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Since Guru is God, obeying His orders, walking in the path He has shown, these are as effective as the *japam* (repetition) of the name. Once you have secured a Guru, leave everything to him, even the desire to achieve liberation. He knows you more than you yourself ever can. He will direct you as much as is good for you. Your duty is only to obey and to smother the tendency to drift away from Him. You may ask, how are we to earn our food, if we attach ourselves to a Guru like this? Be convinced that the Lord will not let you starve; He will give you not merely money but even *Amritha* (Nectar), not only food but the nectar of immortality.

> Sri Sathya Sai Baba July 24, 1964



BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA

DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE TO





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Editorial

BHAGAWAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA: JAGADGURU & SADGURU

Guru Poornima is celebrated by spiritual seekers to offer love and gratitude to their Guru. The tradition started as "Vyasa Poornima" to express gratitude to sage Veda Vyasa since he codified the Vedas, wrote the 18 Puranas and the epic Mahabharatha (containing jewels like the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Vishnu Sahasranamam* and the *Sanatsujatiyam*) which sanctify lives and show the way to liberation.

This tradition still continues, and spiritual seekers pay their homage and offer their adoration to their Gurus. Swami says that the best way to express gratitude is to follow the commands and teachings of the Guru immediately, implicitly, and completely. Swami says that it is the mother who shows the father to the child. Then, the father leads the child to the Guru or the preceptor, who guides the way to God. We are supremely blessed to receive divine grace wherein our Guru and God are one and the same!

God, who is beyond name, form, attributes, time, space, and causation, has taken the beautiful form and name of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, whose nectarous teachings show us the way to self-realization! So, we consider him as the *Parama* Guru (Supreme Divine Teacher), *Sadguru* (True Teacher), *Jagadguru* (Universal Teacher), and *Gurunam* Guru (Teacher of Teachers). He is the embodiment of the trinity– Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara–the creator, preserver, and destroyer.

Who is a Guru, and the Types of Gurus

Swami says that the Guru shows the *Guri* (aim or goal or target) of life. The goal of life is Self-realization. There are 8 billion people on planet Earth, and most of them spend their time and energy pursuing wealth, progeny, and sense enjoyment. Only the Sadguru shows the way out of these entanglements and leads human beings on the right path. In general, there are two kinds of Gurus.

- *Bodhα* Guru–Teachers who teach the highest Truth and show the way to God.
- Badha Guru–Teachers who cause pain to the students by taking them along the wrong path. They utter *mantras* in their ears and collect money, making it a business.

The real Guru is the one who removes the darkness of ignorance. *Gu* stands for darkness, while *Ru* stands for removal. During His Guru Poornima discourse on July 21, 1986, Swami described eight types of Gurus:

1. *Bodha* Guru–teaches the Shastras and encourages pupils to follow scriptural injunctions.

- 2. *Veda* Guru–reveals the inner meaning of the Vedas and turns the minds of pupils toward God.
- 3. *Nishiddha* Guru–imparts knowledge about rites and duties and shows how one's welfare here and hereafter can be ensured.
- 4. *Kamya* Guru–makes pupils engage in meritorious deeds to secure happiness here and hereafter.
- 5. Vachaka Guru–imparts knowledge of Yoga and prepares the disciple for spiritual life.
- 6. *Suchaka* Guru–teaches how the senses must be controlled through various types of discipline.
- 7. *Karana* Guru–teaches the unity of the *Jivi* (embodied being) and the *Atma* (Self).
- 8. *Vihita* Guru–clears all doubts, purifies the mind, and shows how Self-realization can be attained.

Of these eight Gurus, Swami says that the Karana Guru is the foremost because he helps the individual to progress from the human to the divine. Only God can act as such a teacher. So, we are blessed to have God as our Guru, taking us from the human level to divinity.

The Ultimate Mantra

Being the divine Guru, during the same Guru Poornima discourse, Swami blessed us with a powerful five-letter mantra (Panchakshari Mantra) in Telugu, "De-Vu-Du-Nna-Du, Devudunnadu," which translates in English to the five-letter mantra, G-O-D-I-S, 'God Is.' Swami exhorted us to make this mantra the sheet anchor for life.

He advised, "Consider this mantra as the message for this Guru Poornima



and proclaim it in all circumstances and at all places with all the conviction and strength you can command. The world can be turned into an earthly paradise if you strengthen your faith in God and demonstrate it in your actions. You must have the courage and determination to face all kinds of problems and difficulties. By propagating this mantra, you can promote the love of God and fear of sin among the people. The ultimate mantra 'God Is' can be more powerful than any mantra based on a particular deity's name."

Swami instructed us to have this five-letter mantra as our constant companion and strengthen our faith in God. He assured us that it would ultimately lead us to God-realization.

The Defects that Prevent Us from God-Realization

The Guru has come to remind us and show us our true nature that we are embodiments of *Atma*, Divinity, and Love. Why, then, are we not able to experience this? **Swami says this is because of three types of defects of the mind. They are** *mala***,** *vikshepa***, and** *avarana***. These prevent us from seeing the reality, leading us to identify with the body, mind, and intellect. Swami gives the example of a mirror in which we wish to see our true reflection** (reality). Three types of defects may prevent us from seeing our reflection in the mirror.

Mala (impurities): This is the dust that settles on the mirror. Man commits many offenses, knowingly or unknowingly, in this life and in previous lives. These actions are imprinted on the Chitta (memory), life after life, like dust accumulating on the surface of a mirror day after day, preventing us from seeing reality. Just like wiping the mirror clean, the best way to get rid of mala is following the path of selfless service (karma yoga), which Swami always emphasizes. That is why Lord Krishna says, "Chittasya Shuddhaye Karma" (selfless action purifies the mind). By engaging in selfless activities, one gets rid of all impurities.

These impurities are of two types-external and internal. Internal purity is the most important-a lot of effort is needed for it. That is where selfless service comes in. External purity involves keeping our environment, body, attire, etc., clean and can be done quite easily. However, the purity of food is also important because, as is the food, so is the mind (Jaise Ann Vaise Mann). So, we must have sathwic food, taking care of how the food is obtained, cleanliness of the vessels, and who prepares, cooks, and serves the food. To get rid of other impurities that are beyond our control, it is best to offer the food to God (Brahmarpanam) and partake as God's prasad (sanctified food).

Vikshepa (vacillation): This occurs due to the constant wavering of the mind and can be compared to the movements of the reflected image in an unsteady or shaking mirror. It prevents us from seeing our image clearly. The best ways to control the wavering mind are *Abhyasa* (practice) and *Vairagya* (detachment). To control this waywardness of the mind, one should undertake various spiritual practices like meditation, prayer, and the **nine modes** of devotion (bhakti yoga) mentioned in the scriptures:

- 1. *Sravanam* (listening to the Lord's stories, *leelas*, and *mahimas*),
- 2. Kirtanam (singing His glories)
- 3. Smaranam (remembrance)
- 4. *Padasevanam* (service to the Lotus Feet)
- 5. Archanam (worship),
- 6. Vandanam (salutation)
- 7. Dasyam (master-servant relationship)
- 8. Sakhyam (friendship)
- 9. *Atma nivedanam* (offering oneself to the Lord i.e., Self-surrender)

Swami gave His assurance in His letter dated May 25, 1947, that anybody who has steadfastness, regularity, and discipline in spiritual practices will be protected and will advance toward the goal.

Avarana (blockage): This may be likened to a thick cloth covering the mirror of man's mind, completely blocking any reflection of the image of the Self. Thus, while mala does not enable us to have a clear and correct image of the Self, and vikshepa results in seeing an incorrect and shaky image of the Self, avarana altogether hides the Reality (Self) and makes us identify ourselves wrongly with the body, mind, and intellect. Self-enquiry helps us to recognize who we really are, namely the Atma.

Swami says that the thick cloth is made up of the *arishad-varga*—the band of six internal enemies of man viz. *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (attachment), *mada* (pride), and *matsarya* (jealousy, envy). Out of the six, pride may be considered the worst enemy. Pride can be of eight kinds: pride of money, learning, caste/lineage, affluence, beauty, youth, position/authority, and *tapas* (spiritual pride, which is the most dangerous). One needs to eliminate these six enemies, including any of the eight forms of pride. The solution to getting rid of these enemies,



When we practice the divine teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who is our Guru and God, we will get rid of all our obstacles...

Swami says, is to develop love for God and see God in all (*jnana yoga*). Love is the only bond that can unite all and make us realize the One Reality behind all the apparent diversity.

Guru Reveals the Highest Spiritual Meaning

Another meaning of the Guru is 'Gu,' which stands for Gunateeta (beyond all attributes), and 'Ru,' which stands for Rupavarjita (beyond all forms). Worshipping the name and form intensely, one transcends to the formless and attributeless Absolute Truth. The Guru reveals the innermost secrets of the scriptures. In the same 1947 letter, Swami declares that the Avataric mission for which He came is also to show the hidden secrets and meanings of the scriptures. The scriptures have a literal meaning (vachyartham), an inner meaning (antarartham), and the highest spiritual meaning (paramartham). The Lord comes to reveal the highest spiritual meaning.

One of the greatest examples is when Swami, in His previous form as Shirdi Baba, revealed the inner meaning of the verse *(sloka)* from the Bhagavad Gita,

Tad viddhi pranipatena Pariprasnena sevaya Upadeksyanti te jnanam Jnaninas tattva-darshinah (Bhagavad Gita, 4:34)

(Learn the Truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him with reverence and render service unto him. Such an enlightened Saint can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the Truth.)

Many commentators (including the greatest one-Adi Shankara) have translated it as the Guru will give you *jnana* when you practice self-enquiry and devotion, and serve the Guru selflessly. Shirdi Baba, however, gives the actual meaning. He says that the Guru does not teach *jnana* but shows what is ajnana! A beautiful example is that of the Sun, whose effulgence is hidden by clouds. The minute the clouds are blown away, the Sun is revealed, shining brightly. The Guru, thus, does not have to teach the Truth, which is luminous like the Sun. He reveals what is ignorance, the clouds-once these are blown away, the effulgent Self (Atma) is revealed. For this realization, prostration to the Guru (bhakti yoga), self-enquiry (inana yoga), and selfless service (karma yoga) are necessary. This comprehensive and all-encompassing explanation with such profound clarity could only be provided by our beloved Guru and God!

Swami has also given us many beautiful meanings of the scriptures. For instance, Lord Sri Krishna says:

Karmanye vadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadachana, Ma Karmaphalaheturbhurma Te Sangostvakarmani

(Bhagavad Gita, 2:47)

(You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action or the outcome of your deeds. Let not the results or the outcomes be the motivation; you should never be attached to the outcomes, nor should you be attracted to inaction.) Most commentators say that you have an obligation to work, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Swami corrected this by adding a subtle yet critical point. Swami said that it is the law of karma that when there is an action, you are entitled to the fruits. **But if one does not want to be entangled in the consequences of bondage due to karma, the best thing is to offer the fruits of the action willingly and sincerely to the Lord**. So, you are entitled to the fruits of the action, but you choose to offer it to God willingly! That is the real meaning of this *Sloka*.

Swami gives another beautiful explanation for the famous *Sloka*:

Ananyas chintayanto mam Ye janah paryupasate Tesham nityabhiyuktanam Yoga-kshemam vahamyaham (Bhagavad Gita, 9:22)

(There are those who always think of Me and are exclusively devoted to Me. To them, whose minds are always absorbed in Me, I provide what they lack and preserve what they already possess.)

The usual meaning is that if you think of the Lord all the time, then the Lord will take care of all your needs and welfare and carry your burdens. But Swami says it is not about thinking of God always but having the thought of 'no other,' that nothing is separate from the Divine. That is *Ananya Bhakti*-all you see is Oneness, only God, and nothing else.

Another common maxim in the Advaita (non-dual) philosophy is '*nethi*, *nethi*' (commonly referred to as 'not this, not this'). In this context, God is that which remains after all else has been negated. But **Swami gave a profound interpretation explaining that the true meaning of** '*nethi*, *nethi*' is 'not only this, not only this,' which is inclusive rather than negative. This means that instead of saying, "God is not this, not this," we say, "God is not only this, not only this." Thus, God is that all-encompassing, all-pervading One who is realized after everything has been accepted as divine! Finally, we realize that all that we tried to deny as non-Self is, in reality, a part of the Self! Swami shows that this non-dual philosophy is not one of exclusion but of all-inclusion, the corollary to the concept of 'Ananya' or 'no other.'

In Shakespeare's Hamlet, there is the famous dilemma-"to be or not to be." Swami beautifully says that the secret of life is-to be and yet not to be, or to be in the world and yet not be of the world. That is to live fully but with detachment.

When we practice the divine teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who is our Guru and God, we will get rid of all our obstacles–*mala*, *vikshepa*, and *avarana*– and come face to face with our real Self and realize that we are divine.

We will be able to attain the goal stated in the famous *Vedic* prayer:

Asatoma Sadgamaya Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya Mrityorma Amritangamaya Om Shanti, Shanti, Shantihi (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)

(Lord! Lead me from untruth to Truth, from darkness to Light, and from death to Immortality. Om, peace, peace, peace.)

Once we live abiding by the divine teachings, we live in Truth, we live in Light, and we become Immortal. The scriptures proclaim loudly,

Shrunvantu Vishwe Amrutasya Putraha

(Listen! Ye Children of Immortality!) (Shvetashvatara Upanishad)

The Lord has proclaimed that we are immortal, and we need to realize this in this very lifetime.

Jai Sai Ram.





LOVE IS GOD GOD IS LOVE

It is the power of love that is responsible for the earth to rotate without an axle;
It is the power of love that makes the stars stay in the sky without falling on the ground;
It is the power of love that keeps the oceans within their limits.
It is the power of love that makes the wind God blow incessantly in all the worlds.
It is THAT love which is the supreme power.
The entire creation is permeated with love.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love! GOD is love, Love is God. The Lord declares in the Bhagavad-Gita, "All the living entities in this world are parts of My eternal divinity (Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathana)." Just as God, the embodiment of love, showers His love on the entire world, man too should share his love with one and all. The principle of love is beyond any definition. Unable to recognize the sacredness of love, man is directing it toward wealth and ephemeral worldly objects.

God transcends all attributes. The same can be said of love too. By associating with worldly conditions and limiting such attributeless love, people are wasting their life. They use the sacred word 'love' to describe the relationship between mother and child, wife and husband, brothers, friends and relatives. Prior to birth, who is the mother and who is the child? Similarly, prior to marriage, who is the husband and who is the wife? The relationship that exists between mother and child, wife and husband, brothers, sisters, friends, relatives, etc., has the physical body as its basis. This type of physical relationship cannot be called love in the true sense of the term. There is no giving and receiving in true love. Many devotees pray, "O God, if you fulfill my desires, I will offer you coconuts." They also offer their hair and pray for mighty favors. Can this be called devotion? No, not at all. A true devotee is one who only gives and

does not expect anything in return. That is true devotion.

World is a Mix of Dharma and Adharma

Human life is a mixture of the physical world and the spiritual world. But people today trust only the physical world, forgetting the spiritual aspect. Thus, they indulge in enjoyment with the mind. So long as people follow the mind, neither they, society, nor the country at large can attain peace and security. Peace and security will reign supreme in this world only when people give up attachment to the mind and follow the principle of love that originates from the heart. The co-existence of dualities of righteousness and unrighteousness, truth and falsehood, merit and sin, heat and cold, etc., is the nature of this creation. It is not possible for only dharma (right conduct) to exist in this world. Similarly, adharma (unrighteousness) alone cannot exist. People want adharma to be entirely eradicated from this world and establish only dharma, but it is not possible. The world itself is a combination of dharma and adharma. The world cannot exist without the pairs of opposites, dharma and adharma, and truth and falsehood (sathya and asathya). One should lead a life following only dharma, forgetting adharma. Forgetting one's human nature, if one fosters animal qualities there will be no peace or security.

Follow Your Dharma

Dharma of human beings is different from the dharma of animals. But people are unable to differentiate between the two. The principles of Truth (Sathya), nonviolence (ahimsa), and empathy (sanubhuthi) are the same for all beings. People can never attain peace and security so long as they do not give up bestial qualities. Food, sleep, fear and procreation are common for people and animals. Then, what is man's dharma? To think that you are a human being constitutes only half of the total truth. The other part of the truth lies in understanding that you are not an animal. You should keep reminding yourself, "I am a human being, not an animal." Do not stop at this stage. Enquire further as to which of the four stages of life you are in, whether you are a celibate, householder, recluse or renunciant (Brahmachari, Grihastha, Vanaprastha or Sanyasin). Follow the appropriate *dharma* according to the stage of your life. When you are celibate, you should not follow the dharma of a householder.

There will be a decline in morals giving rise to troubles and turmoil when one fails to adhere to the dharma appropriate to their stage in life. Today, man is unable to understand the principle of dharma corresponding to each of the four stages of life. The code of conduct is different for different stages of life. Never be under the mistaken notion that dharma is the same for all people irrespective of their stage in life. The cause of adharma today is that man is trying to follow dharma that is not appropriate to his age or stage in life. Each should strictly adhere to the dharma corresponding to his or her age and stage in of life. By following the appropriate age-related dharma; you can attain divinity.

All Belong to the Race of Humanity

Today people do not understand the significance of different faiths and different modes of worship that are prevalent in Bharat (India). Many mistakenly believe that all the violence, unrest and conflict in this country are arising from having different castes, communities and religions. The existence of different religions has nothing to do with the violence and conflicts in this country. The absence of inner purity is responsible for all this.

It is one's own feelings that are responsible for conflicts and disturbances, not differences in religions and communities. It is a grave mistake to attribute unrest and disturbances in a country to the existence of different religions. For thousands of years, people in India have lived in unity and fraternity despite the existence of various religions and communities.

Religions are many, but the goal is one; Clothes are many, but the yarn is one, Jewels are many, but gold is one; Cows are many, but milk is one; Beings are many, but breath is one; Nations are many, but the earth is one; Flowers are many, but worship is one.

Different religions have come into existence to lead man to Divinity, and not to create conflicts and disturbances. There is nothing wrong with any religion. The mistake lies in *mathi* (mind), not in *matha* (religion). If the mind is good, how can one find fault with religion? All people belong to one *Jathi* (race), i.e., *manava jathi* (human race). You should understand the meaning of *Jathi*. *Jathi* is based on a particular form.

For example, all flowers belong to the same *Jathi*. No doubt, all trees belong to the same *Jathi*, but their fruits and tastes vary. There are in all 450 kinds of tastes corresponding to the fruits of various trees. But you cannot get mangoes when you sow a neem seed. You should try to under-

• Forgive those who have harmed you and criticized you. Have faith that whatever happens is for your own good.

stand the underlying principle of unity of each *Jathi*. The human race is one, but human beings are different; their feelings, thoughts and behavior patterns are different.

It is utter foolishness to think of annihilating the race (*Jathi*) as a whole. It may be possible to kill a few individuals, but it is not possible to annihilate the entire human race. The human race is true and eternal. It is highly sacred. It is a sign of ignorance to give room for differences and conflicts without understanding the unity of the human race. You must recognize the divinity in man as the basis of human unity. **The ancient culture of Bharat lays great emphasis on understanding this unity in diversity. This is possible only through love.** Love is a natural state of all beings.

Love is the form of God. God is full of love.

Love alone can bind. Love is the rule. Hence, one full of love is qualified to attain the non-dual state.

(Telugu Poem)

Love is Your True Form

The state of non-dualism is contained in the principle of love alone. But man, being carried away by body attachment and physical relationships, fragments his love in various ways. This cannot be called love in the true sense of the term. As Swami repeatedly stresses the need to cultivate love, some people may wonder what is the form of love. The answer is *Prem Easwar Hai, Easwar Prem Hai* (Love is God, God is Love). Love is the fundamental basis of everything. *Atma* (Self), *Brahma* (Supreme Being), *Hridaya* (Heart), *Uniki* (existence) are synonyms of love. Love is *Atma*. Love is Brahma. Everything is suffused with love. Then, how can anyone describe the form of love? The same principle of love exists in one and all. Once you understand this principle of unity, there will be no scope for hatred.

Today conflicts are on the rise because unity is forgotten. *Ekatma sarvabhutantaratma* (bodies are different, but the same *Atma* dwells in all). *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (Everything is Brahman). Brahman means vastness. It indicates unity and not multiplicity. So, give up body attachment and strengthen faith in the spirit of Oneness. It is only the body attachment that is responsible for evil qualities like anger, jealousy, greed, ostentatiousness etc. *Isavasyam Idam Jagat* (The universe is permeated by God.) You should see the *Atma* everywhere and think that you are in the company of God always.

Faith is the Basis of Love

Embodiments of Love! I often address you as 'embodiments of love' because love is your true form, which is pure, unsullied, eternal, ancient, formless and non-dual. You love your mother because you know that she is your mother. So, faith is the basis of love.

Where there is faith there is love; Where there is love, there is peace; Where there is peace, there is truth; Where there is truth, there is bliss; Where there is bliss, there is God.

Peace, truth and bliss are not elsewhere. They are in you. You are the embodiment of peace; you are the embodiment of truth and you are the embodiment of bliss. It is foolish to search for peace and bliss in the

external world. Nothing exists separate

from you. Everything is the reflection of the inner being. Try to visualize your reflection in everybody just as you see your reflection in a mirror. In order to propagate this truth, Lord Krishna declared in the Bhagavad Gita: "Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathana." (I and you are one and not separate. The principle of love is one and the same in both of us.) All your spiritual practices will prove futile if you do not adhere to the principle of love.

The world is like a mirror. All that you find in this mirror is only the reflection, not the reality. Your right eye appears as your left eye in the mirror. Then how can you consider it as reality? When the mirror is removed, the reflection also disappears and reality remains. Consider yourself as the embodiment of divinity. Experience your true nature of love. This is *sakshatkara* (vision of the Self). Some people claim to have the vision of the Self in meditation, but the vision of your reality as divine is true *sakshatkara*.

All worldly relationships are temporary like passing clouds. They are subject to change with the passage of time, but the reality is absolutely changeless. That is the principle of love. Worldly love may turn into hatred with the change of time. What is liked today may not be liked tomorrow. But love has no likes and dislikes. God alone has this kind of sacred Love. God is no different from love. God is Love. Love is God. You may adore Him as Jesus, Zoroastra, Allah, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, or Guru Nanak. You may call Him by any name. All these are names given by somebody (pettina perlu). Love alone is natural name (putting peru). The names given are bound to change, but love is changeless. You should aspire for that love. That is true devotion. Devotion is synonymous with Love. Because of devotion (bhakti), you acquire shakti (energy, strength), *yukti* (astuteness), *rakti* (Love for God), and *virakti* (detachment).

Some people go to the temple of Lord Venkateswara and pray, "Swami, if You fulfill my desires, I will perform special worship and celebration (brahmotsavam) for You." Some others pray, "Swami if my daughter gets married, I will conduct Your marriage celebration (kalyanam)." Can there be a marriage for God? Does God fulfill your wish so that you may perform His marriage? With such prayers, people are trying to cheat even God. One should pray to God out of love, not with the expectation of any favors from Him. Prayer born out of selfishness is no prayer at all. You should see the Atma everywhere and think that you are in the company of God always.

Consider the Entire Universe as a Single Family

In this world, everything is suffused with divinity. Other than divinity nothing exists. Even this cloth is divine (Swami showed His handkerchief), this flower is divine, and everything is divine. If there is no divinity in this cloth, one will not desire it. Love pervades everything. You should make every effort to understand this. The human heart is full of love. Many students write to Me, "Swami, I love You." They use the symbol of heart (hridaya) to denote love. This means hridaya-heart (hrid) filled with love and compassion (daya). Hridaya is the very form of God. Easwara Sarva Bhutanam (God dwells in all beings). Isavasyam Idam Jagat (God permeates the entire universe). Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma (all this is verily Brahman). That is Love. God resides in the Heart. Love is the Heart. The Heart is Love. That Love is verily the form of God. God dwells in all beings in the Heart. Whatever you see is verily Brahman. That Brahman is Prema. Do not keep all that Love for yourself. Share this love not only with your fellow beings but also with

All of you are the sparks of My Divinity. So, share your love with your fellow beings, just as I share My love with you all.

birds and beasts. Stand united. Consider the entire universe as a single family. Then, there will be no scope for hatred or conflict.

Embodiments of Love! Today you find disturbance and unrest all over the world. The reason is that man lacks broadmindedness. There is no expansion of love in him, there is only contraction of love. Narrow-mindedness is man's own creation whereas God's creation is expansive and limitless. You are trying to limit the infinite *Atmic* principle: this is responsible for all the suffering.

Guru Dispels the Darkness of Ignorance

Embodiments of Love! Today we are celebrating the festival of Guru Purnima. Who is Guru? 'Gu' stands for Gunateeta (attributeless). 'Ru' signifies Rupavarjita (formless). There is another interpretation of the word Guru. Gukaro Andhakarasyat, Rukara sthannirodhaka ('Gu' signifies darkness and 'Ru' denotes that which dispels darkness). So, God, who is attributeless and formless, is the true Guru. In the word 'Bhagawan,' (God) the letter 'Bha' stands for effulgence. An ordinary electric bulb illuminates only a limited area, but God who is all-pervasive illumines the entire creation. Divinity shines in everybody. So, do not hate anybody. In this world, people are driven by hatred and narrow feelings. They go even to the extent of killing each other. What a heinous crime it is! Hurting others amounts to hurting God Himself. Our hatred will certainly rebound on us. Today people derive demonic pleasure in causing harm to others without understanding the truth that one day or the other they will have to reap the consequences of their actions. **Make others happy and you will certainly be happy.** Today violence and murders have become the order of the day. Greatness does not lie in killing others; even an insect can do that. Greatness lies in saving lives.

Embodiments of Love! You are bound to face the consequences of your actions because, for everything, there is reaction, resound and reflection. Never forget these three as you cannot escape from them. So, do good and you will certainly reap good results. Do not get disheartened if there is no immediate reward. Wait for a while, you will certainly be rewarded. Your suffering is nothing but the consequence of bad deeds in the past. Prayer alone can alleviate your suffering to some extent. Prayer is a way of expressing your gratitude to God. The Sun God is extolled as Kritaghnaghnaya Namaha (salutations to the destroyer of the ungrateful). It means that the Sun God will withdraw eyesight from those who are ungrateful.

The Quality of Kshama

The quality of *Kshama* (forbearance) is the most essential for one and all.

Forbearance is truth; Forbearance is righteousness; Forbearance is nonviolence; Forbearance is the teaching of the Vedas; Forbearance confers happiness and heavenly bliss.

(Telugu Poem)

Forgive those who have harmed you and criticized you. Have faith that whatever happens is for your own good. If someone hurls abuse on you, do not retaliate. Enquire within yourself whether he has criticized the body or the *Atma*. If anyone criticizes the body, you should feel happy. This is because they have indirectly done you a favor since the body is impermanent and full of flesh, urine and excreta. On the other hand, if they criticized the *Atma*, it amounts to criticizing their own self because the same *Atma* exists in both of you. One should cultivate this kind of forgiveness and broad-mindedness.

Embodiments of Love! The Guru is one who dispels the darkness of ignorance arising out of body attachment. The body is but an instrument. God has given you the body to take to the path of action. It is God's gift. Body is the temple and the indweller is God, the eternal (Deho Devalaya Prokto Jeevo Deva Sanathana). Consider all bodies as temples of God and offer your salutations. Salute even your enemies. Sarva Jeeva Namaskaram Kesavam Pratigachchhati and likewise Sarva Jeeva Tiraskaram Kesavam Pratigachchhati (whomsoever you salute, it reaches God and whomsoever you insult, it also reaches God).

Understand the Principle of Unity

I often address you as *Bangaru* (precious gold) because you are the embodiment of *Hiranyagarbha* (cosmic golden womb). The principle of *Hiranyagarbha* is present in your heart. You may change the shape of the jewel, but gold remains unchanged. The value of gold decreases when it is mixed with various metals like copper, brass, etc. Likewise, human beings by birth are highly pure and valuable. But on account of their association with evil desires and bad company, they lose their value.

Thyaja Durjana Samsargam, Bhaja Sadhu Samagamam, Kuru Punyam Ahorathram, Smara Nityamanithyatham. (Renounce bad company, join the good company, perform meritorious deeds day and night, and enquire into that which is permanent and that which is ephemeral).

This is your *dharma*. Know this Truth.

Consider All That You See as the Form of God

Embodiments of Love! It is said, among all beings, human birth is difficult to obtain (Janthunam Narajanma Durlabham). So, sanctify your life by making proper use of your senses. Do not talk as you please; talk softly and sweetly. Have proper control over your vision. Do not look with bad intentions. You all know what happened to Keechaka (a character in the epic Maha Bharatha) when he looked at Draupadi (wife of Pandavas) with evil intentions. Bhima smashed his head into pieces. That is why Lord Buddha exhorted mankind to cultivate sacred vision (samyak drishti). Buddha attained enlightenment only after he cultivated a sacred vision. Consider all that you see as the form of God. Think what is good, see what is good, hear what is good, speak what is good and do what is good. Only then can one achieve anything in this world and attain divinity.

Embodiments of Love! This body is approaching its 75th birthday. All these years, I have remained blissful because I am aware of the principle of unity. You too can experience bliss if you understand this truth. I do not hate anybody; nor do I have any enemies. I have absolutely no fear because everything is My own form; the same *Atma* exists in all. When an innocent child smiles at you, you too smile at it. Likewise, when I smile blissfully, all of you do the same. Have a sacred heart.

Cultivate sacred feelings. Then the result also will be sacred. Have faith that God is everywhere. You may have to undergo trials and tribulations, but never lose faith in God. **Consider faith (viswasa) as your**



very life breath (*swasa*). Each one of you is an embodiment of love, but because of improper food and habits, evil qualities like jealousy and anger arise in you. As is the food, so is the head; as is the head, so is God. So, consume only *satwic* food. Then you will have only sacred feelings and your speech will also become sacred.

Do Not Become a Buffalo

To put you on the right path, I sometimes pretend to be angry, but I am never angry. The only harsh word that I use is dunnapota (he-buffalo). You are truly a buffalo if you do not engage in good actions. You can become a good fellow only when you do good. When there is a heavy downpour, the cow and calf may run away to safety, but the he-buffalo stays where it is because of its sloth and inertia. You should not become inactive like the he-buffalo; try to transform yourself. Human life is highly sacred. Do not misuse this human life. I love everybody. Love is My true form. That is My true form. That is My real form. All of you are the sparks of My Divinity. So, share your love with your fellow beings, just as I share My love with you all. Then you too will become divine. When all follow the sacred path, the world will undoubtedly attain peace and prosperity.

Embodiments of Love! Give up ignorance, light the lamp of wisdom within you, and ultimately merge with the divine. This is Swami's main message for you today. Develop love, love, love. There is nothing greater than love in this universe. Through love alone, you can get rid of bad qualities and through love alone, you can get cured of any disease. So, love all. Love the Heart (hridaya), not the physical body. Love the Divine principle which is installed in your heart. Body, mind, intellect, and senses are merely matter; you are the master. 'Master the mind and be a mastermind.' Never become a slave to your mind. Contemplate on the divine day in and day out. You may chant any name, contemplate on any form, but understand the truth that God is one and only one.

> Sri Sathya Sai Baba July 16, 2000



Swani The Giver of Life

IN THE 1970S, I GOT MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO ESCORT SWAMI

TO MADRAS (Chennai now). Swami visited Madras every year, usually in January. Upon receiving an intimation from Him, I would go to Brindavan, Whitefield, in Bangalore (Bengaluru today) with three or four cars and drive Swami back to Madras in a convoy.

Swami was always very meticulous in His planning. He instructed us to have all the diabetic patients in the entourage in one car and provide savories for snacks, but we were not to pack any sweets for them. He guided us to keep all the elderly devotees in another vehicle, instructing the driver to make regular stops at hotels along the way so they could visit the restroom. He had me keep track of all vehicles to ensure everyone reached the destination safely. He attended to every little detail before we set out on the journey.

The story I am about to narrate happened during Swami's visit to Madras in 1978. It began as usual, with me going to Bangalore and returning with Swami to Sundaram in Madras. There was only a small mandir back then. The beautiful edifice of Sundaram we see today was inaugurated by Swami only later on January 19, 1981.

The Drive Protocol

At that time, Major Rayanangar was the State President of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations of Tamil Nadu, and I served as the District President for Madras. During Swami's stay in Madras, He would bless many devotees with visits to their homes. The homes and venues to be visited would be decided the previous day by Swami, and Major Rayanangar would give me the details to take Swami for the scheduled visits in Madras, as I was familiar with the city.

He casually mentioned, "Parvathamma had died two hours ago. I brought her back to life. She is fine now."

Whenever Swami went around in Madras, there would be motorcycle escorts. I was told to use the signal lights in the car to alert the motorcycle escorts in case Swami made any changes to the route while driving. It was a well-understood protocol. On that particular day in January 1978, Swami surprised everyone, including myself!

Major Rayanangar said that Swami had not given him any specific destination for the day. He advised me to ask Swami for this information myself. Swami told me that He would tell me the destination on the way. Even when we started, I had no clue where we would be going. It was just the two of us in the car, and Swami told me to take a right turn at a signal. I switched on the right indicator lamp, and the piloting motorcycles ahead clearly saw it in their rear-view mirrors. But even as they turned to the right, Swami guickly instructed me to turn left! Though I changed the indicator quickly, it was too late, and now all the motorcycle escorts were headed in the opposite direction!

Hospital Hospitality

I was confident that the motorcycle escorts would soon turn around and catch up. However, Swami had directed me to turn very quickly. After that, He guided me through a series of right and left turns in quick succession, and I was convinced that there was no way that our escorts would find us. Swami led me to Lady Wellington Nursing Home, a well-known hospital established in 1932 at 31 Greams Lane in the heart of the city. We reached the hospital at 11:10 am. I knew the timings of this famous hospital, and I told Swami that visitors would not be allowed between II am and 4 pm. But Swami would have none of it. He told me to drive to the foyer, where He got out. As I began to open my car door, He told me to stay put. Surprisingly, the gate wasn't locked that day! He went into the hospital alone and returned after 10-15 minutes. On the way back, He casually mentioned, "*Parvathamma had died two hours ago. I brought her back to life. She is fine now.*"

My jaw just dropped open! Mrs. Parvathamma was the wife of Mr. Hanumantha Rao, the Transport Commissioner of the State of Madras. He was also the person who issued Swami's driving license as He used to drive the two-door Morris Minor car! The couple were ardent devotees of Swami, and Swami visited their home on many occasions. Swami continued, "When I brought her back to life, she opened her eyes and asked for water. I suggested coffee would be better for her. She agreed, and so I gave her some coffee."

"How did You get her coffee, Swami," I ventured to ask, "You had not taken any flask with You...."

He smiled. "I put my little finger to her mouth, and she drank her coffee from it." Swami continued, "She has to take over as chairperson of the Andhra Mahila Sabha (Ladies' Wing) and do a lot of service. I told her to leave the hospital in the evening."

Confirmation of Miracle

After Swami retired to His room, I was reprimanded by the State President and others about how I had given wrong signals while driving. I quickly explained to them that I was following Swami's command and excused myself. Getting into the car, I rushed back to the Lady Wellington Hospital. It was now around 12:30 pm.

As I stopped the car at the hospital, a security guard came to me and said that I could visit patients only after 4 pm. I explained that I had come to the hospital just an hour ago, and a 'person' had indeed gone inside to meet a patient at 11:10 am. The guard was convinced that I was lying and got angry. Luckily, just then, a doctor who knew me well came by, and I requested him to take me inside. I discovered that the hospital staff had thought Mrs. Parvathamma had passed away, and her death certificate was being prepared. But then, she had suddenly revived and asked to be discharged in the evening! I rushed to the place where Mrs. Parvathamma was in the hospital. She was oblivious to the fact that she had reportedly passed away! But she was beaming with joy at having Swami's darshan. Her narrative matched Swami's description to the last detail! "How did Swami give you coffee?" I asked. "Oh! He held His little finger to my mouth, and I drank the coffee!"

His Divine Word is a Command

Dazed, I returned to Sundaram to be in time for the afternoon *darshan* at 3 pm. Swami summoned me to His room. He asked me, *"Ay! Where did you go after you left Me?"*

I had to tell Him the truth.

Swami responded, "So, you did not believe what I said and went back to verify?"

I just fell at His feet, asking for forgiveness.

Swami then told me, "Do not share this with anyone else. Keep it to yourself."

I nodded in loving obedience.

It is unbelievable that for 20 years after that incident, I did not even have any recollection of this stupendous and awe-inspiring miracle! One fine day in 1998, in Brindavan, when Swami beckoned me to give a talk, He told me to speak about Mrs. Parvathamma! In an instant, all the memories came rushing back, and I took that as Swami's permission to share this miraculous episode from then on.

It also gave me a glimpse into another facet of His reality. When He wills, our mind goes blank; and when He wills, it is activated! Similarly, when He wills, our body becomes lifeless; and when He wills, it is brought back to life!

Sri T.G. Krishnamurthy





Sri T.G. Krishnamurthy has served as the President of the Tamil Nadu chamber of commerce, honorary secretary and correspondent of Sri Thyagaraya educational institutions. He has served in the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization India as the District President of Chennai in 1976, member of the State trust in 1978, State trust convener in 1982 and as the State President of Tamil Nadu in 1995. Bhagawan on numerous occasions has blessed him to speak to devotees at Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan, Ooty, Kodaikanal and Chennai in His Divine Presence. He is also the author of the book "The Divine Path to the Wisdom of Sai".





I AM A NATIVE OF KERALA, INDIA, AND GREW UP IN HYDER-ABAD. Even though my father was a staunch follower of Lord Ayyappa (a Hindu deity), I was fascinated and attracted to Lord Venkateshwara (a form of Vishnu) in the renowned pilgrimage place of Tirupati, India. That is why upon relocating to Sydney in 2004, I searched and found a Venkateshwara temple at Helensburgh which became my Tirupati in Australia. Though I had lived much of my life in Hyderabad, I never knew much about Swami.

Phase of Ignorance

I married into a family of Sai devotees. I got a little exposure to Swami but never really understood what He meant. For instance, soon after we got engaged, my fiancé (who was in India then) called me excitedly. She told me how delighted she was that Swami had 'accepted' our wedding card from her brother, who was in Puttaparthi for a medical camp. Apparently, Swami had stopped the car during darshan and had sent a sevadal (volunteer) to collect the wedding card from my brother-in-law. Swami had also opened and read it before the car moved on. I didn't understand her excitement. My mind was asking, "so what?"

My wife's family offered Arati to Swami's photo during our wedding. We all sat clueless about what was happening. Then, when my wife came to Sydney, she brought a picture of Swami and put it on the altar. I was shocked because I had a magnificent picture of Lord Venkateshwara, and now she put a picture of a man beside it! But then, I thought it was her faith, and I must respect it.

In 2011, we received news of Swami leaving His body. My wife and her family were devastated by the news. I continued to be puzzled by their extreme devotion and attachment to Swami.

Phase of Seeking

My relationship with God–Lord Venkateshwara–was mainly about praying and asking for things, which He granted me most of the time. But each time, I was left feeling unfulfilled and empty, and I would go again seeking something else. Despite all my wishes being granted, I did not feel content. I felt nothing gave me lasting happiness, and I would return to square one again. This went on and on in my life. Then, there was a phase of contemplation in my life, when I started asking deep questions. What is it that really makes me happy? What will stop me from going into this state of feeling unfulfilled and empty and again seeking something else?

Then I prayed, and again I asked for something from God. But, this time, it was different: "Lord, give me something beyond which there is nothing more left to seek." I believe that was the turning point in my life, and my Lord gave me that beyond which there was no more seeking–Swami! Looking back at this today, I feel this perfectly aligns with two quotes from Swami.

- "I give you what you want so that one day you may want what I have come to give you."
- 2. "Seek that, seeking which you will never have to seek again. So, seek Me and Me alone. True happiness lies in Union with God alone and in nothing else."

Power of Reading Swami's Stories

Let me share how I met Swami. In 2012, my in-laws came to Sydney for a vacation and brought some books. One day when I was leaving for work, my father-in-law asked me if I wanted to read any of his books. To please him, I said, "Okay, give me. I will read on the train."

He gave me a special edition of the India Today magazine titled, *'Divine Grace,'* fully dedicated to Swami. After reading it for some time, I felt something special. Later I borrowed another book from my fatherin-law– A Catholic Priest Meets Sai Baba. Again, it was an enlightening and inspiring book to read.

While taking my in-laws to the nearby temples, I found a Sai Center just 500 meters from my home! I took them there once, and soon it became a weekly affair! I became fascinated by the beautiful bhajans. I also felt that the people at the Center were genuine and unique-very different from others.

After some time, my in-laws returned to India, but we continued to go to the Center. Some days, when my wife was sick, I even went alone to the Sai Center!

Tryst with Divinity

Early in the morning, on the 13th of June 2012, Swami appeared in my dream for the first time. It was such a clear and vivid dream, the likes of which I had never experienced before. The dream had four parts.

Part 1: I was in Puttaparthi with a backpack. I saw Swami there with an old lady. She asked me why I was there, and I said that I was there to work for someone. Swami nodded as if He knew. His look was stern, but my heart said He cared for me.

Part 2: I went into a vast hall, where Swami approached me and asked, "Did I say I will give you something?" I said, "No, Swami." He said, "Okay, I will give you," and He walked away. **Part 3**: There was a big basket or a bin. I saw Swami and others standing around it and watching me. I put my hand in my backpack and found rotten fruits! Swami looked at me as if asking me what I wanted to do with them. I put the rotten fruits in the basket. Swami and others nodded in agreement with what I was doing. (My experiences later indicated that the rotten fruits represented *vasanas*, or tendencies, I had experienced from my past life.)

Part 4: Swami sat on a wall where I conversed with Him. In the end, I took *padanamaskar* (prostrating at His feet). While taking *padanamaskar*, I could hear people say that, although I was there for the first time, I knew what to do!

Then I woke up, and it was 4 am. I could not believe what had just happened. In a half-sleepy state, I told Swami, "People say that when You appear in a dream, it is only by Your will. Now I need some proof that you really came into my dream. Maybe a fragrance would be a good indicator." As soon as I said that, I went back to sleep, only to wake up again with the fragrance of thousands of flowers around me! Then I said, "Oh, Swami, You actually came to me!"

Miracle of Sai

Swami says, **"Come just one step forward;** I shall take a hundred towards you. Shed one tear; I shall wipe a hundred from your eyes." My willingness to read and know about Him was my one step toward Him. Since then, each day has been a miracle. He has taken not just a hundred steps but thousands of steps toward me.

If you ask me what the biggest Sai miracle in my life is, I will say it is the inner transformation He has brought. Swami says, "When you said "Yes" to Me, you gave up the right to be like everyone else. Then you will have experiences that help to purify you."

That is how He works, and that is how He transforms.

I don't know what good deeds I have done in past lives that brought me to Him. I experience His love all the time; I am never alone. I always talk to Him, and He responds in His inimitable ways. **He has become my true friend, guide, guru, God, and everything.** In fact, He has become the sole aim and the soul-purpose of my life!

> Mr. Srinath Nair AUSTRALIA



Mr. Srinath Nair is a finance professional working in Sydney, Australia. Currently, he serves as the SSSIO Regional President for New South Wales in Australia. He has held roles as an Education Coordinator and SSE teacher. He came to Swami's fold in the year 2012. Though he has never seen Swami physically, he feels a strong inner connection with Him.

Truth (Sathya)

Truth is one that prevails in all three periods of time (past, present and future). It is imperishable. This is *Parabrahmam* (Supreme God). *Sath* + *thi* + *yam*, *Sathyam*; *'Sath'* means life, *'thi'* means food, and *'yam'* means Sun. God is addressed as *'Sathyaya Namah'* since He embodies the very forms of life, food, and the Sun.

There is no greater noble conduct than Truth. Truth is God. God is Truth. *"Ekam Sath Vipra Bahuda Vadanti"*—Truth is one, sages call it by various names. Truth is *Dharma* (right conduct). Truth is penance; Truth is yoga; and Truth is *Parabrahma*. Truth alone exists. You are that Truth. Abide by the Truth and recognize the Truth. Truth is associated with the triple purity of thought, word, and deed. Saying what one thinks and doing what one says is the very form of Truth. All enjoyment and prosperity are dependent on this Truth. Truth is the basis for all Vedas and *sastras* (scriptures). They have emerged only from the Truth.

Courage, compassion, forbearance, impartiality, dispassion, justice, and nonviolence are synonyms for Truth. Silence is the language of Truth; this is verily God's song of silence (*Mouna Gitam*).

Truth is not anyone's property. It does not belong to any particular religion or sect. It belongs to everyone. It does not change according to the conditions of place, time, and matter. Truth is the main entrance to God's kingdom. The prosperity of the country is dependent on Truth; Truth is unparalleled wealth. This Truth should become the fundamental doctrine in the life of humanity. A true human is one who strictly abides by the Truth. One can win over the poor with charity, teachers (*gurus*) with service, enemies with weapons, and all the worlds with Truth.

Truth alone is the beautiful abode of God. *Dharma* (right conduct) is established only in Truth. Truth is verily the form of knowledge and science. Truth is the only royal path for us to attain the supreme state.

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



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Telugu letter continued on next page...



Who better than our Bhagawan Himself to summarize the essence of the five human values? Swami granted this gift to mankind when He inaugurated the first museum in Puttaparthi, the Sanathana Samskruti Museum, on November 19, 1990. Commonly known as the 'Eternal Heritage Museum', this museum is located on top of the hillock on the southern side of the ashram.

Swami had blessed the auspicious occasion by writing the essence of the five human values in His own hand for placement in the museum. A copy of the precious document was shared among a few of the senior devotees at that time. We are fortunate to have obtained a copy of Swami's gift to mankind and intend to share it, one value at a time, with devotees around the world.





Humanitarian SERVICE LOVE IN ACTION

POLAND Compassion Champions for Refugees

SSSIO volunteers in Poland continue to serve refugees from Ukraine with love and compassion. With unwavering dedication, they provide relief to those suffering, offering food and shelter to the displaced and delivering sustenance to those remaining in Ukraine. Volunteers from Sri Sathya Sai Centers in Warsaw, Grudziądz, and Kraków demonstrated profound love and empathy as they reached out to vulnerable families in their communities, ensuring their necessities were taken care of. **Their selfless service spoke volumes about the power of love in the face of adversity**.



RUSSIA Serving Mother Nature

SSSIO volunteers in Russia embarked on transformative nature retreats during May 13–14, 2023, with the River Sura as the focal point. With enthusiasm and commitment to the environment, they removed trash along the riverbank, restoring its pristine beauty. In Neftekamsk, two volunteers cultivated a garden by planting potatoes, mowing grass, and removing weeds. **The retreats became a spiritual awakening, foster-**



ing gratitude and love for experiencing the divine in nature. Through their actions, the participants demonstrated how service could inspire others to embark on their journey of love, purity, and service.

See more stories of loving service by volunteers from around the world at the Sri Sathya Sai Universe website: https://saiuniverse.sathyasai.org



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO Guardians of the Leatherback Turtles

The Matura Beach in Trinidad & Tobago is an important sanctuary and vital nesting site for leatherback turtles. In a remarkable display of environmental stewardship, 85 passionate volunteers from SSSIO who love the environment and wildlife joined forces with the environmental group, Nature Seekers on March 5, 2023. Their mission: to protect the invaluable nesting site of leatherback turtles at Matura Beach. This scenic shoreline, revered for its ecological significance, has often been marred by pollution and debris.

With unwavering determination, the volunteers gathered at the beach, driven by a shared vision of restoring its pristine natural condition. They collected over 2,500 kgs of garbage and debris, a testament to their commitment to serving Mother Nature. They also created a cleaner environment, allowing the turtles to continue their centuries-old lifecycle safely.





USA Sandwiches of Love from SSE Students

In 2021, Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) students of the Sri Sathya Sai Center in Tri-Valley, California, USA, began a heartfelt tradition. These young souls gather every second Sunday afternoon of the month to prepare 50 sandwich bags, including cookies, fruit, a granola bar, cheese sticks, and a juice pack. The bags are then delivered to the East Bay Community Recovery Project for distribution to the homeless. This service project has had a profound impact on both volunteers and recipients. **It has inspired young volunteers with the true spirit of service and touched many hearts**. One SSE student expressed, "I love this project. I feel happy when I think how



a sandwich would bring a smile to the person who receives it."

What sets this service effort apart is that month after month, regardless of the circumstances, the SSE students carry their mission forward with unwavering commitment and love.

International Education Conference 2008

With colorful floral Rangolis (artful decorations) adorning the floor along the divine path and children from countries around the world welcoming Him, Bhagawan inaugurated the exhibition, 'Vidya Jyoti,' by lighting a lamp at its magnificent entrance. The exhibition had been set up in the Poornachandra Auditorium with the tireless efforts of many SSSIO volunteers. Swami spent more than 45 minutes moving around and keenly observing all the exhibits, including an inspiring and well-made documentary film of 20 minutes covering various facets of Educare. This was the prelude to the Sri Sathya Sai Education Conference that was inaugurated the same evening on July 20, 2008.

Divine Guidance All Along

Swami took a great personal interest in this Conference. As per His divine planning, He issued a two-fold command:

- 1. There should be unity in all Sathya Sai education programs around the world.
- 2. The participants should prepare for the Conference in their own countries before attending the meeting.

Thus, educators from Africa, Europe, the Americas, Australia, and Asia gathered together as 86 Pre-World Sai Education Conferences were held in 73 countries, and questions for discussion were generated among all delegates in every country. These questions were submitted to Swami and were the subjects of various discussions and workshops. The theme of the Conference was "*Principles, Authenticity, Accountability and Service to Mankind*."





A Symphony of Message and Music

In the evening, Swami arrived for the opening ceremony and seemed to be in a great hurry to get to the dais as He took a detour through the delegates on the men's side. An interesting incident occurred when a devotee presented a large package containing letters from devotees worldwide. Swami was ready to accept it, but instead, He blessed it, leaving it in the devotee's hands. However, once on the stage, Swami instructed a student to bring the package, sparking joyful applause. Bhagawan then lit the ceremonial lamp, signifying the inauguration of the Conference. Dr. Michael Goldstein and Mr. V. Srinivasan gave welcoming addresses, followed by Swami's divine discourse in which He emphasized the need for compassion in the world. He further stressed that compassion could come only from *'Love for God'* and *'Fear of Sin'*-for which, Self-Confidence is paramount.

Following the divine discourse, the stage was set for the Sai Symphony orchestra. Led by conductor Michael Koehler from Germany, the orchestra showcased a diverse ensemble comprising violins, violas, cellos, bass, clarinets, saxophones, oboes, bassoons, flutes, trumpets, trombones, French horns, percussions, a tube, timpani, and a keyboard. Representing 21 countries, the musicians allowed their heartfelt emotions to guide their performance. The program featured soulful pieces by renowned Western classical composers such as Shostakovich, Ottorino Respighi, Felix Mendelssohn, and many more. After the end, Swami lovingly blessed the musicians and arranged for them to receive mango juice and *Prasadam* (sanctified food). Then He accepted *Arathi* and retired for the day.



Loving Counsel

On the second day, Swami granted the much-coveted darshan and sat on the dais by 10:45 am. The first speaker was Dr. Tom Scovill from the USA, who dilated on the meaning of true education as that which inspires,



Dr. Dalton de Souza Amorim



Mr. Victor Krishna Kanu



elevates, and draws out the inherent divinity. He was followed by Mr. B.G. Pitre, who spoke on the techniques and impact of Sathya Sai Education, illustrated by anecdotes. Dr. Dalton de Souza Amorim from Brazil then delivered an inspiring speech on the hallmark of Sathya Sai Education-the transformation of the heart. Finally, Mr. Srirangarajan from the Sri Sathya Sai University expounded on the four E's of Educare-experience, example, empowerment, and ennoblement. After the talks, Swami retired to Yajur Mandir (His residence) at noon after promising to give a discourse in the evening.

The deliberations and discussions went on through the afternoon till it was time for evening darshan at 4:15 pm. Mr. Victor Krishna Kanu of Africa, who arrived in a wheelchair, was the first to be invited to speak. He roared like an African lion with a clarion call to move into action and implement the Sathya Sai education model. He stressed that being born in the time of the Avatar was not trivial. Swami was visibly moved by his 'roars,' blessing him at the end of his invigorating speech. He was followed by the talks by other educators, Mr. Jeremy Hoffer, Mr. M. K. Kaw, and Sri Sanjay Mahalingam. Bhagawan then graciously consented to speak to the delegates. He received a list of questions and began His discourse.

Swami emphasized the need to lead an ideal life with duty, discipline, and devotion to set an example for all to emulate. He also spoke at length on the importance of practicing ceiling on desires. The highlight was the crisp and insightful answers that He gave to various guestions submitted by the delegates. Answering all of them, He appeared eager to remove any doubts the delegates might have had!

Following the divine discourse, a music program began, touching hearts with soul-stirring melodies from distant lands like Russia, Georgia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan,

and many others. The packed hall was captivated, their spirits uplifted by the joy and enthusiasm radiating from the devotees. Smiles adorned every face, some even unable to contain their joy, as the divine vibrations filled the auditorium. The bliss of the Lord and His devotees jointly created an electrifying atmosphere permeating all corners of the venue.

After their mesmerizing performance, Swami beckoned them to sing one last song, and they chose the beloved


"Kalinka," igniting a wave of applause that echoed through the hall.

Blessing all devotees present, Bhagawan accepted *Arathi* and returned to His residence at 7:30 pm while *prasadam* was distributed to all, whose hearts were filled with divine grace and overwhelming gratitude.

The Grand Climax

On the third and final day of the Conference, Swami arrived on the stage before 10 am. Observing the delegates collecting their letters into bundles, Swami called forth two students to place the large bundles on the stage. Then, he summoned the boys from the Thailand school, who had enthralled everyone with their violin concert a few days before, to join Him. With great delight, Swami gifted them watches, filling their hearts with joy. They requested Swami to bless them with His photographs which He had promised. In an instant, a photographer handed over the precious pictures to the students, blessed by the divine hand. Swami spent a few moments conversing with the conference organizers, granting a few interviews, and retired to His residence at 11 am.

The deliberations, discussions, and workshops at the Conference continued till the evening session in the *mandir*. The three speakers for the valedictory function were Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Sri Nimish Pandya, and Dr. Michael Goldstein. While Dr. Reddy expounded on how Educare was the way to immortality, Dr. Goldstein summed up the conference proceedings and outlined the course of future action as follows:

- Understanding the spiritual principles given to us by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.
- 2. Ensuring that programs authentically reflect a deep understanding of these principles.



- 3. Constantly and diligently evaluating progress to maintain the spiritual authenticity of the programs.
- 4. Rendering selfless, loving service to humanity through educational institutions in society.

Bhagawan then delivered His benedictory message, strongly emphasizing unity to achieve divinity and urging broad-mindedness and the practice of silence for unity!" Bhagawan also spoke at length on the need to overcome fear and be courageous. An interesting episode happened as He was speaking on this. A tiny mouse scuttled amidst the primary school children. All the kids started shrieking in fear, and even the ladies began to get up! Swami saw the commotion gently for a while and said with a smile, "If you are so scared of even a small mouse, what will happen? Don't be afraid! Be courageous always." Swami also dilated on the need for parents to practice unity and purity in thought, word, and deed to set an ideal for children. He concluded by urging everyone to be selfless and ready to sacrifice.

The Conference was a wonderful and blessed opportunity for the delegates to gather, share ideas and experiences, and learn from each other. But most importantly, it was a uniquely divine and precious opportunity to gather in His divine presence and seek His divine blessings and infinite love and guidance!



Denterview & Interview & Inter

IT WAS SOMETIME IN THE 1970S THAT I HAD MY INTRODUCTION

to Baba through a book I found in the library of a Yoga Center. My heart instantly recognized Him as God in human form. Though I wanted to travel to India immediately and see Him, my circumstances did not permit this extravagance. I was divorced then and was raising my two children, aged 2 and 5. In the 1980s, I somehow got the address of Baba and sent Him a letter praying for an opportunity to meet Him at least once in my life. Nearly two decades later, I learned more about Him and traveled to India as part of a spiritual group from Belgium in 1994.

Love At First Sight

The group spent a week at Swami Premananda's ashram in Trichy, after which I decided to travel to see Baba. I learned He was in Bangalore and, along with another elderly lady of the group, took the train there. The 'Masterplan' ensured that the train halted precisely at the Whitefield railway station, a stone's throw from the Brindavan *ashram*. It was 7:45 AM. Depositing our luggage in the cloakroom, we sat in the darshan hall, awaiting Swami. My very first *darshan* was unforgettable. It was love at first sight, probably because that love had already been kindled and incubated for years. Swami looked at me directly in the eye, and though He didn't say anything, I felt He was telling me,

"Finally, you are here!"

I stayed for many days after that. Though the accommodation and facilities were really basic, I enjoyed every moment, sustaining myself on the daily darshan and bhajans. There was no looking back after that. From then on, I made at least annual pilgrimages to see Swami.

Heart to Heart Communication

My visits to India usually coincided with Baba's Birthday and Christmas celebrations every year. I also participated in the Christmas choir. One year, Swami graciously gifted us with white sarees to wear for the program. I was thrilled to be a recipient of His love and grace. As Swami came walking toward me, I thought of handing over the bunch of letters that I had in my hand. But when He came close, I noticed He was saying something to me in Telugu. I forgot all about the letters and tried to make out what He was saying. He repeated it, but I still could not decipher what He said. But my heart understood that He wanted me to be present for Mahashivaratri. I received the white saree which I wore during Christmas celebrations.

I also returned to India to celebrate Mahashivaratri with Swami. That year, Swami did the much-coveted *Lingodbhava*, the Hiranyagarbha Lingam, and an ellipsoid golden lingam emerged from His mouth. Swami said that those who had witnessed are assured of liberation in this lifetime. Was I thrilled that I listened to Him with my heart? I was ecstatic!

The date, January 15, 2003, remains forever etched in my heart, as Swami called a group of Belgian ladies for an interview. One of them beckoned me to join in as well. I walked over and sat near the interview room but was very nervous. What if Swami sent me back? That thought by itself made me cry, and I had profuse tears streaming down my cheeks when Swami arrived. He gave me a broad smile assuring me immediately that He approved.

The minutes in the interview room flew by like seconds as Swami was jovial with us, answered our questions, and blessed us with the *vibhuti* that He materialized. After speaking with all of us, He went to the inner room and began calling us in pairs. "He took my hands into His and said His grace and blessings were always with me, just as I had prayed for."

Hold My Hand and Never Let Go of It

The two of us stood in front of Him. He took my hands into His and said His grace and blessings were always with me, just as I had prayed for. He promised me He would bless me with opportunities to serve. When He spoke to the other lady, He asked me to translate into Belgian for her. I let go of His hand in my enthusiasm to explain and be a good translator. Swami immediately held my hands again, tightly this time. I had goosebumps as I realized that He had fulfilled everything that I asked Him in my daily prayer:

"Oh, Baba! Grant me your grace and blessings. Hold my hand tight and lead me to God in my thoughts, words, and deeds. Give me the strength to love You and serve You more and more in everyone."

Even today, I repeat the same prayer-more as a reminder to myself rather than asking Swami. I know that He is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. And I know that getting the opportunity to know, recognize, and serve Him is a true privilege and Blessing.

The interviews that day ended. The inner view continues to this day.

Ms. Regina Van den Broecke



Ms. Regina Van den Broecke was born in Belgium. She studied languages and bookkeeping in Ghent and worked for 38 years in a steel factory. She was the coordinator of the Sai Center in Antwerp and the National Coordinator for SSSIO of Belgium. Regina is trained in human values education in both Dutch and English. She has visited Swami 20 times and traveled throughout Europe as the National Coordinator.





from the International Sai Young Adults

This month, we are excited to share an overview of the second Serve the Planet workshop, which aims to promote the preservation of Mother Earth, and an inspiring and engaging "Train the Trainers" Session by YAs from Zone 4. Finally, we look through the lens of a YA from Bolivia as she shares a beautiful reflection.

Spirituality and Sustainability Workshop



Spirituality & Sustainability: Reconnecting with Mother Earth through the 5 Human Values



Reflect on the practice you chose in Workshop #1, if you attended, and see how implementing that sustainable practice folds into your spiritual practice

As children of Mother Earth, it <u>is</u> our duty to do our part for Mother Earth in any and all ways possible!



How do you practice right conduct in your life?

In their continued efforts, the **Serve the Planet** subcommittee conducted its second online workshop of 2023, titled *"Fostering*"

a Deeper Connection to the Planet through the Five Human Values." The workshop focused on the universal application of two of these sacred values, right conduct and peace, and their profound interplay with sustainable lifestyle. By intertwining sustainability journey with our spiritual path, we cultivate boundless love and gratitude for Mother Earth, harmonizing our values across all aspects of life.

Approximately 50 participants actively engaged in interactive discussions, kindling profound awakenings within. The symphony

of hearts and minds united in their commitment to a sustainable future, igniting hope and inspiring connections that reverberate with Swami's love.

During the workshop, there were many insightful questions from the participants. The subcommittee will host another follow-up session in August 2023 to continue the conversation on sustainable living and how the five human values play an integral part in it.

ARSUND THE WORLD

'Train the Trainers' Empowerment Webinar

The Zone 4 Young Adults conducted an online "Train the Trainers" session for the 'RISE FOR VIP' program. It is the abbreviation for **R**eaching for Inner **S**trength and **E**mpowerment **FOR V**alues, Innocence & **P**urity. This program aims to empower and educate teenage girls with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to address social issues and create positive societal change.

A total of 33 trainees from six countries attended– Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Panama.

One of the main objectives of this program is the prevention of teenage pregnancy, which is

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prevalent in rural areas in many of these countries. In the session, the trainees were equipped with the necessary knowledge and tools to address this issue effectively. By understanding the contributing factors, consequences, and prevention strategies, participants were empowered to create awareness within their communities and support at-risk teenagers. Ongoing efforts to promote compre-

hensive sex education, access to reproductive health services, and open communication will play a pivotal role in reducing teenage pregnancy rates and ensuring the well-being of young individuals and their future. We will continue organizing such sessions and fostering collaborative efforts to combat this ongoing challenge.



RISE FOR VIF Reaching for Inner Strength and Empowerment For Values, Innocence and Purity





A Special Reflection

AND IT ENDED HAPPILY!

That is how I would like to start though currently it feels like I am in the middle of nothing. The moment I took the plunge and jumped, I didn't know if I was flying or falling. But that is where our faith in Swami comes to the rescue, right?

Some months ago, I decided to change my life and start searching again for my goals-dreams in my heart that I have never been able to fulfill. Sone of the first steps towards that was to find a new job. Thus, I had an interview for a job. It didn't get me the job but it ended happily because it made me think and gain valuable perspective.

A prestigious international company was hiring in my country. Over 40 candidates were trying to fulfill the requisite qualifications and expectations to move to the second stage. Many of the candidates had prepared for months on how to talk–what to say or not to say– and how to carry themselves. Even as I began preparing, someone suggested not to let the YA lion out of myself and falsify facts if necessary to get the job! I felt that was not good advice. "But you need to fit in their world to be accepted," I was told. That, too, did not gel well with my conscience. Ultimately, I didn't make it to the second stage. I was not disappointed because the job was not my primary career goal.

But it did make me contemplate and reflect.

When I was meditating about the interview the next day, at the beginning I was feeling sad because I do not have a place in the "world of jobs" and then I asked myself, if I were to look at it from another point of view outside the parameters of success on this planet, from the perspective of Truth, I have a place in God's work. I realized that being in Sai Baba's Organization was the most important thing in the world. We are a privileged group! Not because we are special but because God has chosen us to be with Him and serve

Him. What have we done to qualify? I began pondering how it would be if Swami were to interview us before accepting us into His Organization.

I am a deputy YAC for Zone 2B. When was my interview, Swami? I do not remember doing any research online or offline to use someone else's strategies for that interview. He saw my heart and He accepted me. As YAs, we are trying to be the best we can be in our careers and make enough money to succeed or live well. Are we preparing similarly to excel in the interview with Swami to qualify to be His YA?

Although I don't have a job right now, I do have a place with Him, which is always the most important thing! I am learning to pray to Swami to get that dream job. I do not want to disappoint the One who has not asked me to qualify with credentials but accepted me as I am, with my faults and virtues.

And the happy ending? Well, I no longer see it as a destiny, but as a process of small steps that are built day by day with all the guidance that Swami gives me.

> Ms. Mariel Beltran BOLIVIA





Ms. Mariel Beltrán was blessed to know about Swami since she was six years old. She graduated from SSSILP for Young Adults in 2021 when she was a National YA Coordinator and now serves as a Deputy Zone Young Adults Coordinator for Zone 2B (South America). Professionally, Mariel is a Graphic Designer for Branding and also teaches at college. She is also a musician and has played flute for some songs recorded for SSSIO.

Follow the @saiyoungadults accounts on social media





SWAMINY Guru

Sai to me is God, a Friend and a teacher. Divya | Pre SSE | USA

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Swami, to me, is who guides me in the right direction. When you speak of him, he listens and grants your wishes. Thank, you Swami. Anuja | Group 1 | USA

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Swami to me is role model and I want to follow for my entire life. Swami to me is my best friend because during meditation at the SSE classes intro, I imagine Swami and I hugging each other. Suddenly I feel like there's some divine warmth and I feel blessed and happy. Shyam | Group I | USA Swami to me is my Mom, my Dad, my Sister, my Brother, my Everything. Swami to me is kind, caring and helpful. Aanya S | Group I | USA



Swami, to me, is a very good spiritual leader. You can pray to him to help in times of trouble making good decisions and to follow the right path of life. Thank you. Avantika | Group 2 | USA

> Swami to me is like my mother who takes care of me and shows me the right and honest path in life, like a mother, all Swami asks in return is love and devotion. Manasa S. | Group 2 | USA

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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 page.

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

Date of Online Event	Day(s)	Festival/Event
July 2, 2023	Sunday	Guru Poornima
August 19-20, 2023		Akhanda Gayatri





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





Eternal Companion email list



- Sri Sathya Sai International Organization 🗹
- Sri Sathya Sai Universe 🗹
- Sri Sathya Sai Humanitarian Relief 🗹
- Sri Sathya Sai Young Adults 🗹
- Sri Sathya Sai Education
 Healthy Living

If you win the Grace of the Lord, even the decrees of destiny can be overcome. Certain drugs come in bottles on which the manufacturer has given an expiration date beyond which the drug loses its efficacy. Of course, the drug will be in the bottle but would no longer be effective. Similarly, the Lord's Grace can make decrees of destiny inoperative. The guru is one who shows you the path to getting that Grace, and to such a guru this day (Guru Poornima) is dedicated.

> Sri Sathya Sai Baba July 27, 1961



sathyasai.org

Love All • Serve All Help Ever • Hurt Never