Specialty Hospital was inaugurated during Swami's Birthday, Swami got the names of large donors

announced. Much to the amazement of everyone who knew Mr. James Johnson, his name was announced as he had contributed \$100,000! He felt very embarrassed when people asked him about it because he wanted to remain anonymous. Then he revealed that he was caring for his sister, who was dying of cancer. She left him an estate of \$100,000 when she passed away. He felt, "This money entirely belongs to God. Since God is building a hospital to serve the needy, it should go there." What a beautiful thought and a genuine magnanimous gesture!

**Sathwic service is charity where the left hand does not know what the right hand does.**

### Obstacles to Service

The two biggest obstacles to service are *Kartrutva* (doership) and *Bhoktrutva*



(enjoyership). The feeling that “I am the doer” and “I want to enjoy the fruits of my service” verily negates the spiritual benefit of the service rendered.

On one occasion, a devotee from the USA with his team presented a drama in Swami’s presence in the Poornachandra Auditorium. The next day, Swami came to him and said,

“The drama was done very well.”

“It is all Your grace, Swami!”

“Who is the director?”

“You are the Director and Producer, Swami!”

“Then, what about you?”

“Swami, I am your assistant...”

“Assistant? I don’t need any assistants,” Swami retorted smilingly.

**Even when we try our best to be humble, the ego raises its ugly hood! We should always feel that we are mere instruments in His hands.**

### Benefits of Service

There is a beautiful story about service narrated by Swami. About Ben Adhem, a pious individual, always served his fellow beings, though he never formally worshipped God. One day, he accosted an angel preparing a ‘list of people who loved God.’ His name wasn’t on the list. But the next day, the same angel was preparing a ‘list of people whom God loved,’ and to his utter surprise, his name was on top of the list!

**Service endears us to God. It purifies our tendencies. It also helps us see the Oneness that pervades everything. Thus, it grants us all three—Unity, Purity, and Divinity.**

Swami introduced an important concept that through rendering service, one bene-

fits the recipient, whether one believes service to be a *sadhana* or not, because one relieves people’s distress by providing food, water, shelter, education, and medical care. But Swami emphasized the higher benefit of service by introducing two words—*Swayamsevak* and *Narayana Seva*.

*Swayamsevak* is the term used to refer to a volunteer, but in Sanskrit, it literally means ‘one who helps oneself’! Swami clarified that the ultimate beneficiary of service is the one who serves! **It is vital to have the feeling that we are not serving others but ourselves. It is for our own benefit and transformation.** Service helps minimize and eventually eliminate the ego, along with the vices of selfish desire, anger, greed, infatuation, pride, and jealousy.

*Narayana Seva* is the term used to refer to serving food to the needy, but, in Sanskrit, it literally means ‘service to Lord Narayana,’ that is service to God.! This attitude is essential to receive the spiritual benefit of service. **The whole attitude should be that service is done by God, to God, through God, and the service activity is also Divine. So, the important lesson is the recognition of Oneness.**

Service purifies the heart. It removes negative tendencies. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Swami said, “Purity is Enlightenment.” So, through service, we see God face to face. Service makes us experience oneness with all humanity, all living beings, and all creation—*Advaita Darshanam Jnanam* (Wisdom is seeing Oneness in all).

May our lives always be dedicated to serving Swami and His creation until our last breath.

Jai Sairam

# Fill Your Hearts with Love

Embodiments of Love! The cosmos is filled with love. Love is wealth. Love is Righteousness. Love is Truth. The universe depends on love. Unable to recognize this love principle, human beings are running after transient worldly pleasures, ignoring this supreme principle of love.

What is the reason? Selfishness has grown, and love for God has declined. Narrow-mindedness has grown, and broad-mindedness has declined. Desires have increased and ideals have declined. Humans are only leading lives of selfishness and self-interest.

The ancient sages enthroned sacrifice (*Thyaga*) on the highest pedestal. They adored righteousness. They crowned sacrifice. They welcomed truth. Today, in such a sacred country of Bharat, the divine ideals have vanished. Therefore, India is suffering from various problems.

A heart without love is a burial ground. **Love demonstrates the existence of the divine. Love is all-pervasive. This love proves every human being is divine. Everyone should fill their hearts with love.** The day when selfish and self-centered feelings are changed into divine feelings is the day

when love shines through. Hence, every human being should fill his heart with love.

*God is the very form of love, full of love.*

*Love can only unite love.*

*When one has intense love*

*One is entitled to self-realization.*

(Telugu Poem)

It is vital that everyone recognizes and practices this love principle. At all times, love has existed in the good and the bad, in the forest and in a palace, in attachment and in detachment, in one's way of living as well as in one's speech, in the mind, and in the residence. Love is the only thing that is all-pervasive. No one is able to understand this truth.

## The Power of Love

The most powerful weapon to destroy the forces of evil rampant in the world today is love. Love is the seed. It is also the branches, the flowers, and the fruit. Everyone must try to understand this love principle. However, people today are only pursuing money and power. No doubt wealth and power are necessary, but only within limits. When the vast ocean swells beyond its bounds, it is censured for its misbehavior. The sacred human body and mind are

strengthened only when one consumes a limited amount of food. When one crosses this limit, it causes indigestion and illness. People generally partake *tamboolam* (a preparation with betel leaf, betel nut, and slaked lime, also called *paan*) after a meal. The key ingredient in this preparation is slaked lime, without which it cannot be called *tamboolam* or *paan*. However, if too much slaked lime is used, it can cause ulcers on the tongue. Everything must be used within limits. When the mind is turned toward the heart, one acquires happiness. Everything in this world has a limit, except for love. Love is

limitless. "*Anirvachaneeyam Prema*" (Love is beyond the expression of words). Sage Narada described this love principle in various ways.

This flow of love is like life-sustaining water. How is this love to be secured by one? It cannot be acquired by repetition of the name of the Lord or meditation. It cannot be obtained by reading the scriptures. **God resides in every heart. Turn your mind toward the heart. One should shut one's mouth and open the heart. Then, they will experience divine bliss.** People engage in meditation, repetition of the name, and yoga to obtain this love. They read various texts. They engage in *parayana* (regular repeated reading of various scriptures.) These are all like the jewelry one wears; they do not show the way to the reality of Atma. Scholarliness is a mere jewel. Reading sacred scriptures is only like ornaments or decoration. None of these practices can give bliss within. Love is the most important path that confers inner bliss.

Today, love has been almost totally banished. Where love should prevail, hatred has taken its place. Petty jealousy has usurped the place of compassion. One can experience true happiness only when the appropriate qualities reside in their allotted places. Pray to God reverentially, offering everything.

**Embodiments of Love, transform your entire life into a saga of love. You will then lack nothing to make you happy. Love can confer all wealth, power, success, and position unto you.**

### **Pray to God with a Feeling of Total Surrender**

What is the nature of this love? When praying to God, you should have a feeling of total surrender. However, such surrender to the Lord does not exist today. If you are keen on realizing God, if you are hungering and thirsting for God, then you should cultivate this all-absorbing love. You do not



possess this hunger, thirst, or desire for God. You are merely expressing the desire for God but not engaging in spiritual practices to experience the divine. Just thinking about water cannot quench your thirst. Thirst can only be quenched by drinking the water. If you have genuine spiritual hunger, you must try to win the love of God. Then, your hunger, thirst, and yearning for God will be satisfied. However, being lazy and praying to God for bliss is useless. If your heart is full of selfishness, you will not experience divine love merely by a wish.

What you must wish for today is love. This Love is formless, beyond the mind and speech, and cannot be expressed in words. It can only be experienced. The closer you get to this divine love, the more happiness you experience. The reason for all the troubles in the world today is the lack of such love. People have love that is self-centered and focused on the body. What is the use in seeking the effect (*adheyamu*) without seeking the cause or basis (*adharamu*). Today, people are after body consciousness rather than divine consciousness. You are ignoring the divine principle of love that can confer everything unto you. Love is the most important thing and the basis for everything.

Where does this love originate, and where does it end? Spiritual love begins with the concept of *Dasoham* (I am your servant) and culminates in *Soham* (I am He, Oneness). Without the feeling of *Dasoham*, you cannot experience the feeling of *Soham*. **Without surrender, one cannot experience oneness with divinity. This oneness with God is love. In this “So Ham,” “So” is Atma. Atma is Love. Atma is Brahman. Atma is Truth. Atma is Dharma.** People have been concerned with the four goals of human life, the *Purusharthas*—*Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, and *Moksha* (Right conduct, wealth, desire, and liberation). But they are ignoring the fifth goal,

love. Only when pure love reigns will the world become a paradise on earth.

Where love prevails, there will be no room for hatred or envy. When one entertains evil thoughts and evil feelings, love will remain distant. Love cannot survive where there is evil-mindedness. This is a chair. Two people cannot sit in one chair. The human heart is one. When love takes place in the human heart, there is no room for other qualities to enter the heart. The heart is pure, steady, and subtle. People are turning such love-filled hearts into musical chairs. If one goes on hopping from one Swami (spiritual master) to another, from one form of worship to another, they will never experience the love of the divine. Under all circumstances, a heart should be one-pointed and focused. The power of love is uniting the world today. People are afflicted with attachment and diseases. The reason for this is the increase in bodily (worldly) desires. People today are running after selfish, meaningless desires. They are praying for themselves and not for the world's welfare. Society and country are very important. We must strive for the welfare of society. One cannot survive without society. People possess the power of love, and this love is uniting the world today.

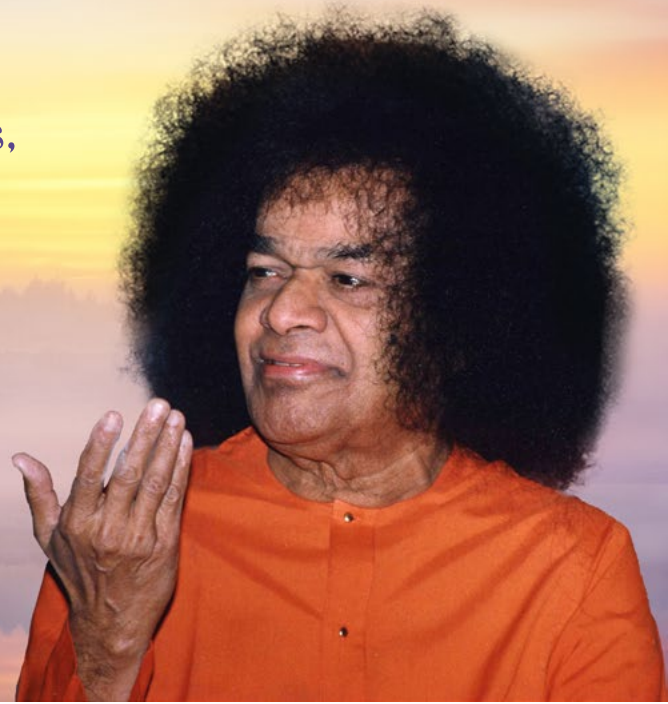
Today, thousands of people are gathered here. What has brought them here? Love is the main cause. Without love, you would not have come from such distant places. How does this love express itself? It is a process of give and take. You have to receive God's love, and you have to offer your love to God. But both are one and the same love. God's love is reflected in your bodies. That is the meaning of the declaration in the Bhagavad Gita, “The eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being (*mamaivamso jivaloke jivabhuta sanatana*).”



# GOD

cannot be acquired by  
wealth, gold, possessions,  
power, education,  
or intelligence.

Only  
through **LOVE**  
can He be won.



### Use the Divine Element for the Benefit of Others

That divine love in you should not be misused. **It should be used for the benefit of others. Fill your heart with love, spread love, and make everyone happy. This is the goal of love.** But you are not able to recognize the importance of love. The divine principle of love is being treated with narrow ideas. Divine love is present in every cell of the human body. From ancient times, the sages welcomed this principle. They declared that love is beyond expression in words and gives joy and satisfaction. Just as without sugar, no sweet will have sweetness; without love, nothing in life can have any value. Love is the cause of all. Mysore pak, gulab jamun, or burfi (popular Indian sweets) cannot be called sweets without the essential ingredient, sugar, in them. Similarly, worldly actions, charity, and spiritual practices gain value when they are saturated with the sweetness of love. Therefore, your heart should be filled with such love.

With the sacred Ganges flowing next to you, you desire a few dewdrops. Your thirst can only be quenched by the river, not by mere dewdrops.

The stream of love flows in every atom and cell of a human being. Everywhere, love

is in the form of an atom. This atom takes the form of the cosmos. Without the atom, there is no cosmos. This form of the atom is divine love. This atom is not merely an atom—“*Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan*,” this love exists as the smallest of the small and the biggest of the big.

### Investment in Devotion

Love is inherent in us, we don't have to go elsewhere to acquire this love. People accumulate wealth through employment and business. But, to acquire bliss, people have to acquire the wealth of love. People today keep their wealth in various investments and insurance companies and such. However, these institutions are not permanent. One should invest their entire possessions in divine love. This deposit is not only safe but will yield you increasing returns. If you invest your wealth of love in an impermanent bank, you are sure to lose it. Anything can be stolen except the wealth of love. You should deposit your love not in the worldly banks. So, where should we store this love? Where should we deposit it? Your heart is the bank where your love for God should be deposited. Depositing elsewhere is insecure. But the deposit in your heart is safe from theft or loss. It is entirely safe, although there are no doors or locks. It will remain true

and permanent without any change. This love has been characterized as *Amritha-swarupa* (a form of the nectar of immortality). Eternal love is greater than eternal nectar. Eternal nectar sanctifies human existence. Nectar pleases only the palate. But divine love confers eternal bliss, which is sweeter than nectar. Everyone should resolve to acquire this nectarine love.

**Only when you live a life of sacrifice can you welcome love. Only when sacrifice reigns will love come into its own. All your latent potentialities and powers will then manifest themselves. You will succeed in all your undertakings immediately.**

When love becomes the ruling principle, sorrow and disappointment will disappear. That is why the Vedas declared that “*na karmana, na prajayaa dhanena, thyagenaike amrutatwa maanasuhu.*” One can attain immortality by sacrifice alone, not by work, wealth, or progeny. God is love. How can you hope to realize God without love?

*God is the embodiment of love; Love is His divine form*

*Love is the sweet mantra that liberates*

*Oh man, how can you get such divine nectar without love?*

(Telugu poem)

Don't you have to use your hands and mouth to get the food on the plate into your stomach? Love is with you, close to you; it is your treasure. But you are not making an effort to experience it. Will your stomach be filled by just repeating the names potato and chapati (flat bread) placed before you? Use your hands to take a portion of the food and put it in your mouth, swallow it, and then the fire God in your stomach (in the form of digestive juices) will digest it to provide the energy needed by the body.

### **God is the Embodiment of Love**

How do you manifest the love that is within you? You have to clap your hands

as you chant the names of God like Rama, Krishna, Govinda, and others. Recite the names of the Lord aloud. If you really desire to experience God, you must remember the name of the Lord always, like Prahlada who chanted, “*Om Namo Narayanaya.*”

**Constantly sing the praises of the Lord like Radha and Meera (great devotees of God) did. Like Ramakrishna, always yearn for God and cry to see God. Then God will surely appear.** Today, you are crying for mundane and trivial things but not for God's grace. What type of tears are you shedding? There are two types of tears. One is the tears of bliss, and the other tears of sorrow. What you have to offer to God are tears of bliss.

### **Power of the Lord's Name**

In the divine drama, when Lord Sri Krishna was being auctioned off for wealth equivalent to his weight, all the gold and jewels of Sathyabhama (second queen of Sri Krishna) could not balance His weight. Rukmini (first queen of Sri Krishna) then came and declared that the mere chanting of the name of Krishna would be equal to His weight.

*“If it is true that by offering a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or a little water with devotion will be equal to Krishna, then you will be balanced with the offering of this Tulasi leaf.”*

(Telugu verse)

So saying, she placed a Tulasi leaf (sacred basil leaf) on the scale. What kind of leaf is this Tulasi? It has pure qualities. It is love personified. By merely uttering the name, the form will not be balanced. The scale could not be balanced by concentrating on the physical name and form. The physical body can only be balanced by the name of the Lord, which is not physical. The body, which is part of nature, can only be balanced by the Lord's name, which is beyond nature. The body is of the external path (*Pravrutthi*), whereas the Lord's name

is of the inward path (*Nivrutthi*). Narada is an extraordinary sage. He advised Rukmini, "Mother Rukmini, you are going by the outward path (*Pravrutthi*), but Krishna can only be obtained by the inward path (*Nivrutthi*). Thinking Krishna could be balanced by worldly things (outward path or *Pravrutthi*), Sathyabhama had placed all her jewelry but failed to balance Him." Then, Rukmini dropped the Tulasi leaf on the scale, uttering the words 'Krishnarpanam' (I offer this to Krishna). By invoking Krishna's name, the form of Krishna was balanced. Even with the lightweight Tulasi leaf, the balance tipped. Therefore, Krishna became Rukmini's. **God cannot be acquired by wealth, gold, possessions, power, education, or intelligence. Only through love can He be won.**

If you wish to win the Lord, you must offer love and love alone. Today, wherever you see, love has become nonexistent. Love between a mother and child is also not being experienced in its fullest form. God's love is boundless, from top to toe. A doll made with sugar is sweet whether a piece is taken from its nose, ear, or finger. What is the reason? Because the entire doll is made with sugar. God is full of love. Only after developing such sweet love, one gets the right to seek God's love. Without such love, one has no right to seek His love. There is no use in praying to the pure, unsullied, and selfless embodiment of love when your heart is filled with evil traits, feelings, and thoughts. If you cannot be pure all the time, at least be pure in your shrine, then you may acquire some of the divine love.

Many people can give lectures in the world. Many great men can touch your heart with their words. But of what use are their discourses if they spend time lecturing but do not practice? Bliss lies in practicing and not in preaching. Instead of giving tons of speeches, drink one ounce of love. Then, you will get divine Grace.



## Manifest Your Love

Like a lighthouse, divine love will show you the way. Embodiments of Love! If you really desire devotion, take refuge in divine love. Feast on this divine love to pacify your anguish, sorrows, and sins and appease your hunger.

You are suffering from troubles and miseries arising from insatiable worldly desires and frustrated ambitions. For people suffering from constant, continuous, and unending desires and meaningless anxiety, love only can satisfy your thirst. God's love is like a lighthouse beacon. It always shows you the right path. But when will it show the path? Only when you navigate the boat of your life toward the lighthouse of divine love. But, when you travel away from the lighthouse, how can you get this love? **You have filled your boat of life with the heavy burdens of responsibilities. Even with all the difficulties, steer the boat toward love, then you will surely reach the goal. You will gain victory. You will be sanctified.**

### Fill Your Heart with God and Engage Your Hands in Work

Embodiments of Love! You do not need any special type of spiritual practice. You are meditating. Who are you meditating on? The form you are meditating on is within you. So, who are you meditating for? What you must meditate on is love. Always turn your mind towards love. You may wonder, how can you complete your household chores if you are constantly meditating on love? Do your housework. **Even while attending to your daily chores, regard all of them as offerings to the divine. That is love. You don't have to forgo any of your responsibilities. Do all your duties. But, have a feeling that each act you are doing is for God and do it as an offering to God.**

God is omnipresent. There is no place where God doesn't exist. Everyone is an embodiment of God. Everything is

the form of the divine and Brahman. Strengthen this Atmic principle. To progress each day, this conviction should shine like the Sun. Then, love will increase day by day and will shine like the full moon. For a short period, there is darkness every fortnight. But, for the moon of love, such darkness is impossible. You should value such a heart filled with love. Don't hanker after trivial, impermanent things. You have your hands and mind. Using these, you can perform duties associated with this world. As Tukaram (a renowned saint) said, "*Dil me Ram, hath me kaam* (God in the heart and work in the hand)." Fill your heart with God and do your work; there is nothing wrong with that. **What everyone must learn from today is to cultivate true, unslipped love. When you lack this divine love in your heart, you will suffer and experience sorrow.** Without that love, you will only be steeped in misery. Everything is filled with sorrow. Everything is impermanent, impermanent. You cannot see bliss anywhere.

### Do Not Divorce Yourself from Nature

Buddha proclaimed, "*Buddham Sharanam Gachchami; Sangham Sharanam Gachchami; Dharmam Sharanam Gachchami, Sarvam Sharanam Gacchami.*" First, take refuge in your intellect (*Buddham Sharanam Gachchami*). Divert that intellect to the service of society (*Sangham Sharanam Gachchami*). This leads to taking refuge in righteousness (*Dharmam Sharanam Gachchami*). Then, one will deserve bliss.

If you hold sugar in one hand and water in the other, how can you expect to get sugar syrup? One needs to mix the sugar and the water. This will provide a cool drink of the syrup. It will be so sweet. Likewise, we should not differentiate between nature and God. "*Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagath*" (The cosmos is permeated with the divine). **Every atom and cell is filled with the**

## Don't be disheartened if you do not know how to sing bhajans. It is enough if you do the singing within your heart.

divine. Recognize this truth. To recognize this truth, whomever one sees, even if someone is one's enemy, one should love them. Then, their heart will transform. Even if someone has done harm, one should express love toward them. Their mind will change. You should not change your mind. This is because the heart is the primary residence of love. No other matter should enter the heart.

When people pray to God, sometimes doubts may arise as to whether the Lord will come or not, whether He will give *Darshan* (divine appearance) or not, and whether you deserve it. Such doubts arose even in the mind of the renowned devotee of Sri Krishna, Radha. She tried to sleep in her room, but a thought came to her. She thought someone might enter the room if she left the door open. So, her thoughts prompted her to lock the door. These thoughts are related to attachment to the body. Right after this, as the Atmic feeling (*Atmabhimana*) filled her heart with Krishna, she imagined Krishna beckoning her to open the door. Then, torn between the two conflicting thoughts, she thought entertaining such thoughts would not protect her. She laughed at the folly of her own thoughts and for her ignorance. Will it be the doors that will protect me? Even if there are big doors, they can be broken open. Will this cheap door help me? Watching this conflict within herself, she was laughing at herself. She realized that when the whole universe is the temple of God, there is no need to keep the door open or closed.

*Veena tanatrulu meeti (playing the strings of the musical instrument, Veena)*

*Prana tantrulu nati (when the life forces vibrate)*

*Ananda bhashpamulu Atmarpanamu seya (offering blissful tears to Atma)*

*Veedhi vakili adhiyera (that is the entrance door)*

(Telugu Verse)

What are the strings of veena as it applies to one's body? They are *rechaka* (exhalation of breath), *pooraka* (inhalation of breath), and *kumbhaka* (holding of breath). The vibration of the life forces refers to the five life forces of *Prana*, *Apana*, *Vyana*, *Udana*, and *Samana* (five vital airs governing a specific area of the body and its functions). When one offers blissful tears to Atma, that is the street and the door. That is the primary entrance door. We do not understand this principle today. The sages of the yore described such sacred principles based on their inner feelings from the heart. But today, people depend on the principles of the physical world.

Likewise, every word of Meera (a renowned saint and devotee of Sri Krishna) has a deeper inner significance. Meera sang,

*"Chalore mann, Chalore mann, Ganga Yamuna theer" (Oh mind, move towards the Sacred rivers Ganga and Yamuna).*

*"Ganga Yamuna Nirmala Paani" (the pure waters of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna).*

*"Moramukuta Peetambara Sahita Kundala Rajatha Shareer Chalore Mann" (the one who has a peacock feather in the crown and wears yellow colored silk clothes and gold earrings—O mind, go to that Lord's feet.*

The deeper meaning of the above song is that the place where Ganga and Yamuna meet, referred to as Prayaga, indicates that Ida and Pingala (vital nerve channels) meet at a center point (between the eyebrows) where God resides. Meera sang, "O mind, to reach the focal point (*Prayaga*), there is no need to buy a train ticket. You do not have to travel far. What does it mean to say "*Ganga Jamuna Nirmala Paani*" (the pure waters of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna)? They are selfless and flow with great force. They are providing water to all beings but not consuming it themselves. They provide water to the people. They merge in the ocean of grace. Therefore, these vital nerve channels called Ida and Pingala teach you the principle of purity. This is where God resides.

*"Moramukuta Peetambara Shodhe Kundala Rajatha Shareer Chalore Mann."* These verses have such deep, inner meaning to them. These songs provide unending bliss. **Attain God's Grace through pure thoughts, words, and actions.**

Sages Narada and Tumburu described God as a lover of music. God is in ecstasy when the celestial singers sing His glory. When you meditate on God with such heart-felt music, you merge with God. That is the reason why communal Bhajan singing was organized. **The attraction that is in singing can't be found in anything else. Don't be disheartened if you do not know how to sing bhajans. It is enough if you do the singing within your heart.** Do not worry about impressing others with your ability to sing in *Sruthi* (scale), *laya*, *raga*, and *tala* (beat). Your heart-felt singing will make God merge into that singing. What is the reason? Singing originates from the navel and comes out of the tongue. The triune unity and purity that emanate from the navel, mouth, and beat refer to *thrikarana shuddhi* (triple purity of thought, word, and deed).

God can be realized through *thrikarana shuddhi*, or triple purity of thought, word, and action or deed. Many poets write various poems and verses. Whether in poems or verses, they pray to Rama for protection. (Bhagawan demonstrated by singing the opening lines of a song, "*Rama nannu kapadu*," in different ways and explains how a melodious prayer can move the heart of anyone). But these poems and verses are not as attractive as singing the same words with a heart filled with love for God. **Singing with love is very attractive and affectionate and pulls the heart toward God. Therefore, merge with God through music, singing with love. Music and singing are a boon from the divine.** Many people make a lot of effort to sing but do not succeed. Whereas for some people, it emerges effortlessly in an easy, sweet, soft, delightful manner. Therefore, it is God's gift.



M.S. Subbulakshmi (a renowned Carnatic singer) is present here. Singing sweetened her heart. Not everyone can achieve this by mere practice. This gift can only be obtained through God's grace. You can spread happiness to people by singing bhajans out loud. If you cannot do that, pray within yourself; it will earn you salvation and sweeten your heart. Therefore, indulge in all actions with Love. Whatever you do, think of it as God's love. Even when you get into adverse situations, consider them as God's gift. If you get fever from malaria, you must take a bitter medicine called Quinine to cure it. Even though the medicine is bitter and not sweet, it reduces the fever. Even if you face adversity and contradictory feelings in the world, it will bring good results. Even an expensive diamond will only gain value by getting chiseled several times. Pure gold becomes a beautiful jewel only after being melted in fire and beaten with a hammer. **Therefore, you should believe all suffering and difficulties are for your own good. Whatever may happen, strongly believe that "It is good for me! It is good for me! It is good for me!" That is the form of oneness in true love.**

### **Become Embodiments of Love**

Embodiments of love! Today, this body is 71 years old. What is the body? The body is a combination of five elements. The body is sure to fall. So, don't consider the body, but consider the principle of love that comes from the body as the support. My life is full of love. I never inflicted any type of pain on anyone. I never hurt or hate anyone. So, none exhibit hatred toward me. What is the reason? My love brings about this change. Today, this body is 71 years old. For me to be like this, no one can comprehend the reason and power behind it. I pretend to show anger for the sake of achieving something. My anger does not come from my heart; it only comes from my tongue.

**I am only love, from my toenail to the tip of my hair. This love propagates Swami's glory all over the world.**

I do not desire anything. PPP—the first P is for Purity, the second P is for Patience, and the third P is for Perseverance. The reason for Sai's glory being spread all over the world is the presence of these three Ps in Sai's name. We did not send any invitations to anyone. We never asked anyone to come. Only this love is what attracts everyone, like a magnet. This magnet has such power. Some iron pieces may think that if Sai truly has such magnetism, how come He did not pull me closer? No, no. This magnet has power in it. But, if the iron piece is rusted and covered with dust, the magnet cannot attract it. Therefore, remove the rust and dust, which are in the form of inherent tendencies (*vishaya vasanas*), worldly pleasures, jealousy, and ego. If the rust and dust are cleansed, one will attain purity. Then, wherever you are, I am yours, and you are Mine.

*You may be in the forest or sky  
In a city or village  
On a mountain or in the middle of the  
ocean  
For those who are forlorn,  
Sai is the beacon*

(Telugu poem)

**Stay wherever you may but purify your heart. Expand divine love and sanctify your life with love. Then, you will be able to purify your family and surroundings. This time, Swami's primary teaching is "Transform and fill your hearts with Love."** You don't have to offer anything. We don't allow any offerings such as flowers or coconut in Prasanthi Nilayam. We only accept your love, nothing else.

### **There is no Better Medicine than Love**

As a symbol of love, raindrops of love fell today when Swami arrived here. This is a

sign of auspiciousness for an auspicious occasion (Swami's Birthday).

The whole world must be transformed into the love principle. Only then the difficulties, hatred, and envy can be eliminated. Today, envy is a wicked disease. One household is jealous of the other household. One person is envious of the other. One village is envious of the other. One country is envious of the other. This envy is widespread. **Therefore, first, we should completely eliminate this envy. Remove this hatred. Remove the anger. How to remove these three? Only through love. There is no stronger medicine than love. So, develop and expand your love.** Whoever you meet, speak to them with a smile. Even if you encounter your enemy, you should greet, "How are you, Sir?", "Good morning, Sir." When you greet them with love, their heart will transform. When you are rude to an enemy, he will also be rude to you. "*Yadbhavam Tadbhavati*" As are the feelings, so are the results. Tukaram expounded the same thing. Your heart is your witness. The char-

acter is a witness to the body. Swami is a witness to everything. Wickedness is a witness for a stupid person. We should make our heart the witness of the heart. Therefore, greet everyone with love.

From today onwards, expand your love. **Completely remove hatred, destroy envy, and don't let anger come near you. You will experience bliss if you stay far away from these qualities.** Very, very happy. People from overseas greeted, "Happy Birthday, Happy Birthday." I am always happy. I told them, "Happiness is not in you. You are not happy, so you be happy." You do not have to wish me a Happy Birthday. I am always happy, every second. Once a year, you say Happy Birthday. I don't wait for a year to be happy; I am happy every moment. You must also be happy and healthy every moment. Sanctify your lives by spreading and sharing the gift of love with the whole world.

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**  
November 23, 1996







# HOW I GOT THE DREAM JOB OF MY LIFE

**I FIRST SAW SWAMI, BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA, IN 1996** when I visited the Brindavan ashram with my cousin's wedding party. The man she married was a Sai devotee who insisted on getting Swami's blessings first after the marriage. Swami came and stood in front of me, and the person beside me prompted me into taking my first *padanamaskar*. It felt very good. **I also felt an irresistible attraction for Sai bhajans, inspiring me to spend more time with Swami and the Sai Organization back home.** Within a couple of years, I found myself spending all my spare time in the Sai Centers in Colombo. I literally grew up there and had little time to socialize with my school or college friends.



DREAM  
JOB



## The Heart is the Seat of God

Professionally, my heart led me toward the media field, though everyone thought I should become an IT engineer. Everyone discouraged me from pursuing the media field because, in Sri Lanka, the term 'media' was generally associated with video professionals chasing 'wedding coverage.' But I followed my heart. At that critical juncture, Swami appeared in my dream. In the dream, I was doing *padaseva* to Him, telling Him that I liked the media field despite all the discouragement from my well-wishers. He smiled and replied (in Tamil), "*It is a beautiful field you have selected. You will go to Australia and study for two years. My blessings are with you...*"

I woke up with joy and clarity of purpose. However, despite my best efforts to study in Australia, my visa application for Australia was rejected every time. This was a time of severe ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, and my background probably matched that of a potential asylum-seeker, not a student! I was disheartened and started complaining to Swami in my heart, "You said I would be going to Australia. That is just not happening." I started working in media in Sri Lanka as per Swami's directive. **In 2007, I got the opportunity to serve Swami with my media skills during the World Youth Conference held in Prasanthi Nilayam. I felt fulfilled.**

I got married in 2009. By Swami's grace, my wife Vasuki also gave priority to Swami. I felt blessed to have a partner on my journey to God.

### Experiences in the 'Beautiful Field'

I served as a video editor for a famous movie director in Sri Lanka. In September 2010, I joined the youth of Sri Lanka to perform a drama in Swami's divine presence. I sought leave from work from the director. To my surprise, after confirming the dates with me, he immediately called his travel agent to book two tickets! He told me that he would accompany me to Puttaparthi!



Swami blessing the author during his role as Angulimala's mother in a drama.

After the first darshan, he held my hand and said, "Sanjeevan, I have so many challenges in life, and that is why I came along with you. Now I understand why you keep visiting Swami. Just seeing Him made me feel so good and relaxed! **There is something in His eyes. Once your eyes fall on Him and His eyes fall on you, you are redeemed—you need nothing else in life!**"

This struck a deep chord within me—even those at the pinnacle of professional excellence would give up everything for the 'Swami experience!'

Every visit to Puttaparthi made me envy the special band of talented and dedicated youth, known as 'Swami's boys,' working in the erstwhile Radiosai under Prof. G. Venkatraman. I wished I could use my passion for media and my acquired skills to serve Swami like these boys. The Omniscient Lord gave me the opportunity to do just that for ten days during the 85th Birthday celebrations in November 2010! The icing on the cake came most unexpectedly.

I felt sick just before 23rd November and could not even get out of bed. The kind brothers at Radiosai told me to rest and said they would pick me up in a vehicle the next morning. At 7 a.m. the next morning, I was in the Sri Sathya Sai Vidyagiri Stadium, the program venue, though I did not know exactly where. Brother Sai Prakash asked me, "Sanjeevan, can you please do a quick



Swami fulfilled the author's desire to be His cameraman.

edit of the live program to be given to media persons immediately after the morning program?"

I agreed. I noticed many senior and well-known devotees and important guests walking past me. **Only when Swami arrived did I realize I was in Shanti Vedita, sharing the stage with Swami!** As I enjoyed a wonderful darshan with tears welling up in my eyes, Swami smiled at me as if to say, *"I told you! Media is a beautiful field. It is beautiful because it will bring you close to Me."*

Surely there are a million photographers, camerapeople, and video editors in the world better than me. But Swami's love had brought me from far away to His lotus feet on what was to be the Avatar's last Birthday in His physical form! I am still overwhelmed when I think of His blessing.

### **The Lord's Timing is Perfect**

In December 2010, Vasuki got a 'Skill-migration' visa to Australia. As her spouse, I too got mine! She told me that since Swami had indicated in my dream that I would do a course for two years, I should enroll in one. I suddenly realized that had my earlier attempts to get an Australian visa succeeded, I would have been paying higher fees as an international student. Now, as a permanent resident I did not have to pay the higher fees!

The University I applied to called me for an interview with the Dean, asking me to submit a portfolio of my media projects for evaluation. I had nothing with me besides a documentary video on a cancer hospice in Sri Lanka that the SSSIO supported. I submitted it and went for the interview with the Dean. It went as usual until he learned that I was the candidate who had submitted just a single video in place of a portfolio!

"Wonderful! I was waiting and looking out for you. I am very impressed with the work and the service there," he said. Then, he enquired about me, my passions, and my convictions. "This is a two-year program, but if you are ready to work hard and follow my advice, you can finish it in a year. What do you say?" As a married man who could not afford to be out of work for long, this was music to my ears! I agreed immediately. The Dean was so happy that he planned, customized, and personalized the curriculum to suit my needs. Thus, after a year, I was a working professional in the media field in Australia. Within 75 days after starting work, I got promoted and was given even a company vehicle! Swami's grace is boundless.

### **When Dreams Turn into Nightmares**

In 2014, when everything was going smoothly along professional and personal

## Holding Swami’s picture, I lamented, “Swami, I have done as You told me. Why are You troubling us like this now? Where have I failed You that You are failing me?”

fronts, Swami came into my dream and told me to return to Sri Lanka! This was a bolt out of the blue. I shared the dream with my wife and other members of my family. Everyone told me to stay put in Australia and not be foolish in pursuing a ‘dream’ that could end up a ‘nightmare.’ I kept thinking about what to do until I suffered ‘analysis paralysis’ and continued the *status quo*.

Then, in March 2017, Swami appeared in my dream again. This time, He seemed very upset and had a stern look. “*Come back right now to Sri Lanka,*” He said sternly. This time, I didn’t ask anyone. I told Vasuki we would be moving back to Sri Lanka at any cost. Since Swami is her priority too, she readily agreed. We packed up everything, abandoning our plans to purchase a home in Australia, and moved back to Sri Lanka within two months!

We were both jobless, and our two sons needed to attend school. Everyone in the family was convinced that I had gone mad. I was accused of being extremely selfish, for I had just thrown away a good life to fulfill a ‘crazy dream!’ We had to start from ground zero now. We rented a house and found an affordable school for the children. But for nine months, every effort to find a job turned hopeless for me. I was heartbroken, frustrated, and angry.

Holding Swami’s picture, I lamented, “Swami, I have done as You told me. Why are You troubling us like this now? Where have I failed You that You are failing me?” In my anger, I threw His picture on the ground but my son came and picked it up quickly. I realized that I had indeed turned mad in bitterness. But I felt so helpless and angry that my Swami had abandoned me.

### The Promised ‘Dream’ Job

The very next day, I was contacted by some of my Sai brothers to do video editing for the SSSIO. In my heart, I said, “Swami, I want work that pays.” I didn’t realize that His master plan was just about to unfold.

I was dumbstruck when the SSSIO asked me whether I would be available to do video editing work as a full-time professional!

I realized how the ‘Divine Master Puppeteer’ had perfectly pulled the strings, fulfilling all my dreams—working in media, getting a professional degree from Australia, and working ONLY for Swami.

Today, I understand the reason for the ‘crazy’ steps my heart told me to take, for each step led me closer to the sacred goal, Swami!

Mr. Sanjeevan Maheswaran   
 SRI LANKA



**Mr. Sanjeevan Maheswaran** came into Swami’s fold in 1996 and has been involved in the SSSIO and Sai Center activities since then. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Film and Television from Swinburne University of Technology, Australia. After working under a professional media director in Australia, Sanjeevan returned to Sri Lanka to serve Swami. He is the secretary of the SSSIO of Sri Lanka and a member of the SSSIO’s international media team. He has participated in cultural programs in the divine presence of Swami in Brindavan and Puttaparthi.



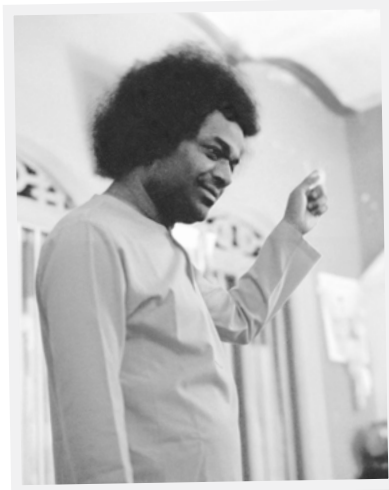
# THE GIFT OF Yearning

## **I FIRST SAW SAI BABA WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MAN OF 24.**

I had the privilege of spending much of 1977 at His lotus feet and visited Him annually for the following eleven years. **Around a thousand or so darshans later, in 1997, I still had no group or personal interview.** When I stated this fact, it elicited strong and varied responses from Sai devotees. Such responses included sympathy, confusion, questions about what I may or may not have done in this life or the previous one, gratitude for one's good fortune, anxiety about one's future prospects of physical contact with the Avatar, and so forth.

### **Swami! Interview Pleeeeeeease!**

All these reactions have gone through my mind as well. Despite my best efforts, the coveted interview eluded me. When my father and I visited Swami, my father received an interview alone on the first day. I took a group to Puttaparthi once, and only a few members were selected for interviews—but not me. I was the president of a local Sai Center for four years. I attended every *darshan* possible during my visits and joined several groups at the *Ashram*. And I begged...



**When my mind wanders to worldly matters, I remind myself that there is nothing I would rather do than see His form or hear His name.**

It would be unfair to say that Swami ignored me during those ten years. I attended two Summer Courses, and He spoke to me occasionally in the *darshan* lines. Once, He tossed me a plum from the *Prasad* tray in Whitefield. He blessed my marriage by sprinkling *vibhuti* on our wedding rings, and He let my wife and I become donors for a room in the *Ashram*, which assured us accommodation throughout our lives. **From a distance, He blessed me with health, wealth, love, and good work. But mostly, His sacred gift was a burning yearning in my heart for Him.**

However, the unspoken precondition in my heart for a lifetime of devotion to Swami was an interview.

### **A Change of Guru?**

Eleven years after my first *darshan* in 1988, I stopped visiting Puttaparthi and became closely associated with another spiritual teacher living in India. The physical attention I received was a balm for my aching heart. I thought that perhaps my *sadguru* was not Sathya Sai Baba because He kept me at arm's length. I put the entire dilemma at Swami's feet. During the next ten years, when I was with the other teacher, Swami kept coming into my dreams at critical moments, and I felt guided by His invisible hand. I learned much in the university of life.

In December 1997, I received a book on the life of Krishna and found myself reading it passionately and wanting to see Swami again. **The life of Krishna and the life of Sai felt so similar to me.** I unconsciously avoided reading books on Sai during those ten years because of the painful yearning in my heart. I read how Krishna sent Uddhava to the Gopis to alleviate their anguish by teaching them about Krishna's universal presence in their hearts. Something clicked in my mind. Maybe there was a solution to my suffering, but it was not the interview. I resolved to visit Sai Baba the following month.

### **Invitation to The Heart**

However, this was not going to be an easy trip. The unfamiliar heat in India, low-grade flu, and loneliness set in. The discipline of silence increased the pressure. I tried to move up my departure date from India, but the airline refused to cooperate. I was *caught in the clutches* of the Avatar! Swami provided timely compensation for my suffering by giving me glances, taking my letters, letting me touch His robe, showering sacred turmeric rice, and other gifts of grace. I read a book a day from among the many writings of senior devotees relating their inspiring experiences with Sai. I called my wife every two days from the new long-distance phones in the *Ashram*.

## I have come to regard the intense yearning that Swami planted in my heart years ago, and in millions of other hearts just like mine, as the greatest gift of all.

The emotional dam broke after two weeks when my sore throat robbed me of two nights' sleep. I went to *darshan* dispirited, secured a corner, front-row spot, and sat. Swami came by and glanced at my face, chest, and again at my face. From that moment onward, I had no more throat pain. **This miracle of love burst through my consciousness and made me feel that perhaps Swami loved me and was doing the needful all along**, despite His seeming preoccupation with everything and everyone but me.

With two days left before returning home to the USA, I made a final appeal for an interview. I had a corner spot on the front row again. The man beside me, a resident of the *Ashram*, told me he heard Swami say to another *Ashram* resident: *Those who will have an interview with this Avatar have been selected before the beginning of time!* Undaunted, I prepared my speech. Swami made a wide arc around my spot, and I said, "Leaving in two days, Swami!" when He returned to the line. Swami simply said, "Yes, yes." I was crushed.

I returned to my room and wept. I felt I was wasting my precious time with Swami in this fruitless pursuit. It would have been so easy for Him, just once in a thousand *darshans*, to give me an interview. I wrote a note to Swami and put it on my altar with the following wish: "Please do not let me leave Prasanthi Nilayam with this unhappy experience in my mind. After ten years of wandering, please bind my heart to You. Somehow, please stay permanently in my

heart." Internally, I had given up the interview as a condition for a lifetime of devotion.

Two *darshans* passed. On the morning of the final day of my stay, I was ninth in the token line and, miraculously, the second *darshan* row. Then Swami selected a group for an interview, including the man seated before me. I slipped into the front line. **As Swami walked toward my spot, I wept and silently cried out, "Please stay permanently in my heart! Please stay permanently in my heart!"** Swami stopped in front of me, placed both feet by my knees, and I held His feet and wept into His robe. The person beside me began to seize the same *padnamaskar* opportunity, but Swami discouraged him, giving me full attention. This was Swami's goodbye blessing and the beginning of a new, deeper relationship with Him.

### The Blessing of Inner View

Beautiful things have happened since that visit. I occasionally hear the voice of the Lord, the *antarvani*, in my mind. In the threshold between sleeping and waking, I sometimes see His form. Meditation has also become a lot easier. **When my mind wanders to worldly matters, I remind myself that there is nothing I would rather do than see His form or hear His name.** Sometimes, I remember that holy *padnamaskar* on my last day in Prasanthi Nilayam. Though I never got the coveted interview, through my anguish, I was bestowed with an inner view.



Swami has repeatedly promised us that this Avatar will give us *devotion, vitality, and liberation*. This is an incredible blessing. **Once we have the grace of knowing Him in this lifetime, we can surrender to His way. His pull is enormous. The terrible ache in the heart finds relief in inner devotion where nothing else matters.** Therefore, may we look first to Him, surrender to His plans for us without preconditions, and receive His gifts of grace.

**Postscript:  
Penned September 22, 2023**

I am very grateful to Phil Gosselin, a dear friend, for finding this essay from 1998 in which I had written about my yearning for the interview. It contained many details which I had mostly forgotten. The article triggered a flood of emotions, especially the yearning, which is as strong today as it was back then. I am a clinical psychologist, and my last 25 years have been dedicated to bringing the profound contemplative wisdom of India into modern, scientific psychology. To do that, I immersed myself in Buddhist psychology, which is non-theistic and an easy fit with modern science. Serving Swami in this way felt like my *swadharma*, my personal *dharma*, and

Swami made it all happen in wonderful and surprising ways. However, my heart-ache for Swami continued undiminished.

In 2021, just before I turned 69, I was awakened in the middle of the night by a profoundly loving and deep inner voice that said, "You have done your work; now be free." From that day onward, my life changed. I lost interest in most worldly preoccupations and was catapulted into *vanaprastha* (life of a recluse or retirement stage of life). Although I still work in the afternoons, I love to get up in the morning, read Swami's beautiful words, and then meditate on His divine name and form. That is when the heart can finally rest. **More than ever, I have come to regard the intense yearning that Swami planted in my heart years ago, and in millions of other hearts just like mine, as the greatest gift of all. It is a pain for which the only medicine is to surrender every shred of selfhood at the feet of the Lord.**

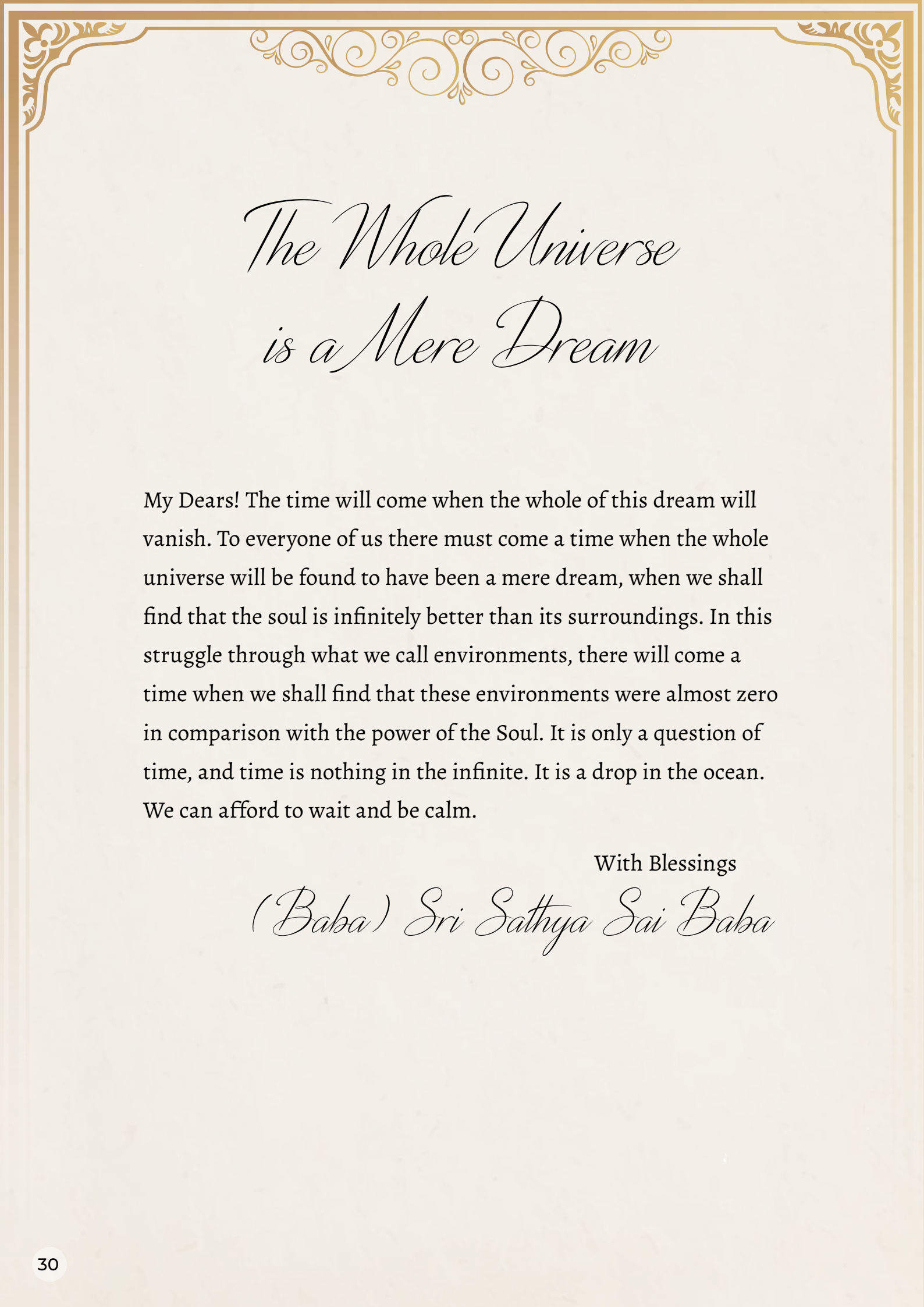
May Swami keep us all in His unconditional, pristine, and abiding divine love.

Jai Sai Ram!

Dr. Chris Germer   
USA



**Dr. Chris Germer** came to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba over 45 years ago. He is a clinical psychologist and lecturer on psychiatry (part-time) at Harvard Medical School. Chris co-developed the Mindful Self-Compassion training program that has been taught to over 250,000 people worldwide. He has authored or co-authored several landmark books on mindfulness and self-compassion. Dr. Germer is a founding faculty member of the Institute for Meditation and Psychotherapy, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Center for Mindfulness and Compassion, Harvard Medical School. He still maintains a small online psychotherapy practice.



# *The Whole Universe is a Mere Dream*

My Dears! The time will come when the whole of this dream will vanish. To everyone of us there must come a time when the whole universe will be found to have been a mere dream, when we shall find that the soul is infinitely better than its surroundings. In this struggle through what we call environments, there will come a time when we shall find that these environments were almost zero in comparison with the power of the Soul. It is only a question of time, and time is nothing in the infinite. It is a drop in the ocean. We can afford to wait and be calm.

With Blessings

*(Baba) Sri Sathya Sai Baba*



**Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

PRASANTHI NILAYAM P.O

ANANTPUR DT. (A.P.)

PHONE NO: 30.

My Dear's! The time will come when the whole of this dream will vanish. To everyone of us there must come a time when the whole universe will be found to have been a mere dream, when we shall find that the soul is infinitely better than its surroundings. In this struggle through what we call environments, there will come a time when we shall find that these environments were almost zero in comparison with the power of the soul. It is only a question of time, and time is nothing in the infinite. It is a drop in the ocean. We can afford to wait and be calm.

With 'Paluney's

(Bala)

Sri Sai; Sai Bah

# Healing with Love

MEDICAL CAMP IN

*Fiji*

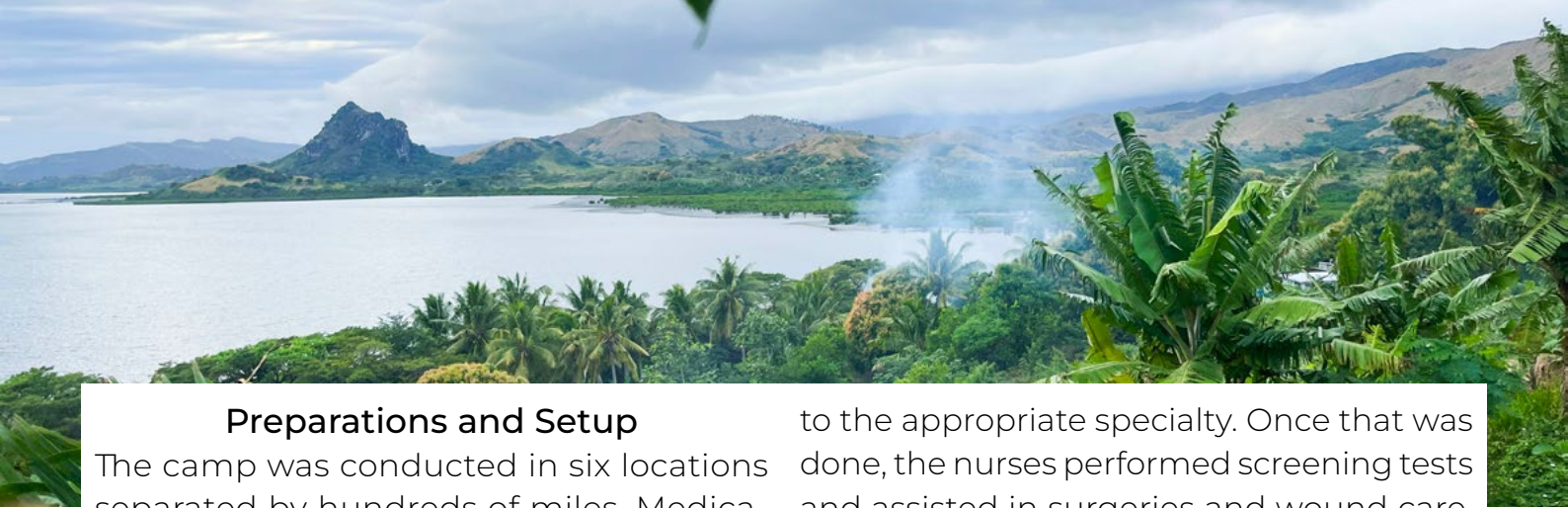


*Once you have taken up a vow to do a good thing, you should not go back on it under any circumstance. You should fulfill it even at the cost of your life. This is the hallmark of a true devotee.*

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**  
October 20, 1993

The medical camp held by Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO) in Fiji from July 23-28, 2023, exemplifies true devotion worthy of emulation. Since starting in 2006, it has been held annually, except in 2020 and 2021, when Covid was rampant. **A 120-member team with 88 health professionals and volunteers from New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, and the USA served 2,530 patients over six days, with many patients seeking consultations in multiple medical specialties.**

Fiji is prone to natural disasters that disrupt healthcare services and damage medical facilities. There are rural and remote areas where access to healthcare is extremely limited. The island nation has a vulnerable population of the elderly and children and requires medical services, such as dental care, eye examinations, or screening for specific diseases like diabetes. Catering to all these needs, the SSSIO has also been building local resources by training local healthcare workers and volunteers and enhancing their skills and preparedness to respond to health emergencies. **These medical camps have targeted predominantly the remote areas of Fiji, spreading Sai Love through a comprehensive multidisciplinary healthcare team and offering screening, diagnostic, and therapeutic services.** The number of patients seeking services highlights the region's growing healthcare needs.



## Preparations and Setup

The camp was conducted in six locations separated by hundreds of miles. Medications and blood testing kits worth nearly USD 12,000 and healthcare equipment and supplies worth nearly USD 60,000 were air-freighted a week in advance and stored at the Viseisei Sai Health Centre in Fiji.

The remote locations forced the SSSIO team to be self-sufficient in all areas, including supplying their own tents, tables, chairs, and power generators! Thus, one truck carried all medications, equipment, and associated supplies, and another carried foldable tables, chairs, and tents. Two 60-seater buses that transported healthcare professionals and volunteers would leave in a convoy at 4:30 a.m. daily. The 4-5 member reconnaissance team would leave an hour earlier to receive the convoy.

Patients would start lining up as early as 6 a.m.! By then, the SSSIO team would be fully prepared to receive them.

## Unity, Purity, and Divinity

**The tremendous success of the camp was because of the purity of intent and unity of effort.** Working together, nurses handled the triage (preliminary assessments), taking brief histories of patients and directing them

to the appropriate specialty. Once that was done, the nurses performed screening tests and assisted in surgeries and wound care. Diagnostic tests included blood tests and tests to assess heart and lung problems, like ECG, Spirometry, Ultrasound, Echocardiogram, GI endoscopies, and pap smears, so that the doctors could make comprehensive evaluation and provide better health management plans for the patients.

Seventeen doctors served the patients with multi-specialty consultations. The team focused on diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, coronary artery disease, and cerebrovascular disease, which cause 60% mortality in Fiji! Forty endoscopies were done to diagnose stomach pain, swallowing difficulties, gastric reflux, and anemia. Endoscopies help diagnose and exclude severe conditions in patients, especially in remote communities, where they cannot travel long distances to main health centers. Four hundred and sixteen patients received assistance from the physiotherapy department for sports injuries, amputations, strokes, musculoskeletal ailments, muscle imbalance injuries from occupations, torn ligaments, sprains, and debilitating osteoarthritis.



The dental department saw 570 patients, while 190 patients consulted the dieticians. Also, 963 patients were provided care by the optometry department, where their eyesight was measured and corrective lenses prescribed.

### Multidimensions of Seva

As an optometrist put it, “Since volunteering to serve at these camps, it has given me a chance every year to step out of my comfort zone and the routine of daily life. It has given me a sense of gratitude for life in both New Zealand and Australia and has taught me to remain grateful with humility and not take simple things like clean toilets and a non-leaky roof over our heads for granted. **At first, I thought these camps were a good way for me to help out the people of Fiji—just to make their life a bit better, but now I see that they have taught me to view my life with a better perspective.**”

Many medical students from the local Umanand Prasad School of Medicine (UPSM) joined the camps at some locations and benefited from the vast experience of the SSSIO doctors. The passion to serve was evident as the nurses also served in the local Lautoka hospital with the gastroenterologist to perform semi-urgent endoscopy procedures for two sessions with endoscopes brought by the SSSIO. This procedure helped identify two cancers, and the hospital administration and staff expressed their gratitude to the SSSIO. The hospital administration gladly accepted the ongoing management of patients referred by the SSSIO team, diagnosed with cervical cancer, probable endometrial cancer, fibroid causing abnormal uterine bleeding, and large pelvic masses. The SSSIO gynecology team served 275 patients, conducting 160 pap smears.

The local nurses of the Fiji government also joined the team at some venues. While the SSSIO team benefitted from their help, they



also benefitted from shared skills, knowledge, and resources. **Such collaboration helps the continuity of patient care as well.**

### Divine Love Through a Surgeon’s Knife

When 55-year-old Josua (name changed) walked into the camp, he looked down, literally and figuratively. A large lump on his back, just below the neck, had made it impossible

to 'look up' or 'shoulder' responsibilities. **The doctors removed the giant, slow-growing fatty tumor, and Josua finally looked up in gratitude with tear-filled eyes!**

Then, there was an elderly gentleman whose foot had a nerve-damaging ulcer that had developed from a neglected rat bite. Another farmer had neglected a wound on the sole, which had developed into a crippling abscess. They both walked away happily in a matter of hours! In this manner, **62 operations were performed**, including removing soft tissue tumors, sebaceous cysts, neurofibromas, dermoid cysts, ganglions, missed foreign bodies in surgical beds, debridement of chronically infected ulcers, and repair of lacerations. Patients with surgical conditions, such as gallstones, goiters, hernias, kidney stones, cancer, and urological and orthopedic complaints, were assessed, and appropriate workups and investigations were done, liaising with local hospitals.

## Divine Support

When any edifice is appreciated and photographed, very few pause and ponder about the wonderful foundation on which the edifice stands. **When it comes to the edifice of the SSSIIO medical camps, it is different. The significant role of the pharmacy and logistics support team, the foundation, is recognized and appreciated. This base includes dozens of silent workers providing medicines, food, transport, and facilities for the medical team.** The staff of the local Keiyasi hospital were amazed when an SSSIIO media crew member fixed a surgical sterilizing machine for them!

Our deepest gratitude is always for our beloved Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who, like the Earth, is the basis for our very existence and is the heartbeat of inspiration for all our work.

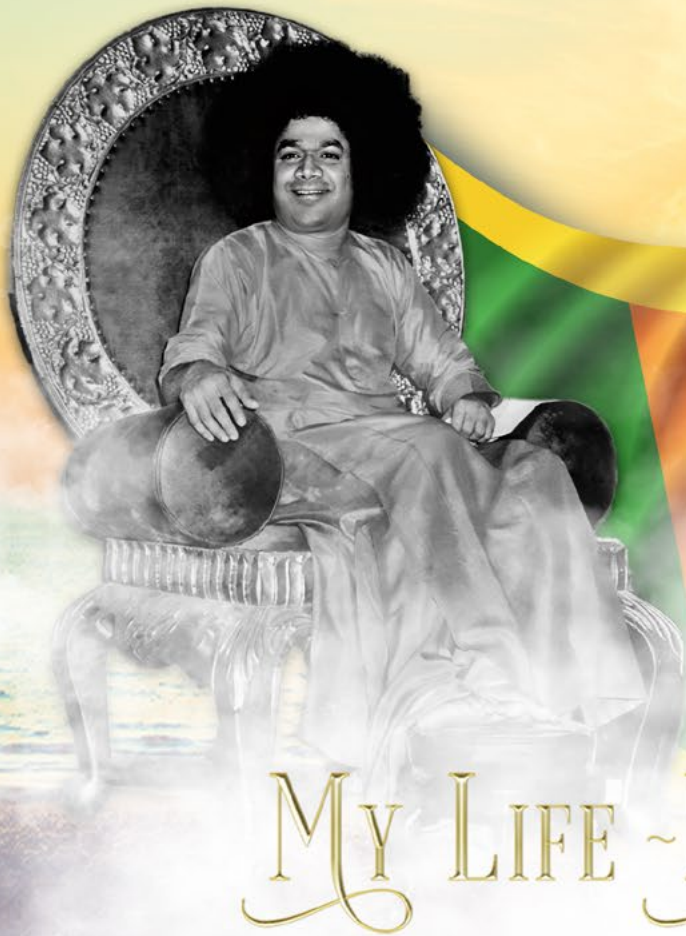
**Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Committee, SSSIO**

*Members of the Sai Organizations should think only of service to Daridra-Narayana (God as the poor). Service to Daridra-Narayana can never go to waste. It is the highest form of sadhana. Man is the product of society, and service to society is real service to God. Such service should be rendered without regard to caste, creed, race, or nationality.*

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**  
January 22, 1985



# SSSIO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, SRI LANKA



## MY LIFE ~ HIS MESSAGE

What began as a conference for about 500 members of Zones 4 and 5 (Asia) countries of the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO), the three-day conference in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, quickly blossomed into an international conference attracting over a thousand participants from 16 countries. Held at the Hoover Auditorium and its adjacent lecture halls of the Medical Faculty of the University of Jaffna, it was a blessed choice for an auspicious gathering of Bhagawan's devotees.

For hundreds of Sri Lankan devotees, the conference symbolized the love of Bhagawan coming into their lives and their hearts. The gathering of senior SSSIO leaders at the conference, including Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman of SSSIO, **brought the divine mission of the Sathya Sai Avatar to their doorsteps so that they could love Him more and practice His teachings in earnest.**

SSSIO Sri Lanka planned and worked for months to organize and host the conference, assisted by other SSSIO members of Zones 4 and 5. **Its senior officers led from the front while the Young Adults (YAs) and Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) Children dedicated their hearts and souls to the preparation of many programs with attention to minute detail.** It was, therefore, not a surprise when the youngsters





brought everyone present to their feet on the third day of the Conference with their impeccable performance, *Sai Melodies—The Language of the Heart*. The presentation was a bouquet of soulful bhajans representing the rich traditions of different cultures and languages, including Sri Lanka. The Conference was graced by the participation of the university's Vice-Chancellor, Senior Professor S. Srisatkunarajah. His devotion and wisdom were evident during his inspiring address on the third day.

### Well Begun is Half Done

The Conference began with a welcome procession of *Vedam* chanting and a flag-hoisting ceremony that installed the Sri Sathya Sai insignia. Inside the auditorium, the program opened with a lamp-lighting ceremony as Sai bhajans filled the air to welcome our beloved Swami. Bhagawan's divine discourse blessed the delegates with divine vibrations on each day of the conference. In the discourse on Day 1, Swami urged everyone to conduct themselves responsibly and recognize the



sanctity and divinity of life. Swami blessed all to "... *lead the life of a true human being and become divine,*" and He urged all to strive to "***Experience the love of God.***"

Mr. Manoj Singh, Chairman of SSSIO Zone 4, welcomed the august assembly. He urged all participants to strive to make their lives His message (the conference theme) and to earn Swami's love and grace. He said, "Change can come through intense good thoughts, which can happen at any moment!" He added that we should be grateful that Swami has gifted His teachings and organization to us for our transformation. He reminded the audience of the scriptural advice, "***Only by sacrifice can we become immortal.***"

Dr. Narendranath Reddy then delivered the keynote address and declared the



conference open. He reminded everyone that we are blessed to be contemporaries of the Avatar. He drew attention to **Bhagawan's divine discourse of May 17, 1968, wherein Swami declares that all names and forms of divinity are manifested in Him and that we should experience Him, not by inquiry but through His love.** Dr. Reddy emphasized that the purpose of the Sathya Sai organization was to help us realize our true divine nature and manifest divinity in thought, word, and deed and help others do so. To achieve this goal, one must practice Swami's teachings implicitly, immediately, and completely. He reminded everyone that **Swami's life, His Message, and His works are enshrined in one word: *Prema* (divine love),** which we must practice. Dr. Reddy then spoke of the great importance of the Gayatri Mantra, to be chanted for the illumination of the intellect. He added that chanting the *mantra* rids one of all physical and mental diseases and that our sorrows and troubles will be removed, and all good desires granted, ultimately leading to Self-Realization. He described how one could develop *Mahat-*



*tara Shakti* (higher divine power) through the practice of *Sathyam* (Truth), *Ritam* (harmony of thought, word, and deed), *Yoga* (sense control), and *Trikarana Shuddhi* (purity of thought, word, and deed).

Next, a short, humorous, and inspiring presentation on making our lives, Swami's message charged up the audience before the official opening ceremony began. **A magnificent flag procession with flags from 16 countries carried by SSSIO members from those countries captivated the delegates.** The march was led by the *human values* flag of the SSSIO, ending with the specially composed song—'Truth is the Hero.'

Dr. Ramadevi Sankaran, a physician from the USA, then introduced two key initiatives, EASE and CORE. The critical foun-



dation of the EASE and CORE programs is realizing that all activities should be performed with the awareness *I am God*. The program EASE inspires—**E**xercise Regularly, **A**ttitude Positively, **S**leep Deeply, and **E**at Responsibly. And the initiative CORE encourages—**C**onsistency in *Sadhana*, **O**bjectivity—Finding Your Purpose, **R**esource Management—Financial Literacy, and **E**motional Wellness. In explaining the supreme importance of His teachings to modern life, Dr. Ramadevi quoted Bhagawan Himself when **He said the five human values are the Vedas of the 21st Century.**

### Practical Learning Through Participation

A practical and innovative exhibition arranged by the YAs was officially opened late in the morning. Their creativity in the many Sai-inspired activities and messages was evident in the exhibits. **An exciting and innovative item was a 32-seater model airplane to simulate carrying all the visitors to the venue for divine *darshan*.** The enthusiasm of the YA presenters at every display booth was infectious and highlighted their dedication to Sai.

The simultaneous workshops on the four aspects of the EASE program for physical well-being commenced in the morning, with each workshop lasting 40 minutes. Facilitators shared detailed information on their subjects, providing practical and spiritual insights to help promote physical and mental well-being and inviting participant engagement.

### Presentations that Touch the Head and the Heart

YAs from Malaysia then offered a joyful production, “*Rasa Sayang*,” meaning ‘Feel the Love.’ They were followed by the wonderful program of SSE children of Sri Lanka who put on a beautiful and moving play on the purity and devotion of a tribal woman, Shabari, the earnest devotee of



Sri Rama who waited for decades at the instruction of her *guru* to serve Lord Rama when he passed through the forest.

Mr. Aravind Balasubramanya then spoke on *Practicing Dharma in Daily Life*, peppering his talk with many stories and experiences with Swami. He shared how Swami once asked a young boy, “*What*



do you want?” and provided the answer Himself, “Grant me the strength to love You with all my heart.” That should be the only prayer we must have! Aravind then highlighted that **Swami says there is only one Dharma: Atma Dharma, the same Atma or God who resides in all.**

He added that nearness to Swami is not enough; dearness is important. He elaborated on the four stages of life according to the scriptures, beautifully comparing them to the stages in a river’s journey. The first stage, *Brahmacharya (Student Stage)*, is for us to focus our lives on Him by learning about *Atma Dharma*. The second *Grihastha (Householder stage)* stage is for growing and expanding like the river gathering tributaries. The *Vanaprastha (stage of a Recluse)* stage involves giving up desires and attachments, desiring only *Moksha* or liberation, like the river breaking into distributaries as it reaches the ocean. The final stage, *Sanyasa (stage of Total Renunciation)*, is the hardest, for one has to give up the I, the ego, the sense of separation from God. This represents the merger of the river with the sea.

### **DAY 2: Starting and Filling the Day with God**

The second day commenced with early morning *Nagarsankeertan*, with hundreds of devotees walking through the town, awakening it from its slumber, literally and spiritually, with melodious *bhajan* and *satsang*. In his opening talk that day, Mr. Billy Fong, Central Coordinator of Zone 4,

reminded the audience about the importance of practicing Swami’s teachings and the importance of the morning and night prayers given by Him.

In the divine discourse that followed, Bhagawan explained that wisdom is not academic information or knowledge of life; it is the understanding of the oneness of the individual and community. Swami said man is not making efforts to know the human values inherent within. Bhagawan asked rhetorically, “How to recognize Divinity within?” and explained that it can be recognized by controlling the senses and fostering divine feelings. Swami explained that good vision leads to good thoughts and that **human life is given to entertain good thoughts and practice human values.**

Mr. Krishnamoorthy Venkataraman spoke on *Work is Worship*, remarking that work is



duty, duty is God, and even the most insignificant work is a flower offered at the feet of God. For the benefit of SSSIO officers, he drew particular attention to Swami's instructions, "*Be a sevadal to Swami's sevadal.*" He also shared his experience with a severe medical condition and how Swami cured him. When he asked Swami about his recovery, **Swami said that serving in the Sathya Sai Organization nullifies our past karma!**

Krishnamoorthy also shared a dream he had in which Swami asked him, "Who is your family?" Swami then added, "Everyone in the world is part of the Sai Family, including animals and plants."

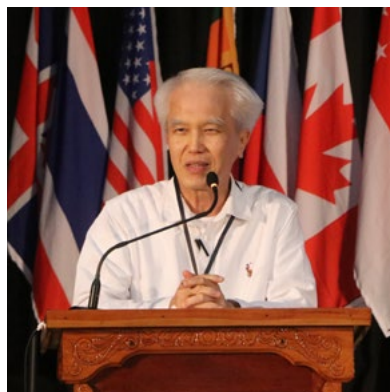
### 'Drama'tic Messages for Transformation

YAs then offered *The Mind at War*, a gripping drama that opens with Lord Krishna visiting the court of the Kauravas to offer them one more chance to behave in a *dharmic* manner. Yet, as we know, all reason was ignored. However, the drama took a twist, and a play within a play unfolded. The director and actors in the play had to deal with a participant who wanted personal glory at the expense of the whole production. **Creative, engaging, and poignant aptly describe this excellent drama presentation. The main message of the drama was the practice of Human Values.**

SSE children staged a colorful and joyful production about how societal actions in the last century have not been beneficial toward nature but, on the contrary, destructive. The play provided a provocative but practical view of the future, result-

ing from humanity's deplorable actions of the past. It concluded with Swami's injunction, "*It is your duty to protect Mother Nature,*" and **His advice, "Practice the five human values to save the planet and bring love and peace."**

Then came the presentation of Dr. Suresh Govind, a member of the Prasanthi Council, the administrative body of the SSSIO. As the charismatic and energetic 'host' of a staged live TV service program, he showed videos of outstanding work performed in Zone 4 countries of the SSSIO. He dilated on various projects enthusiastically and encouraged others to emulate these practices. **He described how the University of Jaffna had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the SSSIO of Sri Lanka to train trainers in the "War against DARTS (Drugs, Alcohol, Relationship issues, Time**





**Waste, Smoking) program.** The audience stood up multiple times to honor and applaud these outstanding achievements of SSSIO during the inspiring presentation.

Ms. Anuradha Venkateswaran, an alumnus of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) and Regional Devotional Coordinator, SSSIO USA, Region 3, then spoke on *Living a Balanced Life*. She spoke of *Shrama* (effort) and drew attention to the **three rare boons in life that the sage, Adi Shankaracharya, extolled: human birth, intense desire for liberation, and the company of a great soul.** She further explained that a balanced life is spent doing all work as God's work. She urged everyone to offer all actions as offerings to God. To illustrate this point, she told the touching story of a lady named Radha. During *Gramma Seva* (service in villages) in the 1980s, Swami described her as the best midwife in the world because every time she went to help deliver a baby in a remote village, she prayed for Swami to work through her.

She also narrated that Swami once told Professor Bhagya of Swami's college that all work is His work and said, "If you separate your work as worldly work and spir-

itual work, I will not give you liberation even in a thousand lifetimes."

### The CORE of the Conference

After lunch, the delegates attended the first two workshops of the CORE program on Mental Well-Being. The facilitators moved enthusiastically across the lecture halls to ensure enriching experiences for all four workshops.

All delegates then proceeded to one of the four panel discussions offered: for YAs, in Tamil, in English, and for ladies. Each workshop was on a different topic and thus added to the wealth of topics for discussion and reflection at the Conference.

**A special convocation ceremony was held for YAs from Zones 4 and 5.** The proud delegates came with sashes to receive their certificates from Dr. Narendranath Reddy and Dr. Mrs. Hyma Reddy.

### DAY 3: Rejoicing in His Glory

In the auspicious early morning hours, at 4:45 AM on the third day, delegates made their way to the beach for *Sunrise Prayers*. Sitting on the sand before Swami's chair and awaiting the glorious sunrise, they chanted the auspicious Gayatri Mantra in unison. Although rain was forecast for the day, the merciful Lord kept the rain at bay



as dark clouds streaked across the sky ahead. The unique event received great attention and admiration from devotees around the world.

### SSE Children's tour

The Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) children, seven years and older, went on a tour of the coastal region of Mathagal on the third day of the conference. The team of 93 children, 15 SSE teachers, and 8 conference delegates visited the Sangamiththa Temple and the famed Mahabodhi tree, sacred places associated with Lord Buddha. The children also enjoyed the beauty of nature along the coastal area and experienced oneness despite cultural diversity.

### Morning Session

In the auditorium later that morning, Dr. A.R. Ganeshamoorthy, a member of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust of Sri Lanka, spoke of the inspiring and selfless work being done in his country.

Then, the ceremony honoring senior devotees from Zones 4 and 5 followed. The honorees were given certificates to acknowledge their long years of service to the divine mission of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The remaining CORE workshops were held to conclude the morning proceedings of the third day at the conference.

### A Fitting Finale

In the afternoon, the YAs worldwide jointly offered a musical program, *Sai Melodies—The Language of the Heart*. It is a wonder that singers from around the world, who did not have much time to prepare, sang in harmony and in languages they did not speak. The YAs received a well-deserved standing ovation as they demonstrated that they are *spiritual lions*.

As the program came to a close, Dr. Suresh Govind offered a *Vision for Sai Mission*. In an inspiring, energetic speech, **he urged all devotees everywhere to take Swami's love and His message to all corners of the world** and relieve human suffering by tackling complex social issues. He said, "Be part of His story. When we are part of His story, we become part of history."

Senior Prof. S. Srisathkunarajah, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jaffna, the gracious host



of the venue, spoke about his faith, spirituality, and awareness of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. **He said: “I know Bhagawan is here, and you are here. My Master used to tell me there is no difference between the Master and the disciple.”**



### Resolutions to Grow in Love for Him

The countries of Zone 4 then declared their resolutions for the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations of Bhagawan in 2025.

For **Education**, they resolved to increase the numbers of SSE and SSEHV students, establish a standard curriculum for SSE throughout the Zone, establish international certification for SSE graduates by the Asia Pacific Institute for Sathya Sai Education in Human Values, and establish an SSE alum body. They resolved to establish **YA** programs in every Sai Centre and ensure their active participation in social service and environmental programs, including planting 250,000 trees across Zone 4 countries.

For the **Devotional Wing**, it was resolved to have at least 500 people chant the Gayatri Mantra daily, do other *sadhana*, train meditation trainers and *bhajan* singers, and conduct more *Sadhana* Camps.

In the area of **Service**, it was resolved to hold 130 medical camps, perform 5,000 cataract surgeries, offer physiotherapy to 100 cerebral palsy patients, and have the Sri Lanka Ladies' Wing care for at least 100 pregnant women, amongst other initiatives.

Dr. Narendranath Reddy delivered the valedictory address in which he shared a prayer for all leaders: ***Oh God, make me the servant of the servant of the Lord.*** He said it is with such humility and enthusiasm that Sai leaders must take the Sai Mission forward. Dr. Reddy referred

to Lord Krishna's message about how *maya* (delusion) is very difficult to overcome, acting as an obstacle between man and God. To overcome this challenge, Lord Krishna said: ***“Surrender to Me completely, and I will take you across the Maya. He also assured, “If you completely surrender to Me,***

***I will remove all your sins and give you liberation; hence, grieve not.”***

In his closing remarks, Mr. Ashok K. Sakhrani, Chairman of SSSIO Zone 5, provided an overview of the conference proceedings, identifying highlights. He stressed that human birth is precious and urged everyone to be convinced *I am God*, which should be the basis of what we think, say, and do. We should treat all work as divine work and everyone as Sai Family, recognizing the oneness of creation.

The evening ended with *bhajans* and *mangala arathi*.

### DAY 4: The Grand Finale

On Sunday morning, the SSSIO Sri Lanka graciously organized *grama seva* or service in villages and tree-planting. The delegates were in for a pleasant surprise since the villagers entertained them with a cultural program in gratitude!

The Conference delegates returned home energized, with recharged spiritual *batteries* and memories galore. The Conference was a momentous occasion that demonstrated the strength, depth, and breadth of the SSSIO in taking the divine message to all corners of the world, just as Bhagawan had instructed the members of the Prasanthi Council to do in 2004. **The organization bearing His holy name continues to triumph and spread the Love, name, message, and works of our beloved Sathya Sai all over the world.**

Jai Sai Ram.





# The Hourly Alarm



## **I ATTENDED AN SSSIO CONFERENCE IN INDONESIA**

while serving as the Zonal Young Adult Coordinator for Zone 4 of the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO). We, international delegates, were traveling to the venue in the car of a Sai brother who had kindly picked us up. The car was packed with delegates, and I ended up sitting beside him in the front seat. With a smiling face, this brother seemed to have a divine aura.

As we were driving uphill, I heard the sound of a gong coming from his phone. None of the others seemed to hear it, as there was much talking in the back seats. At this point, the brother pulled the car to the side of the road and closed his eyes as if in deep meditation for a few moments. Then, he resumed driving normally as if nothing had happened. What was that about, I wondered?

We reached the conference venue and were getting out of the car when another gong emanated from his phone. Just as we were alighting, I asked him, "Are you coming?" "You carry on," he said, "I'll come in a minute."

Curious, I walked on but turned to see that he was doing the same thing again—closing his eyes as serenity spread across his face!

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**“It’s not just about what we do, but how we do it, that makes all the difference. And more than that, why we do it is the most important reason!”**

I was intrigued and decided to find out what he was up to! Later in the day, I located him and asked, “Brother, I noticed that you stopped to meditate every time a gong sounded on your phone. I’m sorry to pry, but do you mind sharing what you are doing?”

He smiled and replied, “The Lord is so gracious, and He looks after everything for everyone at every moment. Isn’t that amazing? I feel I should be grateful for that always. So, I developed this habit of saying ‘thank you’ to Swami every hour, for myself, and on behalf of everyone in the world. That gong you heard is my hourly reminder.”

I was blown away and deeply touched by his response. I understood why he carried that amazing aura! It was a divine gift from his attitude of gratitude.

### **Start the Day With God**

Since that day, I, too, made it a point to express my gratitude to Swami as much as possible in a day, if not hourly, inspired by that brother. It makes me feel magically connected to Swami and reminds me that He’s always with me, in me! By remembering Him throughout the day,

I feel I am living with my Swami in my Prasanthi Nilayam!

In my current phase in life, I am primarily a mother of two, a teacher, and a baker. Hari and I spend the morning looking after my 6-year-old son and preparing him for school. On the way, we made it a practice to pray together in the car. We focus on Swami mindfully, with intent, till we feel He is with us.

After dropping him off and on the way back home, I sometimes listen to spiritual audio-books or talks as I go for a short walk. Sometimes, I practice watching my thoughts and letting them go without holding on to them during the walk. By doing this, I have enjoyed some profound moments when there are no thoughts at all! **There is a beautiful silence that is so blissful. It is such silence in which we hear the voice of Swami within. At such times, if you look for Swami, you’ll see him everywhere**—in the buildings, in the trees, and in animate and inanimate beings. Somehow, reaching this point of silence slows down time, and I feel I can achieve more and focus better, thanks to the deep stillness within.

### Fill the Day With God

Once I'm back home, it's time to bake. I run my small business (MrsSheelsJr) from home, and there are orders almost every day. I'm very happy to say that Swami is the love ingredient in my cakes! As I bake, I have a habit of saying 'Sai Ram' with each ingredient I add to my batter, as my grandmothers did before me. This is because energy is also a critical ingredient we add to food. **Saying 'Sai Ram' nullifies all unwanted vibes and fills the food with goodness and love.** Some days, I have my customers telling me,

"Saiusha, **we could taste the love in the cake.**" That's what "Sai Ram" seems to do—so regularly, too!

After that, it is back to precious 'mother-daughter' time, as I spend time with my two-and-a-half-year-old daughter. We play, read, and paint for a while, and then we go to pick up my son from school. On the way back, we spend some time in the park. Returning home, we have lunch together and play some more, and then I begin my other profession as a teacher!

### Spend the Day With God

I tutor at home from 3 PM to 8 PM most days. Here, too, just like in my baking, I ensure that Swami's name and Swami's love are the key ingredients, and it shows. I have gained a reputation as a "special needs" tutor when, in fact, I have no training in special needs education. Over the years, I have had counselors and therapists reach out to me, seeking help for students with difficulties in learning at school! With humility and gratitude to Swami, I can say

that in 14 years, 99% of my students who have appeared for competitive exams like the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and A-level exams have received top scores, either A or A+! IGCSE is considered the most popular international certification at the end of secondary school, equivalent to the British O-Level, UK GCSE, fifth form, or year 11. The A-level exam is taken two years later—it is (subject-specific) pre-university education certification.

Swami says Educare is not about filling children's heads with what is outside but eliciting from them what is already present within! That is pretty much all I do! **There is no special technique or skill other than loving and listening, inspired by Swami. One needs to be patient, deal with every student individually based on their needs, and get them to think of what they need to learn.** To do that, I start the lesson by seeing Swami in the children's seats before the lesson starts. That somehow helps the lesson flow smoothly. With Swami's grace, the kids don't seem to get bored, and time just flies.

### End the Day With God

I have a lovely *au pair* who helps us with the kids, so by 8 PM, my kids return from their classes, bathe, and have dinner. Then Hari and I sit with them to tell them stories, sing them a bhajan, and lovingly tuck them into bed. At 9 PM, I get a little time to respond to messages, be with my husband after he's back from work, read, and unwind. I also make it a point to sit silently and send Sai love to the world and talk to Swami.

Before calling it a night, when I sit by myself, I run through the day in my head and do a self-audit. Some of the things I reflect on are:

1. In what way was I of service today?
2. What was my attitude during the service?
3. Did my moods affect the way I spoke or behaved?
4. Did I connect and help the kids connect with Swami and His Love during the day?
5. Was there anything I could have done better?

This is an ongoing effort, so I can always be a better version of myself the next day as my offering to Swami.

The more I practice these, the more I feel Swami's love and presence. I also notice that, in the process, I become more adept at whatever I am doing.

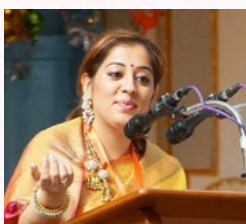
### Parting Thoughts

As I've gone through life, I've had experiences where I've held interesting roles and titles. I have traveled extensively, thanks to SSSIIO activities as a coordinator. At this stage, I may not communicate with as

many people as I did before, but molding young minds is a big task and one I have the honor of doing, thanks to these beautiful children. **It's not just about what we do, but how we do it, that makes all the difference. And more than that, why we do it is the most important reason!**

This current phase has also taught me to appreciate the importance of paying attention to detail—small changes and actions make a huge difference to how the kids behave and respond—and it always begins with me. I occasionally find time to run an SSE (Sai Spiritual Education) Group 4 class, a YA session here and there, pick up courses online, and become a better version of myself. All of this makes me appreciate Swami that much more. We look after just a few kids, and our day is spent—but how magnanimously and intricately He looks after each one of us, to the extent that we feel He's just mine, my personal Swami, and no one else's! **To this Swami who runs all the Universes and looks after me... Eternal gratitude to my Eternal Companion!**

Mrs. Saiusha Haridas  
MALAYSIA



**Mrs. Saiusha Haridas** is a fourth-generation Sai devotee, originally from Hong Kong. She settled in Malaysia after marriage with Hari in 2008. She has taught English, Language, and Literature, and has run Group 4 SSE Classes for over two decades. She served Zone 4 as the SSSIIO Young Adults Coordinator for four years, overseeing young adult projects and activities in 15 countries in Asia, serving about 15,000 youth. Saiusha is also a passionate vegetarian and vegan baker who runs a home-based baking business inspired by her mother!

# from the International Sai Young Adults

This month, we are delighted to bring you the latest updates from the Sri Sathya Sai International Leadership Programme (SSSILP) for Young Adults subcommittee. We will begin by sharing highlights of the recent graduation ceremony, a testament to the growth and development of our dedicated young leaders. We are also thrilled to present inspiring updates from the dynamic Young Adults (YAs) of Zones 4 and 9. **These updates shed light on a significant program and a transformative service activity that exemplifies the spirit of unity and selfless service and underscores the positive impact the YAs are making in their communities.**



# SSSILP GRADUATION 2023



On September 23, 2023, under the benevolent guidance of our beloved Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the virtual graduation ceremony for the Class of 2023 unfolded. The overarching theme for this year's online graduation ceremony was *Samarpayami (My Offering): Swami Resides in the Lotus of Our Hearts*.

The journey leading up to this momentous occasion is a testament to the dedication and perseverance of the graduates. They diligently completed nine instructor-led online sessions, pre-reading assignments, and post-module activities, demonstrating their enthusiasm and commitment to this valuable program.

Throughout their educational voyage, the graduates were enriched by imbibing the divine teachings of Bhagawan. **His wisdom on leadership, explained with simplicity, sweetness, and inspiration, equipped the YAs with the practical tools and resources needed to become exemplary leaders within SSSIO and society.**

Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman of the SSSIO, delivered the Convocation address. **He placed Hanuman as the ideal for all aspiring leaders**, lacing his talk with stories, anecdotes, and personal experiences. "Servant-leadership" is what Swami taught us, he said. It was followed by the address of an eminent guest speaker, Ms. Roshini

Visvanathan, a YA Advisor and SSSILP Alumni, who graced the ceremony. **She shared her personal journey, highlighting the profound impact of the knowledge and training acquired through this program, both professionally and within the organization.** Additionally, graduates from the Class of 2023 shared their heartfelt reflections on the transformative benefits of the program.

The Class of 2023 comprised 54 graduates from various countries. They joined the ranks of nearly 2,200 alumni from different parts of the world amidst congratulatory messages from devotees, officers, National Council Presidents, and Zone Chairs of the SSSIO.

The anticipation for the upcoming 2024 program is palpable, as updates and enhancements are in progress for a collaborative effort with the Pathways Subcommittee. This session promises to be another milestone in nurturing future leaders.

At the large gathering of the recent SSSIO International Conference held in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, an in-person SSSILP graduation ceremony was conducted for the Classes of 2020-2023. This memorable event unfolded on September 28, 2023, at the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, with the enthusiastic participation of the YAs from SSSIO Zones 3, 4, and 5.

# AROUND THE WORLD

**500 participants! 300 bags of trash collected!** That was what the International Coastal Cleanup Day achieved in South Africa on September 16, 2023, as the YAs and Go Green teams collaborated with the Green Buddies Organisation. The noble mission was aimed at reviving the Blue Lagoon Beach in Durban. Participants rolled up their sleeves and tirelessly worked to rid the Blue Lagoon Area of its accumulated waste, epitomizing the spirit of selfless service and unity in working together toward a shared goal.

Beyond the cleanup, awareness sessions were conducted to enlighten the participants on the significance of maintaining a clean environment and fostering deep reverence for Mother Earth. A comprehensive brand audit was also undertaken to identify the companies contributing to environmental pollution. Once the results are available, meaningful dialogues will be held with these companies to raise awareness and explore eco-friendly alternatives.

Through their concerted efforts, the Sai YAs not only transformed the Blue Lagoon Area but also left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of those who joined this noble endeavor.



**cleanliness is  
godliness**





# CONVOCATION OF MALAYSIA SAI YOUNG ADULTS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Sai YAs of Malaysia marked a momentous milestone, hosting the 20th National Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) Convocation at the Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation on September 23, 2023. **This convocation was graced by more than 400 distinguished guests, including the graduates of the new Malaysia Sai Young Adults Leadership Program (MSYLP).** In a joint event, the graduation ceremony for 26 Sai YAs unfolded in collaboration with the 79 SSEHV students who completed nearly 12 years of the program and the 20 SSEHV teachers who completed the Teachers Training Program.

The Malaysia Sai Young Adults Leadership Program (MSYLP) is a transformative 8-month initiative open to YA leaders

nationwide. This intensive program requires the participants to develop skills in diverse subjects such as effective communication, effective people management, the dynamics of teamwork, time management, creative thinking, and selfless leadership. Also, as an integral part of their graduation, these emerging leaders guided various service activities, embodying the ethos of selfless service and community engagement.

**This convocation not only marked a significant educational achievement but also symbolized the deep-rooted commitment of these YAs to their spiritual and personal growth and unwavering dedication to serving humanity.**



# Do His Work He Will Take Care of Yours

“How did you come into Swami’s fold?” This is a question I have often been asked, and I have hesitated to answer it because I felt I didn’t have a remarkable story to share. Today, however, I want to share a most beautiful story of divine love, which probably does not have a big ‘Aha’ moment but is filled with dozens of small miracles that mean the world to me!

## ‘Ordinary’ Beginnings

I was born and raised in Taiwan. Born to Sindhi parents and growing up in Taipei, I attended a community center for Indians, which was also a place of worship. It housed different Hindu idols. It was sometime in the mid-1990s that the Sri Sathya Sai International Organization (SSSIO) in Taiwan was established by a few ardent devotees of Sathya Sai Baba. One of those devotees was my mother’s friend, and she told her about the *Balvikas*, or SSE (Sai Spiritual Education) program, encouraging my mom

to enroll me and my elder sister in the SSE classes. My mother trusted her good friend’s advice, and soon, **I found myself in SSE classes where I started learning about Swami and His simple but profound universal teachings.**

Though I didn’t feel Swami was my Guru or God at that time, I was dedicated to attending the Saturday classes out of respect for my parents. Soon, I was enjoying the classes, learning stories and bhajans, and imbibing human values.

## ‘Ordinary’ Darshans

Let me fast forward to 2007 when I visited Prasanthi Nilayam for the first time as part of a large contingent of devotees from Taiwan during the Chinese New Year celebrations. Bhagawan passed by and looked at me during the first darshan. Everyone was excited for me, but I was naive and did not know what it meant. But I still can recall that image of Swami lucidly. I visited Swami once again in 2009

After a long time, I started feeling at peace and had a new meaning in my life—being able to do Swami's work with love and dedication.

with another group of devotees from Taiwan, and was blessed with a few more precious darshan opportunities. I was 16 then, and Swami was an integral part of my life. I had spent much of my childhood as part of the SSE and the SSSIO. But it all felt like a phase of any child's life. I still didn't understand what Swami truly meant to me!

#### **Moving Away from Swami**

After graduating from school and SSE in 2010, I went to Manchester, England, for my undergraduate studies. This move marked a new stage in my life where I was away from family for the first time and had unbridled freedom! It was during this phase that I completely lost touch with Him. In the quest to 'enjoy' my freedom, I got into bad company. **(I define bad company as any friendship/relationship that takes one away from Swami!)** New distractions for a young adult, like partying, alcohol, girlfriends, etc., took over.

I never bothered going to any Sai Centers in England and strayed away from the path I had learned from Him. I lost all control over my life during this period and changed to keep up with my friends' circle, which kept changing every few months. I became a different person during my days at the University and drifted far away from Swami.

#### **The Breakpoint**

Let me fast forward to 2018-19, when I was 25 years old and in the prime of my youth. It had been five years since I had moved to Hong Kong. Life was pretty ordinary as I worked in an office job in banking. I did go to the Sai Center in Hong Kong occasionally, but Swami was not my priority.

And then, I hit rock bottom. I broke off a long-term relationship I was in. That devastated me. I started experiencing severe depression and anxiety and felt lonely like never before. I had to make some changes to my life. The same distraction—alcohol, flimsy friendships, relationships, and indulgences—again beckoned me, promising an escape. But the grounding that Swami had blessed me with through SSE gave me the strength to take a 'U-Turn' and return to Swami's fold!

That is when I realized how much I had taken the SSE learnings for granted. **That seemingly 'ordinary' start that Swami had given to my life was now giving me 'extraordinary' strength!**

#### **Welcoming His Prodigal Son**

I became more regular in my attendance at the Sai Center and SSSIO activities. It gave me the escape I was looking for without any adverse side effects! I began to grow in confidence and self-esteem. I launched my startup

business with a few good friends on 23rd November 2018 and enjoyed a strong start to the enterprise. After a long time, I started feeling at peace and had a new meaning in my life—being able to do Swami’s work with love and dedication.

I visited Prasanthi Nilayam after a decade during the Chinese New Year 2019. I got the opportunity to offer flowers on His Samadhi. As I did that and bowed my head, I felt a rush of energy fill my mind, heart, and body. It felt like a new awakening. It felt like I was transformed into a different person and was starting a fresh chapter in my relationship with Swami. I recollected the way Swami had looked at me during earlier *darshans*. It is hard to explain in words the feeling I experienced. I felt so much lighter and blissful. I felt as if my guilt, anger, and depression just melted away. I knew that Swami had forgiven me for all my mistakes, and I was sure He was always there by my side, even when I had strayed away.

### Extraordinary Changes

2019 was a year of self-transformation for me. I became more active in the Sai Center in Hong Kong. I became a regular *bhajan* singer every Thursday, became more involved in weekly service activities, and started leading Young Adult initiatives. In addition, I gave up alcohol and became a vegetarian.

In turn, Swami rewarded me with the opportunity to enroll in the Sri Sathya Sai International Leadership Programme (SSSILP). I revisited Prasanthi Nilayam during the 2019 Guru Poornima celebration—and participated in a musical offering by the SSSILP. **My family had planned a vacation on the same dates, but I ‘sacrificed’ joining them to be with Swami! Let me assure you, it was no sacrifice, for I got far more than what I gave up!** I could never have imagined

that I would be singing in Kulwant Hall with many talented brothers and sisters from all over the world—it was one of the most blissful experiences of my life.

### His Presence Makes All the Difference

Covid-19 struck at the beginning of 2020, and that was when I faced a real test after returning to Swami. Being in a startup with limited resources, I faced many challenges trying to sustain the business. It was a challenge to get funding due to the poor investment climate. I could not pay myself a salary for six months because paying the staff was my priority. However, these challenges did not stop me from serving Swami through the SSSIO. Although my startup business did not do well at that time, I continued to blossom within the Organization. Swami blessed me with the opportunity to become the National Young Adult Coordinator of Hong Kong in 2020. Also, He gave me two other roles as an SSE teacher and a Co-lead of the Pathways Young Adults Subcommittee.

**I did not know how to juggle a startup business and three leadership roles within the SSSIO, but Swami took care of everything. The more work I did for Him, the more He took care of me!** Eventually, by His grace, I secured some funding for my business through a Sai devotee who helped me secure the needed investors. The startup company thus survived the pandemic!

I am no longer running the startup business as I have now joined a more stable corporate finance job in a small wealth management firm. **I chose that job over working for big corporations because I wanted a job that gave me time and flexibility to serve Swami.** When I interviewed with my current boss, I openly told him about my fulfilling work for the

SSSIO and candidly talked about Bhagawan. I could not have discussed these points in any job interview ten years ago. My boss was very impressed, and even to this day, he allows me to leave the office early on Thursdays so I can attend the Sai Center *bhajans*. I am ever grateful to Bhagawan for giving me a flexible job and the strength to manage all my duties. After all, we work to get joy, peace, and happiness, right? And happiness is union with God!

### The Best Investment for Life

**From my experience, I encourage everyone to embrace every opportunity they get to serve Swami, for it is a lifetime blessing.** I promise you will not regret it, as your life will be redeemed! As a profes-

sional investor investing in different projects, I believe investing in Swami and His Mission with your whole heart is indeed the best investment you can make. He takes care of the risks, and the returns are infinite and timeless through His grace and divine blessings.

It has now been four years since I returned to His fold. I can say with certainty that my life has never been more fulfilling. Yes, there have been challenges along the way, but I faced these challenges with the firm conviction that Swami is there by my side and there is nothing to fear because, as He says, **Why Fear When I am Here?**

Mr. Hari Chainani  
HONG KONG




**Mr. Hari Chainani** was born and raised in Taiwan. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Manchester and a master's from the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology and New York University. He is a professional in Finance. Hari was introduced to Swami at the age of 6 through SSE classes in Taiwan. He is the National Young Adult Coordinator of the SSSIO, Hong Kong, and Co-Lead of the Pathways Young Adults Subcommittee. Hari graduated from the Sri Sathya Sai International Leadership Programme in 2020. He is an SSE teacher in Hong Kong for Group 2 students.

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**Sai Young Adults**

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# 30 Awesome reasons why to be Swami's best friend



- 01 He loves you no matter what
- 02 He helps when you need him
- 03 He never gets mad at you even for the biggest of things
- 04 He always has his hands up to bless you
- 05 He always understands
- 06 If you were lost, he would always find you
- 07 He is the one and only person you can trust
- 08 He is the one who lights up the room
- 09 He is always the one who makes your day
- 10 He is the one who makes you better every day. What a kind friend!!!!
- 11 He is a role model to the whole world. Imagine being a friend of a famous role model!!!!!! (but that's not the point)
- 12 He is the reason why you are a human
- 13 He is the reason why you are smiling today and every day
- 14 Life is so hard without him
- 15 He is always there for you
- 16 He makes you see the world in such a way no-one else does
- 17 His capacity for kindness is infinite
- 18 He is always worth your time
- 19 During hard times, he always knows how to solve a problem without even having to panic at all!
- 20 He has unconditional care for you
- 21 He is a friend much beyond God. Imagine a friend like that!!!!
- 22 He has filled your life with so many colours of happiness
- 23 You are never scared only because of him
- 24 When there is draughts, he is the rain
- 25 He always holds your hand and never lets go of it. That is a super friend
- 26 He is a friend that will never leave you, even if you die
- 27 He is all the universes. Everyone will be sooo jealous because you have such a friend!
- 28 He does so much for you
- 29 He always answers you (I mean by prayers)
- 30 He gives the equal amount of love to everybody

Saiesha S | Group 2 | Australia

Happy Birthday!  
Swami

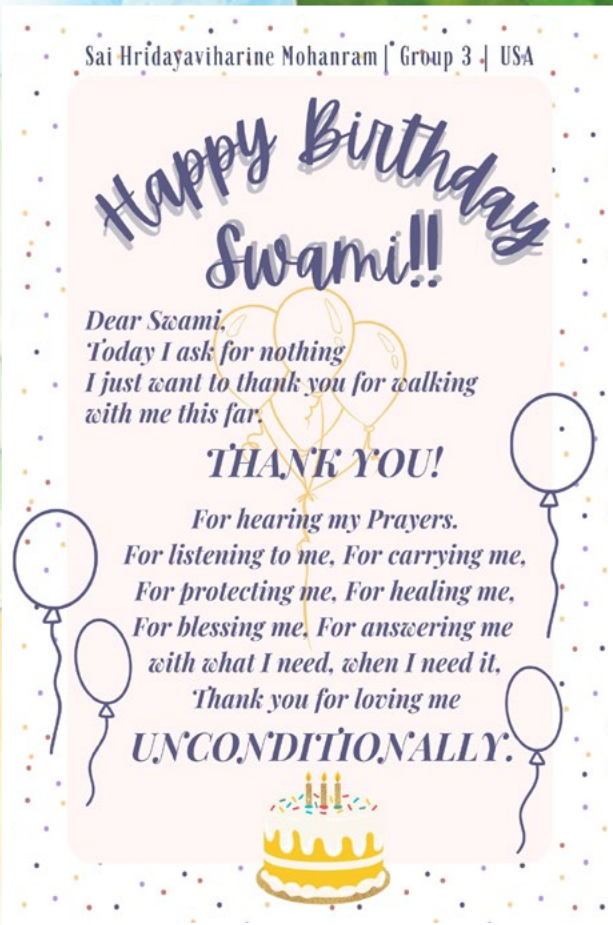
# Divine Friendship



Hlengiwe B | Group 1 | South Africa



Hiteyshee D | Group 2 | Mauritius



Sai Hridayaviharine M | Group 3 | USA



Francesco B | Group 2 | Switzerland



Dhruv G | Group 1 | USA

SSIO Online SSE  
Group 2  
Riya



Riya | Group 2 | Online SSE



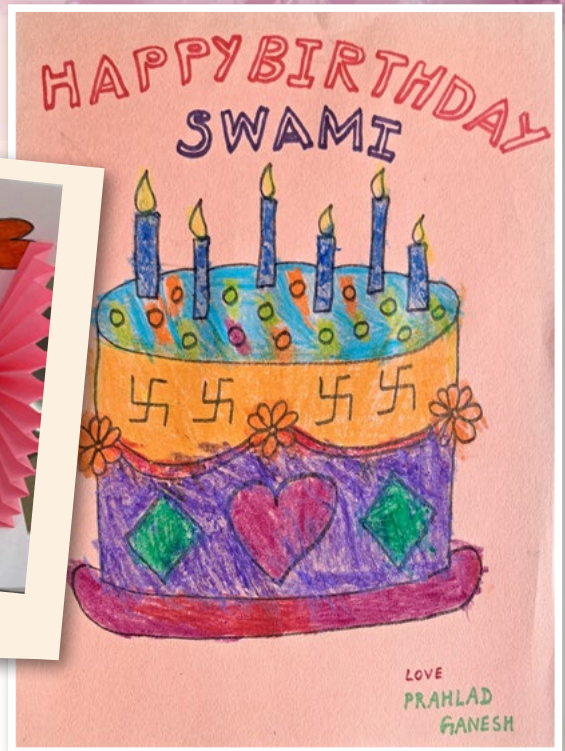
Vrithika | Group 1 | Online SSE



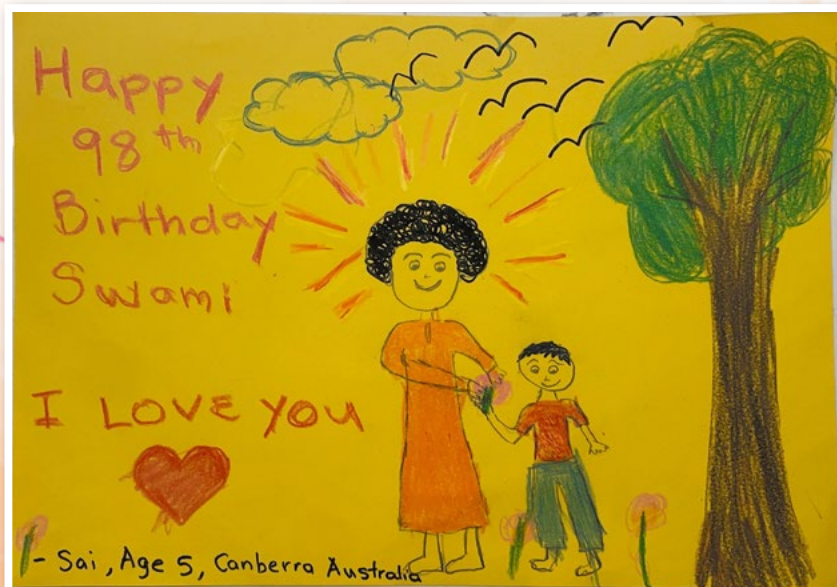
Charvi | Group 1 | Mauritius



Jash A | Group 1 | Panama

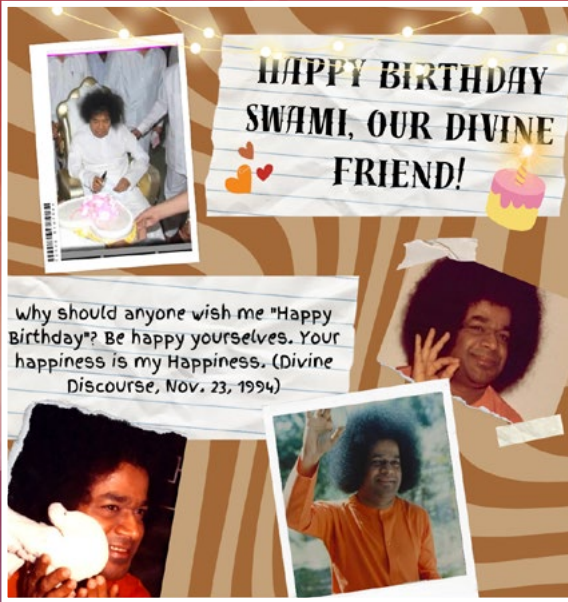


Prahlad G | Group 1 | USA



Sai K | Group 1 | Australia





Shreya Sai & Vaidehi S | Group 2 | USA

08/10/23

Hey swami!  
Did you know? your 98th birthday is around!

I am thrilled to suprise you with exciting gifts.

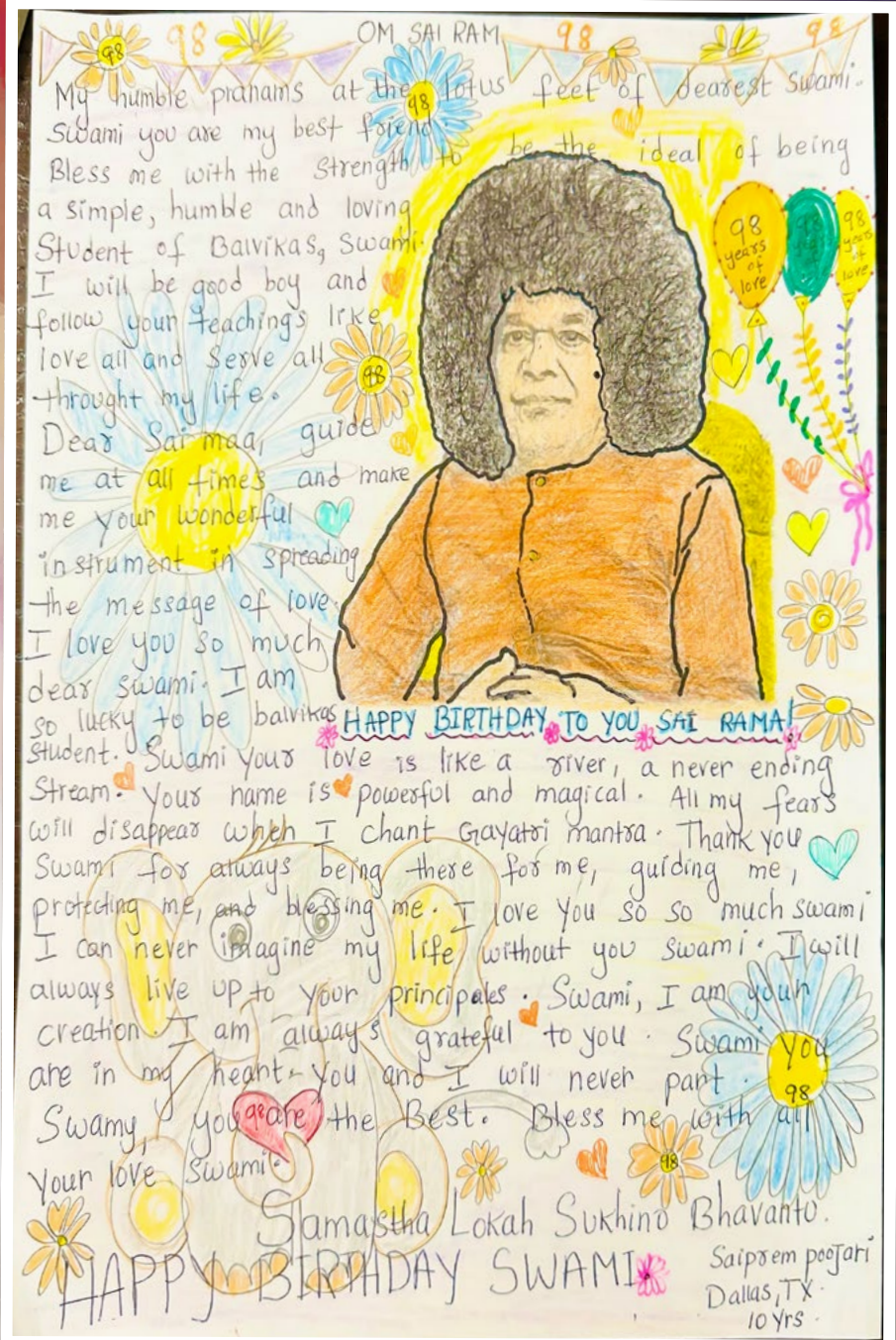
Can you guess? Yes, you got it right Afterall, You are omniscient.

- 1/ Obediance to my parents, teachers, Swam.
- 2/ Respect to mother nature by not wasting: time, money, energy and food.
- 3/ Regular in my prayers.

Swami you are omnipresent, so I cannot play hide and seek with you. You are omnipotent, I cannot armwrestle you

For the sake of our friend ship will you allow me to lock you in my heart?  
Yadvi.

Yadvi | Group 1 | Mauritius



Sai Prem P | Group 2 | USA

Sathya Sai Baba's 98th Birthday Poem

The mother of mothers, a haven for souls  
From whom we seek refuge when troubled and torn  
When we offer an apple, he gives hundreds in return  
The joy from his prasada, lasting eternities to come  
His darshan is the dream of every devotee,  
Though in our hearts he lives, happy and merry  
We are his children, who survive under his loving care  
But who is this being, who is never-ending bliss?  
His love flows through us like a rapid stream,  
He is Sathya Sai Baba; The All Almighty Supreme

Shivam D | Group 3 | Canada

Sathya Sai Baba's Birthday Poem

In Prashanti Nilayam's sacred abode,  
A beacon of love, on this earthly road.  
Sri Sathya Sai Baba, at ninety-seven, Radiates  
grace, a gift from heaven.  
May your presence continue to bless and inspire,  
For your love and teachings, we deeply admire. On  
this special day, we celebrate your grace, Happy  
98th birthday, in your divine embrace.

Rishi B | Group 2 | Canada

# Upcoming SSSIO Online Events

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

Please visit [sathyasai.org/events/worldwide](https://sathyasai.org/events/worldwide) for further details on scheduled events, local dates and timings.

Date of Online Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
November 11-12, 2023	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Bhajans
November 23, 2023	Thursday	98th Birthday of Sri Sathya Sai Baba
December 16-17, 2023	Saturday-Sunday	Akhanda Gayatri
December 24, 2023	Sunday	Christmas



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



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



Facebook



Instagram



WhatsApp



X (Twitter)



YouTube



Spotify



Telegram



Threads



Email



Eternal Companion email list



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



Divinity is immanent in every being. But who is responsible for this Divinity within? The mother who has borne you for nine months with many difficulties and is even ready to sacrifice her life for your welfare. You owe your existence to your mother. The welfare of the children depend on the mother. It is because of the mother's love that children become eminent and great. So the foremost duty of every individual is to be grateful to one's mother, respect her and serve her. The Ladies Day serves as a reminder that one should revere and love one's mother and never hurt her feelings.

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

November 19, 1998



**sathyasai.org**

Love All • Serve All  
Help Ever • Hurt Never