

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

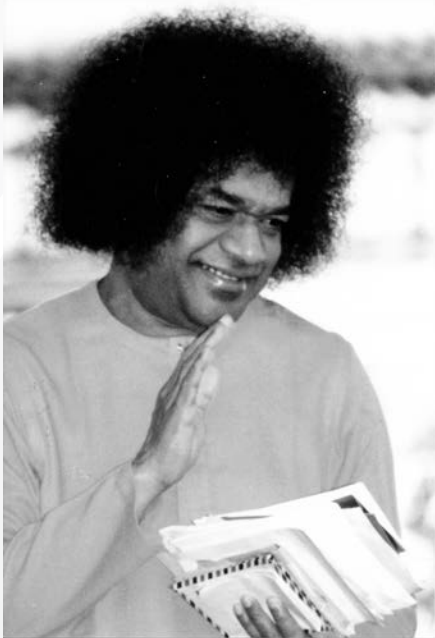
Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



“Loving the Love”

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SAI'S MESSAGE



LOVE IS GOD

LOVE is God.

*The cosmos is permeated
with LOVE.*

*Assuming the form of LOVE . . .
showering the nectarean stream
of LOVE, [the Lord] came as the
embodiment of LOVE for those
yearning for Him.*

Everything is born out of pure LOVE.

All joy is derived from unalloyed LOVE;

So are Truth, Sacrifice, Peace, and Forbearance.

If LOVE is lacking, there can be no contentment.

This is the path of Sai and the word of Truth.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks (SSS) 24:23
September 2, 1991

“Love the Love”: Dana Gillespie American Concert and Speaking Tour, October 2011

at UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES in IRVINE, CALIFORNIA – BOULDER,
COLORADO – NEW BRUNSWICK and UPPER MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

A Musical Tribute to Sri Sathya Sai Baba

A series of special concerts in tribute to Sri Sathya Sai Baba was kicked off at the Irvine Barclay Theatre, adjacent to the University of California, Irvine, on Sunday, October 2, 2011. Titled “Love the Love: A Musical Tribute to Sathya Sai Baba,” Dana Gillespie sang some of her well-known selections and spoke in loving tribute to the life of Sai Baba.

Dana Gillespie is an internationally known, multi-award-winning blues singer from England with over 60 albums to her credit. She has sung in front of Swami for almost every one of His birthdays since his 70th.

For the Irvine concert, a group of 18 professional musicians, six backup singers,

and the Southern California-based Sai choir supported Dana. Tablas, keyboards, guitars, percussion, violin, flute, harp—exquisite musicianship, with some performers being

world-class—created an exquisite blend of East-West-New Age sounds that bridged differences and merged us all into a state of delight. The theater, staging, lighting, and sound provided a wonderful backdrop.

This concert represented an effort that began last year and hopefully will continue. The organizers want to propagate the **vision**

that it is possible to rise above differences when we act with love—and the **effort** to more effectively communicate Swami’s love to the community. We were particularly interested in interfacing with students.



The previous October (2010), Dana had performed in San Diego, California, in a concert co-sponsored by the College of Education, San Diego State University, and the Sathya Sai Baba Society. The dean of the college spoke nicely about the five human values (truth, right living, love, peace, and nonviolence) and how these values had brought together [both] a secular and a spiritual group to honor good character.

During that Southern California tour, Dana also sang at the Ebell Theater in Santa Ana, for the regular monthly public meeting of the Sathya Sai Baba Society. Then, in December 2010, Dana gave a memorable performance for Sai Baba in Prasanthi Nilayam, India, in front of a packed audience in Sai Kulwant Hall.

In 2011, her USA tour expanded to include dates at the University of Colorado in Boulder, and at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Each event was a great success, and many non-devotees were touched by Dana's performance and Swami's message of love.

Many devotees more deeply sensed our role in spreading Swami's love in society—and our ability to do it in a pleasing, highly competent, and artistic way.

We were gratified to see more than a hundred devotees, in unity and harmony, engaged in spreading Swami's love through assisting with this project. Aspects of the coordination included travel arrangements, organizing musicians, preparing venues, website design, e-mail correspondence, printed material (flyers, posters, programs), video, photography, housing, driving, food, venue preparation, and cleanup—a myriad jobs were happily undertaken by Sai's many hands. It was a unified display of love radiating to the community—and everyone was happy.

We have a particular duty to love—a particular obligation to love—a role in the propagation of the unitary faith of love. Swami has lit the lamp of love in our hearts, and these concerts were a marvelous way of letting this light shine into the community.

Swami, thank you for the opportunity of serving in this way. May we be worthy instruments of your love and play a role in establishing one family of humanity where there is happiness for all.

—**Samuel Sandweiss**

For the Dana Gillespie 2011 Concert
Tour Coordinating Committee

God is love and love is God.
When you hold on to this principle of love
and develop love-to-love relationship,
you will attain the state of nondualism.

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**
SSS 38:09, April 13, 2005

"Mini-Residency" and Concert at the University of Colorado at Boulder

Blues singer and long-time Sri Sathya Sai Baba devotee Dana Gillespie visited the University of Colorado in Boulder for three days, as part of her USA trip in early October 2011.

Dana delivered a message that reached about 900 students through eight classroom presentations: five classes in the College of Music, two for the Peace and Conflict Studies department, and one for the Religious Studies department. Dana's three days at the University of Colorado culminated with a free public concert on campus Friday night, October 7, sponsored by the student-run Program Council. At the conclusion of the concert, each audience member was given a free CD of Dana's spiritual and *bhajan* (devotional) songs.

For anyone else, the Wednesday–Friday schedule would have been exhausting, but Dana was always fresh and positive, eager to engage and inspire the students, radiating the love and understanding that Sai Baba has nurtured in her.

A newspaper reporter who attended Dana's first class presentation asked Dana about the Sai Baba pendant she wears around her neck in plain view. As Dana explained to the reporter about her *guru*,



Sri Sathya Sai Baba, she confided to the reporter with characteristic honesty that the reporter was the first person ever to ask her about the pendant. A long article with an accompanying photograph appeared the following day in the *Colorado Daily*, introducing the university community and the general public to Dana's message and the Friday concert. Dana also traveled to Denver on Thursday evening to sing and speak to a gathering of Colorado Sai devotees.

Dana is an extraordinarily humble messenger of Sai, sharing the message of love and hope, compassion, understanding, cooperation, inner awareness of our true divine reality, the inner battle we all struggle with, and many other pertinent themes.

Dana used her life as a pop musician in the 1960s and 1970s as a means of drawing in students in a way they could relate to. She told stories about her work with many of the leaders in the pop music business, including Bob Dylan, David Bowie, and Pink Floyd. Especially inspiring was the story of a two-year process that led to Dana being selected to sing the lead role of Mary Magdalene in the first London production (1972–1979) of the musical, *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Dana also talked about her family background—of her ancestors who were courageously committed to working to alleviate the suffering of others: “I come from generations of appalling ‘do-goodism.’ A Gurney (related to Dana) started the Quakers. My great aunt (x4), Elizabeth Fry, was responsible for prison reform. Sir Thomas Buxton (great-grandfather x4), almost single-handedly abolished slavery. (Both Fry and Buxton are seen on the £5 note.) So I come from this long line of people who want to do good.”

By opening herself up to the college-aged students with purity and honesty about her life and struggles, Dana was able to disarm them so they were open to receiving her message. Dana intertwined stories about her life’s journey, both worldly/musical and spiritual, with singing to enchant and open students’ hearts in a most masterful way.

Her introductions to the songs prepared students for the spiritual significance of the lyrics. In each class, Dana sang about three songs. These included “*Allah Ho Akbar*,” “Guardian Blue Angel,” “Heart of Hearts,” “In the Garden of Heavenly Peace,” “Love the Love,” “Move Your Body Close to Me,” “*Om Shakti*,” “The Whole Universe,” and “Your Love Is True.”

Dana’s first class presentation was in the “Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies” class. Students in this 9.00 am lecture class were held in rapt attention. While Dana confided to me ahead of time that she doesn’t know what she is going to say until she enters a room, her talk in this (and every other class)

unfolded with masterful organization and strategy for engaging the students’ hearts and minds.

Dana began by describing the horrific conditions in the war-riddled countries she has visited. For the CU students, it was a shocking awakening to the reality of life for people far from the comforts of Boulder. As Dana stood in front of the students and shared firsthand about people’s hardships in these countries on the other side of the world, she emphasized the caring and kindness of the common people.

Students no doubt respected Dana’s courage to leave the comforts of London to put herself in dangerous situations for the benefit of others. “When I go to these war-torn countries like Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Dagestan, I have a military guard with me wherever I go. One thing I discovered in these devastated places, they give with total heart what little they have. I could knock on the front door of somebody in the street where I live in London—and I live right in the center, in the best area—at 4.00 in the afternoon and say ‘Help, I’m in trouble,’ and nobody is going to open their door, because they are actually terrified that I am wanting to rob the place.

“But if I knock on the door of a [home in a] war-torn country and say, ‘Help, I am in trouble,’ they will open their doors; they will give me their last crust of bread. They will be so generous that it is humbling. I am often reduced to the size of an atom because with so little, they give so much.”

"The Whole Universe"

by Dana Gillespie

The little space within the heart
Is as great as this vast universe.
The heavens and the earth are there,
The sun, the moon and the stars, the fire,
And the lightning and the winds are there,
And all that is, and all that is not, belongs to Him.
And He is all we've got. So we play our part,
And like the whole universe,
He dwells within our heart.

The end and the beginning are dreams.
Birthless, deathless, and changeless
Remain the spirit forever,
And life can sometimes be so strange,
Like walking on a razor's edge,
It's now and forever.
Each moment is like eternity,
More than we can ever know,
Much more than the eyes can ever see.
So we play our part,
And like the whole universe,
He dwells within our heart

This shifting house of mirrors where we dwell,
Under your charm, a palace seems.
Who has not fallen, tangled in your spell,
Beguiled by visions, wandering dreams.

And if the light of a thousand suns
Was to shine all at once in the sky,
It's nothing like the splendor of this mighty Being.
Until the day we die, we play our parts,
And like the whole universe,
He dwells within our hearts.
Om, Om, Om, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

With students' minds awakened to both the shock and the caring, Dana then talked to them in a way they could perhaps more easily relate to. Students enjoyed hearing about Dana's life in the pop music business: "When I was here in the '70s, I was living the life of a rock star—the same manager as David Bowie. I used to drive around New York in limos; I had secretaries, and life was pretty amazing. I had never thought in those days that I would be going to countries like the ones I have been asked to go to."

With the students now at ease, Dana used music as a means of returning to the theme of conflict and peace: "I will sing a song that is Indian based. What I mentioned about conflict, inner and outer—there is a very famous Indian holy book called the Upanishads. Has anyone ever read that? (One student raised his hand.) Oh, you have! There is one section in the Upanishads that is about a massive war, a holy war. This section is called the Mahabharata. There are five brothers, which represent the five senses that we have. They have a terrible war against another five, their cousins, who do them dirty. Many think this war actually existed. Other people think that it is, in fact, the inner war, the inner struggle that we have."

"When one hears Arabs talking about the word *jihad*, or holy war, the local press always talk about it as the fight—dropping bombs—but in fact, *jihad* means the inner struggle, the inner war. All of us have this inner war, whether we are Muslim or nothing. We all have this inner war."

"In the Mahabharata, there is this massive war that goes on, and in the end, good wins over bad, but they have to go through a lot of awful episodes to get there. One of the teachings from this war is described in a song I am going to sing called 'The Whole Universe' (see page 7).

"The explanation is that we may think there is the whole universe going on outside, but in fact, whatever happens in the world is really within us. The Indians believe there is this tiny space within our heart, so small that obviously you can't see it, but everything that goes on in the outer world goes on in the inner world."

"So if we are able to conquer and find peace within us, then we don't have such a desire to go around to conquer anyone else outside. Actually, I think this may be true of conflict and war, because unless we actually have got control of ourselves, then how could we ever assume to control anyone else!"

The students loved this song and seemed to appreciate Sri Sathya Sai Baba's message, which Dana clearly communicates. After singing, Dana tied the song back to the issue of inner conflict: "You could say that we play on this earth. We float like corks on the water. Until we control our demons, then we never will have peace. The demons have gotten way out of hand; hence, wars and misunderstanding of other people's cultures. I have traveled to a lot of Muslim countries, and I have made it my business to understand all religions, because if you look through history, [you can see] the amount of times that people have gone to war because of religion."

“How mad, how nuts, is that? Religion is meant to be a peaceful thing, but in fact it has just turned into people killing each other.”

Dana concluded by explaining why she travels to various war-affected countries to sing: “I have always believed that music can heal people. I thought that if I could get people to understand each other’s music, then you don’t want to bash [someone] on the head because he looks different. Peace and conflict[-resolution] is so important because it starts with young people.”

Teacher feedback received after Dana’s visit indicates that Dana’s presentations were inspiring in many ways:

“I am also a teacher in the Peace and Conflict Studies Program. First I hope you will tell Dana that I just LOVED her presentation—it was so on the point, powerful, and uplifting; it was GREAT! It also melded in exactly with what I am currently teaching in my 11.00 ‘Communication and Peace and Conflict’ seminar. Thanks for reaching out to us. I wish I had realized how relevant her message was for my class (‘Communication and Conflict Management’), so I could have arranged this early.” —**Peace and Conflict Studies Professor**

“The students responded really well to Dana’s presentation. They enjoyed the music, and a few were inspired to seek out some additional information about other ‘world’ religions.” —**Religious Studies Professor**

“I thought it was great to have Dana in class. We had a discussion about her presentation in the following class, and it seemed that they really liked her honest take on life as a musician and on her personal experiences. I know they also liked hearing about all the other famous musicians that she knows. It was definitely one of the highlights of the semester.” —**Music Professor**

“Thank you again for providing the opportunity to have Dana Gillespie talk and perform for my music class. It was very relevant to have Dana share stories about her interactions with the music industry and music stars (Bob Dylan, David Bowie), as well as have her perform music that was directly related to the class studies. Many students, including myself, acknowledged their appreciation for her performance and shared relevant life experiences. It is one thing for them to have me teach the history of American popular music, but to have someone who lived and breathed the music reaffirm the class material was perfect.” —**Music Professor**

“I thought Dana was great, and the students enthusiastically echoed my feelings on the day after. I believe first-year music majors in MUSC 1802 benefit especially from hearing about a professional career that has taken so many twists and turns, not to mention the results—her sheer technical accomplishments, her extraordinary friends and collaborators, and her candid discussion of the connection between life-challenges and point of spiritual growth.

Dana's complete openness and willingness to share even embarrassing anecdotes about herself was thoroughly endearing. Her music was totally convincing." —**Music Professor**

Dana Gillespie's visit to the University of Colorado, with its scope of reaching so many students in so many varied lecture classes, was a huge success. Dana's visit might be the first

mini-residency of its kind here in Boulder. The university professors, students, and all the Colorado Sai sisters and brothers are filled with admiration and gratitude to Dana for volunteering her time to spread Swami's light and message. Thank you, Dana!

—**Paul Erhard**
(Music Professor at CU Boulder)



Ms Dana Gillespie, Nicholas Music Center, Rutgers University, October 9, 2011

Appearances at Rutgers University and Montclair State University, New Jersey

“**L**OVE: what is it? LOVE is a thought, LOVE is a feeling, LOVE is a word, LOVE is an action, and LOVE is in everyone of us. Even in our mothers’ womb, we felt LOVE; we responded to it, we gravitated to it. LOVE is a language every living being in this world expresses, no matter which country (or culture) you’re from, no matter which religion you believe in. It is the principle of LOVE that is IN us all, and UNITES us all. . . . And this unifying principle of LOVE has the power to raise our consciousnesses as brothers and sisters of one family. . . .”

Thus the emcee for the evening, Sangeeta Lekhi, began to introduce Ms Dana Gillespie on the evening of Sunday, October 9, 2011, at Nicholas Music Center, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

An article in the campus newspaper, *The Daily Targum*, publicized the concert to the student body and reported how the event had been organized in part by the Sathya Sai Baba Society of America. The article quoted several members of the organizing team, who reinforced the message of LOVE behind the offering of the free concert and their own internalization of Sai Baba’s all-encompassing message of love:

“The purpose of the [Sathya Sai Baba] organization is to promote values. Truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence are the basis for individual and world peace. . . . If you look at the definition of love, it is really to give without expectation. Giving unconditionally—that’s the kind of love we all have in our hearts. The question is, how do we express and expand that love and share it with others?” —**Sunil Lekhi**

“We just try to carry Sai Baba’s message by spreading love. The inspiration is there, and we try to carry it out with our lives. . . . to stress less and live in harmony As we begin to love, everything gets better; if you want the world to change, change yourself.” —**Robert Bozzani**

“Music has a very special place [in conveying the message of love]. It’s the language of angels; it touches the heart really quickly. When it gets in there, you start to feel inspiration and love—and hope that things will get better. . . . Students who attend the concert could leave with a newfound sense of peace: one must leave with a smile. You’ll feel it; it’ll make you happy. . . . When you feel unity and it makes you smile, that’s worth a million bucks!” —**Samuel Sandweiss**

In the moments before the concert, while the attendees took their seats, an evocative slide show, accompanied by a beautiful, meditative sound track, presented numerous inspiring quotes on the theme of “LOVE the LOVE” (see page 37).

The concert was inspiring, as can be expected. But it was afterward that the organizers witnessed a scene that made them feel the message of LOVE had hit its mark. Some children—Sai Spiritual Education students—were overheard spontaneously and sincerely engaged in discussing what love is—among themselves and without any prompting from their elders.

The following day, before leaving for a tour of numerous European countries and beyond, Ms Gillespie continued her selfless schedule by appearing as a guest in several speech classes at New Jersey's Montclair State University. Here again, the students were disarmed and inspired by her example as a public speaker as well as a being a celebrity who operates "from the heart." Here are some of their candid reflections:

—"Not only did I take away important ideas about communication from Dana, I also really took away her idea of projecting love onto others. Dana lives by the thought that if you do everything you can with love and project 'love vibes' onto others, there will be many positive effects. I believe that this is a very important concept in life to try and live by, because even if it always doesn't prove itself to be true, projecting love will make a person generally happier throughout life."

—"I walked away with something absolutely priceless. This sensational British songstress, at the commencement of her appearance, spoke about life being too short to be scared to speak up, and of all the

things she said, that stuck with me on the bus ride home. It forced me to ask myself, 'Why am I so scared to speak in front of people?' Ms Gillespie pushed me to face myself, to face my fears. Her presentation meant the world to me."

—"I especially understood her message about love. She repeated numerous times that you have to put love into your music, and that by doing so you hope to spread love to everyone that listens to the music. Although it sounds like a cliché, I believe she has a point. You have to love what you're doing and share it with other people."

—"Something she mentioned really grabbed my attention: whether she is talking to a crowd of a million or to one person, she speaks the same way. She used the word *love* to describe the way she spoke. While admitting it sounded corny, she said that just putting love into what one is saying will get the message across."

—"At first when she started speaking, I felt it was just going to be a presentation about her life. Surprisingly, she included other aspects of herself and elaborated on using your heart. Not many people know how to use their hearts, nor do they listen to their inner hearts. Her message was inspiring."

—"One of the main points I heard her repeat throughout her presentation was to do everything from the heart. Whether talking to another person, a large group of people, or interviewing for a job, we should always speak from the heart, be-

cause people can always tell. . . . Also, Dana taught us to always be a good person. She said never to tell a lie because it will always come back to get you. She was very truthful throughout her speech, even if there were things she was hesitant to share. I liked this about her because it made me feel connected to her and also gave her credibility that she wasn't lying about other things she had said earlier."

—"I thought her speech was incredibly relevant for college students who are trying to decide what they want to do with their lives and what path they want to follow. As a senior in my last semester at

Montclair, hearing Ms Gillespie's message of listening to one's heart was comforting and affirming."

Clearly, Dana Gillespie is a living example of love with a huge heart who conveys graciously the principles of virtuous character, values, and spirituality that she has imbibed from Sri Sathya Sai Baba. In this she holds true, no matter the "performance" situations life places her in. We were thrilled to host her in this series of concerts and appearances.

—Contributed to by Members of the
Dana Gillespie 2011 Concert Tour
Coordinating Committee



Dana Gillespie presents one of her CD albums to Swami, December 2010

Interview with Dana Gillespie, Ambassador of Love

Ms Dana Gillespie is a musician of international repute, who has emerged as an ambassador of Sai's message around the world. In this interview, she explains how she takes her music to remote places to share Sai love with diverse groups and in the end comes back home realizing how little she knows of her enigmatic Sai.

This British singer, actress, songwriter, and blues diva has been performing in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba for the past 16 years. Her first performance in Prashanti Nilayam was at the time of Baba's 70th birthday. She has 46 years of music background with over 61 albums to her credit. Her career has combined her music with radio, theatre, film, and sports.

Although her life has become synonymous with her music, in the 1970s she became well known for her appearances in London's West End theatres. She played the original Mary Magdalene in the first London production of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

The versatile Dana, who seems to have been there and done all things creative, comes from a family of do-gooders and social activists. Her family was attached to the Church of England. Her ancestors were Quakers and included Elizabeth Fry of prison-reform fame. Yet this trailblazer foresaw her personal journey as a musician early in life, a journey that has seen her share the stage with the likes of Bob Dylan and Mick Jagger, among others, and entertain audiences all over the world.

Presented below are selected excerptss from a conversation recorded between Dana Gillespie and Radio Sai's Karuna Munshi in March 2011 at the Radio Sai studio, Prasanthi Nilayam.

—http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_09/01DEC11/DanaGillespie_1.htm

The Making of the Star, Dana Gillespie

Radio Sai (RS): *Sairam*, Dana, and welcome to Radio Sai!

Dana Gillespie (DG): *Sairam*, Karuna, and it's a pleasure to be here.

RS: As a young girl of eleven, you told your parents that you wanted to change your name, and you chose your name—Dana. Where was that coming from?

DG: My real name, which I don't really like to divulge, is an old family name that comes from the Elizabeth Fry, the Quaker line of the family. So all of the women in this line have this name. And I said to my parents, "I think I'm going to be famous when I'm older. So I'm going to give myself the name of Dana right now. And so, henceforth on,

can you please call me this?” And it flows very nicely off the tongue.

RS: But, at eleven, how did you know that you were going to be famous?

DG: I’ve always functioned on the instinct side. Musicians have to. I just knew that music was the thing for me. I was a very normal child. I was interested in chocolate, animals, and music, and that was about it. And so, I just followed my dreams. The first blues song I heard was when I was 11. I didn’t understand a lot of the lyrics, but I used to sing along to them, and I felt this music very intensely. Blues music is something that is very simple, and I think that if one can talk about reincarnation, I must have lived in that era.

The moment I heard Ms Bessie Smith sing—and she was the heroine, the icon of the old blues women in the ’30s and ’40s—I felt I had come home. And in the ’60s, blues were very important, as a lot of the bands that we might know now, like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, started out as blues bands, because it’s basically three chords and twelve bars. It’s music that is born out of pain. Anything that is done without having to read notes like in classical music, where you’ve got to read, has to come from the heart.

So, all the blues musicians I work with, they work from the heart; they do not work from the head. If you’re sitting in a bhajan group and it’s your turn to sing, I always go, “Oh, Swami, please help me get the right note,” and hope that he gives it to me, because if you start too low or too high, the bhajan is ruined, as you then land up in a squeak

or can’t find the deep note. So, you have to function on instinct. And bhajans play a large part in my life.

RS: You’ve had quite a journey as a musician. You released your first album at the age of fifteen, and it was folk music. And the many genres of music you have traversed through could not have been possible without a personal journey, because as an artist, you’re intensely involved in your work. You write most of the songs you sing, yourself. Tell us about this journey, about the evolution of Dana Gillespie.

DG: Well, I suppose, musically, I started as a folk singer because I couldn’t afford a band. And I wasn’t even allowed to be in the school choir, as I was far too much of a giggler. I knew I had an okay voice and I knew that this was what I wanted to do. I wasn’t sure whether it would be theatre or film or anything; I just knew I was meant to perform.

So, I took any job that came my way and I really did some awful musicals and some pretty terrible old films.

At fifteen I was a sports girl for four years and was in the snow ski team as well, until an avalanche swept me down and damaged my leg. Hence, I often walk with a limp. Then sports got the back seat, and also I realized very early on that you didn’t make money out of sports, and I’d have to survive. I lived at home until I was 30, which is very late for anyone.

RS: . . . in the West.

DG: Yes, it is. It’s extremely odd, but I had such a good relationship with my parents, so I just lived in their basement flat. I had a

piano and a drum kit and a bass guitar and a little kind of sound recording machine that had two tracks to record, which was quite revolutionary then, and musicians used to drop by. A lot of them were—are—famous now, but then, they were just session musicians. They weren't famous to me.

RS: Any names?

DG: Well, David Bowie used to walk me home from school and carry my ballet shoes when I was fourteen. Jimmy Page is still an old friend, who's founded Led Zeppelin. He produced a track on my first album, as you said, when I was fifteen. These were just normal guys; they then stuck to their music and became more famous.

I left regular school at fifteen and went to a theatre school, because I was working in the evenings, raising money to afford a drum kit and drum lessons in a record store. And in the mornings, between 5.00 and 6.30, I was delivering newspapers so I could get enough money to buy this drum kit.

So I formed a band when I was at the theatre school; I was fourteen then. I was the drummer, of course. On one of our first big gigs, the singer was ill—didn't even bother to turn up. But I knew the songs. We got another drummer, and I became the singer.

RS: By chance!

DG: Well, yes, but then, is anything by chance, really? I knew I couldn't really be a drummer, because my drum teacher was an extraordinary man, and he would take me to see this world-class drummer called Buddy Rich, and when I saw how this man played, I realized I could never play like that. I've

always worked on the premise that if you can't do something really well or be the best, then do something else.

An Out-of-the-World Experience during the Musical, *Jesus Christ Superstar*

I was doing, as I said, terrible musicals, weird films—nothing really that my mother would have ever been

proud of. And this is the yardstick in my life: would my mother like something, because I had an amazing mother. She used to come here to see Sai Baba, as well, even at the age of 84. Anyway, the moment I landed a role in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, she was able to go, "Ha! My daughter did something valid and great!" And that sort of changed my life in a way.

And what's so strange about that is the fact that I knew I was meant to play Mary, two years before it happened. I tried to audition, for one thing. They couldn't take me for some reason. Then I went to

"As I started to sing, I can honestly say I had an almost God-like experience. Something sang through me. It was amazing."

America to try and audition there. No, they wouldn't take me without a union card. Then I was actually brought into the chorus in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and while we were rehearsing, I kept thinking, "I know I'm meant to be Mary."

Then the week before the show opened, they asked me if I'd sing to try out for the understudy position. In those days we used to get two pounds extra as an understudy. I thought, "Well, okay, maybe, my dream will come true." And I went. They called me to come back the next day at nine in the morning to sing the main song, which is "I Don't Know How to Love Him." And something happened to me; something took over my body.

I stepped out in front of the biggest theatre in London and took the microphone. I'd never sung this song before; I'd had to learn it the night before, because Mary sings alone on the stage; the chorus does all the dancing and leaping about. As I started to sing, I can honestly say I had an almost God-like experience. Something sang through me. It was amazing. I'm not saying this pigheaded.

I came on stage with tears in my eyes and my knees shaking, because I'd never heard my voice alone with a piano in a huge theatre. And I waited for half an hour in a little room off to the side. Then the director came in and said, "We're going to make you Mary. We're going to have to buy out the other girl"—who was then bought out, and I took over the role. It was an amazing experience. The show was a hit, and my mother was proud of me. I was the talk of the town.

But that wasn't satisfying for me, because I was doing something that somebody else had written. I knew I was meant to sing what I'm feeling. So when it was over, I went to America and started touring there. Then I had my band, so I just kept recording from there.

RS: And you've had a hand in radio, as well—from Austria, Vienna?

DG: Yes. Now that was one of the joys of my life. The program was called "Globetrotting with Gillespie." It ran for eleven years, and I specialized in Indian, African, Arabic, and blues music. Nobody else was doing such a thing then—across Europe every Saturday night. So every taxi driver in Vienna knew me and my voice, because they were all foreigners. I would play something from the Ivory Coast one day or a *bhajan* (Indian devotional song). I used to sneak the odd *bhajan* in, which made me rather happy.

I actually thank God for that experience; if you can understand other countries' music, then you can understand the people better. And when you understand the people better, there's no need to have wars and fights with them. I'm a great believer in pacifism. It's so important, this understanding that we are all one, and music is the great communicator.

I know that, because 35 years ago, I was sitting on a camel in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, when I went to one of these camel safaris with a camel man who did not speak one word of common language. So he started sort of humming, and I had just learned a Pankaj Udhas song. I sang this to him, and he immediately perked up. He recognized the melodies. So, he sang a song; I sang a song.

We spent the next eight hours singing songs. We became friends, and he taught me about the power of music.

The Journey to the Lord and the Long Wait Thereafter

RS: Dana, as an artist, you've lived a full and exciting life. Now, where does the chapter on Sai Baba fit into the life story of Dana Gillespie?

DG: When I first read a book on Sai Baba, which was *Man of Miracles* (by Howard Murphet), it was about 31 years ago. Then I did something I never do. I instantly went to get a plane ticket. Actually, my father bought it for me. He said, "I have a feeling you're meant to do this." So, three weeks later, I leaped on a plane and headed to India.

I had this feeling that Sai Baba was going to say when I got here, "Hello! I've been waiting for you. You are the chosen one!" But of course, not a bit of it happened. He ignored me for twelve years. I slept in the sheds, got eaten alive by mosquitoes, had extraordinary experiences, coincidences—things about which a nonbeliever would say, "Well, that's just a coincidence!" But when you have Baba in your heart and have faith, then you realize that nothing is a coincidence.

I had quite a few unusual experiences. And they were enough to keep me coming

back, sometimes twice a year, to sit and be crushed at the back. My leg was bad, so the first time I came here, I actually walked into the place and left in a wheelchair, instead of the other way around, because I was determined to sit cross-legged.

It was agony. And I often have used a walking stick when I've been here. I don't

mind. It's just the body. I'm not bothered about it at all. Pain is a nuisance because it can drain your energy and can distract you from getting on with loftier, godlier thoughts.

I have to thank this leg pain, because every step I take, which is painful, I have to say "*Sairam*." Every step going upstairs, I have to hold the railing or find somebody who might be

on the step below me, and I'll put my hand on his shoulder and say, "*Sairam*! Thank you." So, for that, I'm extremely grateful, and I know that Sai Baba has said that for every trouble we have, we should thank him, because that makes us turn to him more.

If I'd have had a bed-of-roses life—a happy husband, children, and the rest, which doesn't go actually with the music business—I wouldn't have wanted to find anything higher. I would've been content with the *samsaric* (worldly) view of life, and that has never been my goal. I've wanted to fly free.

**"When you have
Baba in your heart
and have faith,
then you realize
that nothing is a
coincidence."**

RS: Through those twelve years of anonymity in the ashram, as this westerner with red hair sitting at the back of the Sai Kulwant Hall, with no particular physical attention from Baba, what kept you coming back? Isn't that a fairly long period of waiting?

He Fosters the Tender Faith with Subtle Experiences

DG: Well, he did little things, small things. One time, I left Bangalore for Puttaparthi, and I had lost my passport. I thought, well, I've read this story about Swami finding somebody his traveler's check or passport in Paris. I thought, "Well, I've got a choice—either I go back, and they'll think I'm stupid because I know I haven't left it there, or I go on, and Swami will find it for me and something will happen." So, I got to Puttaparthi and tried to register for a shed accommodation, but of course I got an earful from the men at the accommodation office: "How dare you . . . ? Go to the police station!" And to make matters worse, my ticket was also in my passport.

I was desperate, thinking, "What am I going to do?" Then a group of Austrians from Vienna said, "Oh, come in with us. We'll smuggle you into the shed. Nobody's going to notice."

I thought, "Right, okay." And because I was really frazzled and shaking over this experience, I plonked down. I didn't have a mosquito net. I couldn't find a bedroll. I mean, I was completely unprepared for

this occurrence. I couldn't find a torch (flashlight), and—it was back in those days, when you could do *Om*karam and go round the *mandir* (temple)—I thought, "I'm going to have to get up; I'm going to have to ask Swami for help."

I leaped up, ran outside, and sat behind the *mandir*. It was all dark, and I was sitting there with nobody around. Then I managed to see, under a bit of a light, that it was only three o'clock in the morning! I had come out far too early. So I sank down on my knees and said, "Swami, you have to help me." I had my hand sitting there, when suddenly, a jasmine flower plopped out of nowhere. There was no wind; there were no jasmine flowers around. It just landed there, and I heard this noise—really, like a "plop"—as it appeared and landed there.

I thought, "My goodness! I know he's going to help me." I had that faith, because I've always known that everyone else might let me down in life, but God cannot. He has to be your best friend!

So I thought, "Well, I do not know how he's going to do it, but I know he's going to do it." Then, at the next *darshan* (opportunity to see Baba), I was ignored, of course. Then I was a bit disheartened.

In those days, when you could walk up at the back [hillside behind the *mandir*], I always used to walk up there alone. They always said, "Don't go. There are snakes and scorpions." But I used to think, "Oh, if I sing bhajans, nothing's going to bite me."

I was up there in this cool breeze, watching the eagles flying around. Then I suddenly heard this—like a voice—saying, “Go straight down now to the main street. Go now, NOW!” So, I rushed down, and as I was going past the accommodations office, a man was coming out with my ticket and passport in his hand. He’d found it. He’d tried to return it, but because I wasn’t registered, they didn’t know who to give it to. So, we met—and in those days, that street was always very crowded.

RS: Did you find out where the man had found your passport and ticket?

DG: No. I had looked down to check if it was my name, and when I looked up, he was gone! It was one of those great stories. And I’ve got another little one like that.

When I first came here, the first thing that hit me about seeing Sai Baba was that I must never eat an animal again. Meat was off the menu for me.

RS: It was instinctive?

DG: Yes. He was quite far away. He was always a bit of an orange dot in the distance, although there were fewer people. But it just hit me, and I was looking to be a vegetarian—although I’ve never been that keen on meat, but it just hit me.

So I came back full of beans from my first trip to Baba, saying to everyone, “I’m going to be this Mother Teresa—step aside—it’s the spiritual life for me. I’m going to be fantastic; I’m going to help little old ladies cross the road, whether they want it or not.”

And I enrolled as a helper at the main cancer hospital (in England), pushing trolleys and trying to do all this good. But then my father said, “I think you should go back again.” He had married again. He wanted me to take his wife, my stepmother, to India.

We went back, and for three days, I tried to show her Puttaparthi, but then somehow, all the wonderful things that I was trying to do fell by the wayside. My promises were broken—left, right, and

center, and I felt so miserable that “my word was not my bond,” to quote Shakespeare. I sat one day in the bhajan hall in Whitefield, actually, in floods of tears.

I was seated about 20 rows back, and Swami was up on the chair. Everyone was happy, and he was beating time with his right hand the whole time. He was happy, and I put on my glasses so I could see him really clearly, but I want to sink down low behind the woman in front of me. My clothes were soaked with tears. I have never cried like that; it was like a tap had been turned on. And I now know it was like when they

“When I first came here, the first thing that hit me about seeing Sai Baba was that I must never eat an animal again.”

break a coconut—you know, you’ve got to break the person, so that the milk comes out from within.

This was my breaking point. I was a broken person, totally dripping wet (from crying). And every now and then, Swami would look at me and go like this (gesturing), as if to say, “Calm down!” and I kept thinking he was signaling the person behind or in front of me.

He was still beating time like that, and then he’d come back and do this gesture suggesting, “Calm down!” This went on for fifteen minutes, and by that time my clothes were wringing wet. I really couldn’t stop the tears . . .

Then I made an inner connection with him and said inside, “Look, if you are everything I’ve read about, and if you can know exactly what I’m feeling at this moment, I demand a sign.” All I could see was that he’d never moved his left hand; he’d just been beating time with his right hand. So, I said, “Just beat with the left hand once for me.”

He looked me straight in the eyes and went once with his left hand and then carried on with his right hand and never moved his left hand again. So, this was very good for me, because it made me realize his omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence!

I’ve had to learn stage by stage, and if he’d have welcomed me that first trip, going,

“Yes, here you are! You’re the chosen one!”—I hate to think what my ego would’ve grown to, because I come from a profession where they judge you on your looks—which I’ve always thought was pathetic. I don’t judge anyone on how they look. I look at their heart.

The Surprise Invitation to Perform, and the Performance during Baba’s 70th Birthday

“He came straight over to me. . . .
He said,
‘Ah! The singer!
Give me the cassette!’”

RS: After twelve years of learning, evolving, and taking baby steps to understand yourself and Baba, building this relationship—suddenly you were catapulted into the limelight. You got to perform at the 70th birthday in the Divine Presence. From anonymity to celebrity status—how

did this change occur?

DG: Well, I thought it was going to occur, because I’d made my first CD of bhajans. There was this marvelous music, and I thought the Westerners must get to learn it, because in those days, there were only those *Bhajanavali* cassettes, and if you bought them in India, they were broken by the time you played them once. It was before the days of CDs, and I thought, “If I can make this music a bit more acceptable to the Western ear, I might be doing some good.”

So I put it on a cassette, and it was my last day. Swami had never spoken to me, and

I never spoke to anyone here. Nobody knew I was a singer. I'm not really the sociable type. I was just happy to be in his presence, albeit at the back. So, I just managed to smuggle in this cassette, which I'd hidden under my shirt. And, as I said, I told nobody.

He came straight over to me. It was my very last *darshan* of that trip, and I'd wanted to present it. He said, "Ah! The singer! Give me the cassette!"

So I had to produce (from its hiding place) this hot and sweaty thing and hand it to him, and he took it into the mandir. He'd finally accepted this little offering.

So, I did go ahead and press the first CD, which I made three of, under the name, "Third Man." I didn't want to confuse the blues fans who might mistake this recording to be a new blues CD from Dana Gillespie, who would say when they put it on, "Oh! What's this?" So, I felt I had to change my name. Then, of course, they started releasing it here with a sticker saying, "Featuring Dana Gillespie." Now I don't bother with "Third Man."

So then, when I got a call in London asking, "Would you be interested to come and sing for Swami's 70th birthday?" from somebody connected with Brindavan in Whitefield, I said, "Well, yes!" and I was convinced they wanted bhajans. I was imagining me with my trancy, groovy rhythms—this was bound to be the thing [they wanted], but I was told, "No, no! Swami wants you to do the Western music."

So, I had to search around for musicians who could actually help me out, because

half of my band said, "We're not going to go to a place where you can't eat meat, smoke a cigarette, or have a drink." That was quite difficult. But I managed to get an odd assortment of guys together, and that was my first experience. It was an amazing one, because when we arrived, there was somebody meeting us at the airport with a sign saying, "Artists." The crowds parted. We were looked after. Everywhere I went, I was being fed; I couldn't believe my luck.

RS: You had a huge changeover in your life in Puttaparthi!

DG: Yes, but it wasn't always a bed of roses. I learned some interesting things. I got a terrible flu-like thing two days before [performing]. I had no voice at all on the day of the concert. I couldn't see my band, since they were all in the men's section; I couldn't tell them, and I didn't want to worry them, because they had no idea what they were doing. They knew they were coming for some sort of weird Indian experience, but this was beyond their realms of imagination. And also, you know, everything was chaotic. I learned a very good lesson.

The performance that was about to go on before me was axed at the very last second, and all these little children with mascara trailing down their faces were really unhappy. Anyway, I said to Swami (I'd learned to talk inside by this time; he was sitting in the Shanti Vedika), "Listen, I've got no voice. You've got me all this way. You've got to help me. If you're going to help me, would you please look at me now?" And he turned his head and looked at me.

Then, two minutes later, somebody came up to me and said, “I think you should have these five cloves.” And then somebody else came up to me saying, “Here’s some *vibhuti* (sacred ash) for you.” And I must say that when I stepped out on stage to sing, I probably had about 60 percent of my voice, but that’s enough for the blues. I had no idea what I was doing.

“Dear Lord, Will You Swing While I Sing?”

Everyone had said, “Don’t worry, the day after the concert, all the artists get an interview,” which, of course, when you don’t know anything, that seems to be your goal: “I must get an interview.”

It took a while to realize that the **inner view** was the better way to be. So, the next day, we were all lined up—the women, the artists, the men. Swami came out and picked every single person except me. I was the only one who sat on my own, for once in full view of everyone, wanting to die.

RS: That must’ve been so hard!

DG: Well, it was. Even as I tell you this now, I can almost taste the blood in my mouth where I chewed my gums so as not to cry, because I basically just wanted to howl and fall to pieces, but I was in full view, and I’m British, so you have to have the stiff upper lip. So I chewed my gums and had to hold my head up high and walk out of that place

knowing that I was the only one who’d been rejected. Awful! Awful feeling!

RS: What was going through your head? Were you self-introspecting or wondering what went wrong?

DG: Well, I thought everyone hated me anyway, for singing blues. Don’t forget that at the moment that Baba was swinging on the *jhoola* (decorated swing), there were blues going on. And I know that 99.9 percent of the Indians were expecting some marvelous holy music with sitar or something. I thought they were going to hate me.

In fact, a day or two later, a German woman said to me, who didn’t know it was me, “Ah! That dreadful Western music when he was on the *jhoola*!” And I said, “Well, actually, that was me!” And she went the color of a tomato, but I understand people’s reaction.

They’d never heard blues, because most people don’t know how spiritual blues actually is—it is a thing that is very heartfelt. So, he didn’t tell me, but I felt—yes, the nice thing was, he answered a prayer! This is the other thing. If you do pray to him, he does answer your prayers. And we forget this.

About five years earlier, at the Sai center that I went to—and still go to—a man was talking about the significance of Krishna playing the flute, the nine-holed instrument,

“This is the other thing. . . . If you do pray to him, he does answer your prayers. And we forget this.”

and when we are empty like the flute, then obviously the Lord plays the best melody.

Then, he said, “The reason you have the Lord swinging on a *jhoola* is because he should be swinging in your heart.” I remember thinking, “I like that symbolic thing, of the Lord swinging in your heart,” and I made a prayer, “Dear Lord, will you swing while I sing?” And five years later, he’s on the *jhoola* . . .

RS: And you’re singing to him!

DG: Yes, although I was probably still hated by 99.9 percent of the audience. But they’ve kind of slowly gotten used to me; I mean, I’ve performed in the Poornachandra Hall with backing tracks, and that’s also rather an unusual thing. I’ve never seen anyone with backing tracks.

RS: But, if I may ask, how did you make sense of that moment where Swami didn’t pick you as an artist? How did you convince and console yourself and come back? I’m sure you felt terribly rejected and sad at that moment.

DG: I felt small, lonely, and unloved. It’s quite difficult for me to feel small, but I certainly felt it then, went home to my room, and howled into my pillow. But then I remembered about this prayer [of mine—to sing to him when he was on the swing]. So, I knew then that he had answered it.

Of course, I was still yearning to have an interview, but I went home and felt it was still a great experience. I came back a few months later, and he did actually give me an interview then. He didn’t say very much to me; I think he knew I was just yearning to see what the inside

of the interview room was like—anything. I didn’t know what I wanted.

I’ve never known what to ask him, because I don’t know what I want. He knows! He did ask me once, “*Any questions?*” and as usual, I couldn’t think terribly intelligently. So I just said to him, “What is the point of it all? What’s this thing called life? What’s it all about, basically?” And he just said, “*Play the game; be happy!*”

RS: Very significant words!

Traveling to the Corners of the Globe as an Ambassador of Sai’s Love

DG: But so many people forget them. I travel all over the world, as you know, singing at Sai centers and places that most people haven’t heard of and don’t know where they are [on the map]. And I always tell that story to people, because when you’ve got terrible times and things are hard—and all of us have tough lives—I mean, nobody escapes without pain, unhappiness, death, or illness—absolutely nobody—we have to remember that it is He who is pulling the strings. In a way, we’re like puppets. This is very difficult for people in the West to accept. They consider surrender a sign of weakness.

Well, about ten to twelve years ago, I started getting calls, and people would say, “Can you come and sing here?” If I’m not on tour with my blues band and I’m actually free, I’d say, “Yes, okay, why not?”

RS: So you’ve flown to countries people haven’t heard of?

DG: Well, have you heard of Dagestan?—though it's not technically a country; it's a part of Russia. But it's on the Caspian Sea, next to Azerbaijan. Also, [I've been invited to] Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Siberia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Hungary, and Poland, as well as the better-known destinations like Australia and America.

I love these countries that are Muslim but Russian-speaking. The Muslim countries I adore. Swami once said to me—actually, he was talking to somebody else and suddenly looked to me and said, “*The Sufis are very good.*” Then he carried on talking.

This got me thinking, because I've always liked the aspect of Sufi thought. You know, it's not a religion; it's not organized. Its religion is the religion of love—and there's no intermediary like a priest. You need somebody to speak to God? No way, it's ridiculous! Let me go direct to the Big Boss, who of course, as we know, is inside. And the Sufis function like that.

I was quite cheered that Baba should say this, and I've had quite a few interviews when I was surrounded by Iranian Muslims, who were quite rare in the old days. There were not so many of them, and I'm happy to see there are a lot more now. So I have a feeling that's why he always made sure that I enjoyed bhajans like “*Allah Ho Akbar*” and “*Salaam*

Aleikum,” which is a very old bhajan, over 50 years old.

RS: When you go to these countries that are former republics of the USSR, that have a majority Muslim population, how do people react to your music and to the message of Sai that you take to them?

DG: They adore it; they absolutely adore it! I think they're quite happy that anyone is mad enough to go to these places, I mean, because some of them are villages in the middle of nowhere. I've slept practically on floors—and it was not just me alone. It was with the heads of Zone 8.

RS: The Russian-speaking countries of the International Sai Organization?

DG: Yes. One of them is a Dane—Steen Piculell, and one of them is the Russian, Valery [Voshchinin] (Central Coordinator of Zone 8). I'm not sort of thrust into the world on my own; I've got a little bit of a team around me. And they react amazingly.

I'm not shy or timid or nervous in front of a camera or a microphone—because it's what I've been doing; for me, it's like breathing—so I can make people feel at ease when I talk to them or sing to them. I think people can react to this. Even when I sing in front of Swami, I talk as if I'm talking to you now, because that is communication, and it's from the heart.

“Swami once said,
‘Yeah, Dana, she
dances like this.’ And
he did me better
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has!”

So, they react to this, and I have a chance later, on stage, when I can tell them the words of the songs that I'm singing. So, if it's a bhajan, obviously, they usually know the song better than I do.

People of these countries are so starved of religion—they have been depressed, compressed, pressed down.

RS: Repressed with communism all these years, godlessness.

DG: All these years of godlessness, and now they are flourishing, blooming like flowers, and absolutely ready to imbibe it. The amazing service that they do for homeless people, for animals—Swami has said that the Russian-speaking people have an amazing heart, very similar to Indian hearts, and they react amazingly. So, of course, from the moment I start off with “*Allah Ho Akbar*,” they're beaming away, and little old Muslim men with orange beards and a stick and a hat are popping up and down, which is unheard of.

Sometimes, they get up and dance to the bhajans, which of course, I'm quite pleased about. I always say this. It used to make me miserable, but the first bhajans I ever learned, from these Bhajanavali cassettes, came with one bhajan book, and it had a list of rules at the beginning, saying, “Things to do and not to do” when you're singing bhajans. And one of them is that you must sit rock-still.

This used to bother me, because once the music's going, I can't sit still. Swami once said, “*Yeah, Dana, she dances like this.*”

And he did me better than I do me. What a sense of humor he has! He knows I'm not going to sit still, and I know probably it (my swaying to the beat) wasn't very popular in the beginning.

Well, bhajans in the early days were for people who knew about Swami. But my job is to take his message to people who don't know about Swami—and not everyone can get the hang of bhajans, so I've made them slightly groovier for your man in the street. A lot of Indians in America—this was about 15 years ago—would come up to me and say, “We love your ‘Third Man’ albums, because our kids who don't like bhajans are now listening to them because there's a beat.”

But I was worried in the early days, as I had done a version of “*Prasanna Ho*” with a disco beat, and I performed it in the Poornachandra Hall. I was thinking, “Oh, Swami's going to be furious that I've taken some holy music and put it to this beat.”

Not only was he *not* furious, but at the back of the Poornachandra Hall, some people were up and dancing! I thought that was pretty amazing. So now, in the Russian-speaking countries, I tell them this story—that people have danced to bhajans, and they all go “Yes!”—and they're all up and dancing. So, I do it usually as the last number, and they all go, “*Prasanna Ho!*” and rave around like this, because music has to be joyous; it has to uplift the soul.

RS: It's a celebration of divinity!

DG: Yes, absolutely!

Swami Is Already There

RS: When you go to these countries, how do you introduce Baba to those people? What do you tell them? Have you had any experiences telling people or showing his picture? How do you go about it?

DG: Well, I do two different types of concerts. I will do concerts or talks at Sai centers; there, I don't have to introduce him. He's already known.

But somewhere like Uzbekistan and Tashkent, it's not technically allowed. And Singapore, too—but that's no problem: don't mention him. I just mention his message of love, and for me the message is more important. He himself keeps saying that. So it's very easy for me to talk about his message to these people.

RS: Has anyone heard of him before?

DG: Sometimes they have. One example was in Samarkand; we'd gone there with a team of people. That's in Uzbekistan. And I think this was where, I think it was Steen Piculell who pulled out a photograph and showed it to a little Muslim woman, and she said "He's God! We've been waiting for him," and tears poured down her cheek. Then, an 11-year-old boy came and said "But I was playing football with him in the street yesterday."

Then, we were in Dagestan again, with the same merry troupe, and we'd heard that there was a Sufi guy living in a far-off village, basically, with a few huts around him. And so we took up lots of fruit and things as gifts, drinks—nonalcoholic, obviously—and

he was in the middle of nowhere, with no television or anything. We were sitting, waiting for him, because he had to come back from the mosque, as it was Ramadan. We were waiting for sunset, and again, Steen or Valery asked him, "Have you heard of Sai Baba?"

He answered, "Have I heard of him?!" Then he produced a picture of Baba from his pocket. He had a Sai Baba key ring, and he said, "But he's been here!" And the Sufi gentleman brought us into his kind of prayer room, if you could call it that, and there was a big picture of Shirdi Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba on the wall—which for a Muslim, who won't have a form, is a pretty big deal.

RS: And Swami has been there physically for him.

DG: Yes, physically; yes, he's seen him.

RS: And brought him gifts—a picture and a keychain?

DG: These things are inexplicable to me. They're as inexplicable as the *vibhuti* pouring off pictures in various parts of the world or the *amrit* (divine nectar) dropping off things. I know these things aren't, in the big picture, that important. But if you are living in a village somewhere in the middle of nowhere and suddenly—I've seen this of a man in Dagestan—*vibhuti* appears on Swami's photograph. I mean, the joy that it gives is incredible. This omniscience thing is incredible, and I am actually more moved by devotees who have never seen Swami in the flesh than those who come here and see him.

Those who see him in the flesh can easily be misled and think that he is this, in the flesh. It's a very easy mistake to fall into, you know—everyone wanting to get up in the front because they think, "Is he going to see me, look at me?" It's so easy to fall into that trap. Over there, they don't have this possibility, so they're seeing with inner vision.

In July this year (2010), I was in Russia with Valery, in St. Petersburg, where they're doing *seva* (service projects)—fixing up the houses of little old ladies who are over 80. One had only one leg. Their houses have got no windows—they're broken—holes in the ground or in the floor—and who is going to cut their wood in wintertime? It'll be minus-30 degrees in wintertime.

These people, their selfless service is amazing; they were giving out food packets. I'm humbled to the size of an atom when I see what these Russians do, and I'm so grateful that I've been given the chance to do this [music] and bring some joy.

So, I was giving a concert wherever I went. And I never have enough CDs—I can't physically carry enough, you know.

RS: There's such a demand.

DG: Yes. I just get on stage and say, "Listen, make copies. Bootleg, pirate, do it."

RS: No copyright!

DG: No, no, because I think for bhajans, it's Swami's music. It should be global. I long for somebody to come into my life and say, "Let me handle your whole stock of CDs, and I'll do a catalog," because I'm not a businesswoman. I'm a musician, and I can't

find anyone that knows how to do it or has had enough oomph to come to me and say, "I can do it." But, one day, He'll send the right person.

I can carry in my bag maybe 100 pieces, and then you've gotten over the limit of your luggage. And I have to carry the right clothes for looking presentable, because one is actually representing the Lord and bringing good news.

RS: Swami seems to have put you in this role where you're going to these Muslim countries in the former republics of the USSR because you have a very strong Sufi connection from a long time ago. Even your book, *Mirrors of Love*, has beautiful sayings from various faiths, which actually resonates what Swami says. A lot of the content is Sufi. Where did that connection start?

DG: Well, I suppose I found it more logical for me, that "all is one."

RS: But, Dana, you're a Church-of-England girl.

DG: I was born [into it], but I always felt uncomfortable with that. I actually never really liked the sign of the cross, because for me, it represents pain and suffering. Every English church has [an image of] Jesus with blood dripping off him, looking agonized. But over here, everything is joyous and lovely.

As a child, I used to be really unhappy being told by the priest, "Only through Jesus are you going to find salvation, and the rest of you are going to hell and damnation." This, as a child, I could not accept. So, after I was confirmed—which, I must tell you, I only did because my mother paid me 30 pounds to go

through this ritual. I did it for the money so that I could have some more drum lessons. I'm being honest with you, now, over this. But I always felt uncomfortable with what I felt were lies. The moment I started to read any of the Sufi writers—if you read Al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi—there, love is so completely all-enveloping.

RS: Very strong *bhakti* (devotional) element there, a huge focus on devotion.

DG: Absolutely! And it's not with any rituals. You don't need a ritual. There are some great saints in the Sufi tradition who were doing the things that Jesus was doing. But because the Church of England, back in England, probably didn't bother to read about them, they thought that Jesus was the only one. This was how it affected me.

I'm happy if everyone else feels how they feel; everyone should be free to choose whatever form they want. But I didn't feel comfortable, because, as you said, I was probably in a past life strongly connected . . .

RS: A very old soul, connected with Sufism.

DG: I think so. I probably lived in a desert. I can't even eat a date now without feeling a bit nauseous! I probably lived on dates, and I've got this passion for camels!

— http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_09/01DEC11/DanaGillespie_1.htm
and http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_09/01DEC11/DanaGillespie2.htm

(Photos pp 7, 13, and 29 courtesy of radiosai.org)



Dana Gillespie during an interview by RadioSai, March 2011

Divinity Can Only Be Understood Through Love

Lord Shridhara (Vishnu) is the embodiment of love. He lives in love. Love is his divine form. His love is all-pervasive, reaching everywhere. Love is the holy formula for liberation, the Taraka Mantra. God cannot be understood without this supreme love. How can you get good thoughts, without comprehending this love, which is God? If something gets soiled, you can clean it. If there is a husk over a seed, you can remove it. You can even remove ignorance from a normal individual. But it is not possible to correct a fool! (TELUGU POEM)

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

You are all brought here today by bonds of love. It is only love that binds one person to another and one thing to another. The entire world is filled with love. Life devoid of love can be described as lifeless.

Three Levels of Love

In love, there are three levels. The first is the best and the highest level (*uttama*). Men at this level of love have full faith and belief that God, the embodiment of eternal bliss, is present in all beings, without exception. They will have the feeling that God is present everywhere and in everything in the form of love. For such people, “equal love and kindness to all” (*adveshta sarvabutanam*) will be the feeling. They see nothing but love in every being. They see no difference between their “own” people and others. Persons filled with such supreme love will experience bliss.

Those at the second level of love care only for their own good and the welfare

of their own kith and kin, their comfort and happiness. They do not care about others, about their merits or their faults. These people can be called middle-level or *madhyama*, on the scale of love.

There are others who don’t feel happy if they see others happy; in fact, they grow jealous of others’ happiness. They will always be looking for faults in others and criticizing them. They cannot tolerate other people being happy. Thereby they ruin all aspects of love in themselves. Just as a crow feels jealous when a cuckoo sings well, these people feel jealous at others’ attainments. Just as the crow ridicules the swan, these people ridicule good people. They are in the lowest level of love (*adhama*).

The Sweetness of Divine Love Is Attained Through Devotion

Although love is present in all these three, they enjoy, experience and use this love in different ways. In every tree of life, love is

present in the form of sweet, tasty juice in its fruit. But this sweetness is covered by a skin, called desire. Hence we are not aware of the sweet essence in the fruit. Only those who remove the skin of desire and throw away the hard seeds of anger and jealousy can enjoy the sweet juice of the fruit of love.

When one throws away the seeds of likes and dislikes and removes the skin of desire, he can enjoy divine love (*parama prema*), sweetness personified (*rasa swarupa*).

The Upanishads declare that this *rasa* (sweet essence) is God. With a view to experiencing this bliss, they prescribe nine types of devotion. Devotion is described commonly in many ways, but the Vedas say that there are three types of devotion: physical devotion (*bhoutika bhakti*), purity of devotion (*ekanta bhakti*), and supreme devotion or *ananya bhakti*. These have been described in different ways, and various commentaries also have been written about them.

Bhoutika, or Physical Devotion

Listening (*shravana*), digesting what was learned (*manana*), putting into practice what has been taught and learned (*nidhidhyasana*), the rituals connected with

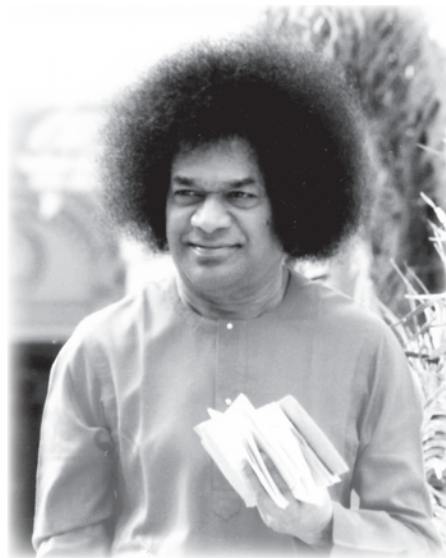
worship (*yajna*), the visiting of various places of pilgrimage, and engaging in various types of service such as charity and virtuous deeds, are all classified as devotion related to created or living beings.

Reciting the names of God (*japa*), practicing austerities (*thapas*), and recitation

of scriptures at sunrise, noon, and sunset (*sandhya* rites) are all connected with this first level of devotion. Constructing temples, consecrating idols, worshiping in temples, and rituals connected with these are also physical or *bhoutika bhakti*. These are all connected with the physical or inert (*jada*).

Even though one may be immersed in meditation and experiencing visions of

such idols, these experiences must be classified under this first type, since all these experiences arise out of the body, mind, and intellect, which are transient and not of a permanent nature. This body has to perish, and hence experiences arising out of this body will also disappear with the body. Nevertheless, this type of devotion is necessary as a first step.



Ekanta, or Purity of Devotion

Traveling along this path, we should progress gradually to the second step, of pure devotion (*ekanta bhakti*). Many people think that *ekanta bhakti* means dedication to one idol or form and experiencing the mental vision of that one form, exclusively, in private. This is not correct. **Purity of devotion is a subtle state achieved by effective control of the mind and experiencing one's inner Self (*Antaratma*).** It is not correct to think that control of the mind means holding it steady without wandering around. To be able to cleanse the mind of impure thoughts is the correct meaning of *ekanta*. This is a spiritual discipline to be practiced in a solitary atmosphere, in a quiet place, free from noise or disturbance of any kind.

The best time for this practice is from 3.00 am to 5.00 am, which is called the *Brahma-muhurta* period. Selecting a particular time in this period, closing the door, contacting no one else, one should sit quietly and adjust the rate of inhaling and exhaling of breath. It is important that the pace of inhaling and exhaling be the same. By gradual practice, the number of breaths per minute can be reduced from eight or ten a minute to two or one. You can take your own time; proceed gradually in the process of reduction of the number of times of inhaling and exhaling. Because of the flow of thoughts in the mind—mental resolves and doubts (*sankalpas* and *vikalpas*), one's breathing also gets affected and disturbed. . . .

Mental Stillness

In the state of pure devotion, the mind is dissolved and in a still state. God is everywhere, in everyone; when the mind is rid of all impurities, God's presence alone is experienced by people with pure devotion.

If you take a small tumbler with very little water and place it in the sun, you can see the reflection of the sun in the water. Though the quantity of water is very little, because it is steady and clear, you can see the sun's reflection. On the other hand, if you try to look into the vast expanse of water in the sea nearby, you don't see the reflection because the water is always moving as tides and waves. Nor can you see the reflection of the sun in a well where the water is muddy.

Even in the sacred river Ganges, you cannot see the reflection of the sun, because the water is ever flowing, though the water may be pure and the bed sandy. Similarly, God will not be reflected in a mind full of likes, dislikes, and desires, or in a mind disturbed with impure thoughts. If you want to realize the presence of God in all beings, you must recognize the importance of purity and steadiness of mind. When the mind is pure and steady, divinity will be resplendent everywhere.

To experience divinity in this way, the stage of purity of devotion alone will help you. On any other path you may experience visions of different types. These are nothing but hallucinations and products of imagination. Without virtuous qualities, you cannot control your mind. How can you build a house without bricks and mortar?

To achieve purity and steadiness of mind, earnest practice is essential.

Purity of devotion cannot be obtained by locking oneself in a room and devoting one's self to worshiping an idol. This cannot be called *ekanta bhakti* but only *ekaki* (lonely) *bhakti*; after all, the idol is only a created object. You should experience your own embodiment of the divine Atma, not a created object. You should have a vision of the Primordial Divinity, whose reflection is your Atma. Worshiping an idol is necessary as a first step, but do not spend all your lifetime on the first step!

By continuous training and practice of pure devotion, you will be able to know the Atma, the Inner Divinity, within yourself. The Atma is in you. You can't see it because of the impurities and waves of likes and dislikes hovering round. When you remove these impurities, the mind rests, in a pure state. At that stage, if you turn your eye inward, you will have the vision of the Divine (*Sakshatkara*). This is the *ekanta bhakti* we read about in books. **Purity of devotion is realized only when you turn the vision inward, away from sensory objects, and experience the pure Atma.** Pure devotion is inner vision (*antar drishti*), while physical devotion is outer vision (*bahir drishti*).

Ananya: Highest Level of Devotion

After earning physical devotion and purity of devotion, attaining the highest level, establishment in *ananya* devotion, will be easy. Many feel that *ananya* devotion

consists of surrendering to God, saying, "I have no savior other than you."

We think that simply by declaring, "You are mother, my father, my friend, and my savior, O God of Gods," we have surrendered and are practicing *ananya* devotion. This is only oral *ananya* devotion. Real *ananya* devotion comes from deep inquiry into the reality of the inner Self.

If Lost in Doubt One Cannot Reach Success

The experience you have in the waking state and the things you see in the dream and deep sleep states are found to be illusory and transitory when you inquire into them deeply. After such inquiry, the *ananya bhakti* will come to the conclusion that in all the three states ("waking, dream, and deep sleep"), whatever one sees is illusory.

He will find that the "I" that is present in all the three states, is only the Atma, and that there is no difference between this Atma and the Supreme Divine (*Paramatma*). If the thought of the body is not there, duality too will not be there. Where there is no thought of a second one, it is *ananya*. To reach this state of *ananya*, you have to go through the stage of *ekanta bhakti*.

You saw in the drama presented by the Bal Vikas children yesterday how a *pandit* (learned scholar) was describing Krishna's person, the jewels that he was wearing, and the flute he was playing. A thief who heard this description became intent on reaping a rich harvest by robbing the described boy of the jewels and asked for his address.

The pandit gave him the details of the place on the banks of the river Jamuna, with all its scenic beauty. He recited this information, however, only from his book knowledge. The thief believed him, went to the address as directed, and saw Krishna there. He accosted him and got the jewels from him. The pandit could not see Krishna, while the thief was able to see Krishna, because the pandit had only book-knowledge and no real belief.

Importance of Unquestioning Faith

Panda means *viveka* or discrimination. One who has *viveka* is *pandita*. This *viveka* is of two types. One is worldly or physical, and the other is spiritual or *adyatmic*. Worldly discrimination can be obtained through experiments and instruments, but in the spiritual sphere, such discrimination will not work. One must have faith and love.

Without faith or pure love, whatever arguments you may enter into, whatever inquiry you make, will yield no results. If lost in doubt, one can never achieve success, even in many lives. ***Ananya bhakti* can be described as “unquestioning faith.”**

In the Bhagavatha, King Parikshit had to give up his life within seven days. At this stage, Sage Shuka, the great *rishi*, came to teach him about God. Shuka had no attachment to the world. When such a great sage described the devotion of the *gopis* (cowherd maidens devoted to Krishna) as the highest state of devotion, you can realize how great was their devotion; it was *ananya bhakti* in the highest sense.

Parikshit questioned Shuka Maharishi as to how the *gopis* got *ananya bhakti* and experienced divinity. Shuka put a counter-question to Parikshit: whether he thought Krishna was a cowherd. If so, he said, there was no use in teaching him further.

Sage Shuka vowed to teach Vedanta and the Bhagavatha only to one who had full faith in God. Only those who are eager to learn, who have the faith that the teaching should be learned, and have the earnestness and steadiness of faith (*shradda*) to experience divinity, can be taught.

Do Everything with the Awareness of God

Members of the Sathya Sai Organizations should attempt to follow the right path and raise their own spiritual effort to the level of *ananya bhakti*. The world today is in a very bad state. The situation can improve only through the faith-filled who are believers in divinity. They should become embodiments of love, and by their spiritual discipline, backed by patience, forbearance, and compassion, play their role in serving society and contributing to the betterment of the world.

God is present in you and is viewing with thousands of eyes what you do. Even if no one else is seeing, God is always watching your actions. Do everything with this awareness.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
SSS 15:40, January 23, 1982

True Love

Yes, I'll say it again and again, year after year—Valentine's Day is my very favorite day. Why? Simply because it has to do with the heart, and the heart is a mystery to be discovered.

To everything there is a season—and a time to heal—a time to mourn, and a time to laugh; a time to weep, and a time to dance. The heart also has seasons. Sometimes it is winter, experiencing sadness and hurt, and sometimes it is spring, expressing moments of hope and growth.

After such periods and seasons of progress, we must learn to let go and let God. If we don't let past hurts be left in the past and move on, then the past becomes our present hell.

If God can forgive you and me of our past offenses and others of the pain by which they were hurt, then why can't we, too, forgive others?

Now I come to the heart of the mystery. Not to forgive—for whatever reason—is not to do the necessary heart surgery, because the heart will never heal on its own. Forgiveness is for always, as we slowly come to see that forgiveness needs to be a way of life.

If we do not forgive, then the anger, hurt, or loss of peace is no longer caused by the person who hurt us; it is caused by us. When we choose not to forgive—and forgiveness is a choice and not a feeling—and hold a

grudge, then the “enemy” (the tormentor) is given the space to freely occupy our mind and heart.

Once we forgive, we might still fight anger and hurt in our hearts, but this only means we need to keep renewing our choice to forgive. Then peace will come.

Each Valentine's Day, I become more in tune with this exploration of love. Choosing to love one another can produce the euphoric sensation of tenderness—godliness. This day only occurs once a year, but its real gift is to remind us of the golden opportunity to redefine the true meaning of love—the powerful subtlety of holiness, goodness, and purity—with no strings attached.

I fell in love at the tender age of 19 while a sophomore in college. At 21, I married this darling husband of mine; however, I needed the living experience of stumbling through the ups and downs of married life to realize the gold I had struck way back then.

[He passed away some years ago.] As usual, I will miss my sweetheart's playful pranks on my favorite day.

—**Winnie Bolton**
Mt Angel, Oregon

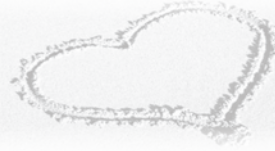
Winnie Bolton writes a regular column, “Something for the Soul,” for her local newspaper. This one appeared for Valentine's Day last year.

The Path to Sai

**Show me the path
You have made for me to travel on.
You are my Friend.
You are my Love.
You are my Life.
Let me travel with You.
Then my journey will be sweet.
When it is cold,
You will put Your blanket over me.
When I thirst,
You will give me water to drink.
When I tire,
You will let me go to sleep in Your Arms.
When it grows dark,
I will not fear.
You are my Everything.
You are The Campfire.
You are The Light.
You are The Way.**

—Janet Marie Bingham

What Is Love?



**"Love as thought is truth; love as action is right conduct;
love as understanding is peace; love as feeling is nonviolence."**

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

"Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love." —The Buddha

"We can do no great things—only small things with great love." —Mother Teresa

"To give and not expect return; that is what lies at the heart of love." —Oscar Wilde

"Self is lovelessness; love is selflessness." —Sri Sathya Sai Baba

"The greatest science in the world in heaven and on earth is love." —Mother Teresa

"Mind sees separateness. Love sees unity." —Sri Sathya Sai Baba

"Love lives by giving and forgiving." —Sri Sathya Sai Baba

"Love seeks no reward. Love is its own reward." —Sri Sathya Sai Baba

"Love sought is good, but given unsought, is better." —William Shakespeare

"Love possesses not, nor will it be possessed, for love is sufficient unto love."

—Khalil Gibran

"I know of only one duty, and that is to love." —Albert Camus

"Love is the greatest refreshment in life." —Pablo Picasso

**"It is not how much you do but how much love you put into the doing,
that matters."** —Mother Teresa

"Do all things with love." —Og Mandino

"Love all, serve all." —Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Announcements

SRI SATHYA SAI WORLD FOUNDATION and PRASANTHI COUNCIL

Loving *Sairam* and Greetings!

Dr Michael Goldstein, with the divine blessings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, has been serving as the Chairman of Prasanthi Council from its inception in 2003 and as the Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation from its inception in 2006.

This is to inform all that Dr Goldstein continues to serve as Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation and, effective November 23, 2011, i.e., the 86th Birthday of Revered Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Dr Narendranath Reddy will serve as Chairman of the Prashanti Council.

The mission of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation (SSSWF) is aimed toward the spiritual upliftment of mankind. The SSSWF works together with the Prasanthi Council, which administers the activities of the Sathya Sai Organizations (Overseas) (i.e., outside of India) in about 135 countries.

Since many countries are unaware of the functioning of both organizations, I am happy to forward herewith a note on the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation and the Prasanthi Council, along with brief introductions of the chairmen (although they are widely known), for information.

I, along with my colleagues in the Central Trust convey our best wishes to the Chairmen of both the institutions for expansion of the Divine Mission of Bhagavan Baba to greater heights in the times to come.

I appeal to all to work with unity and harmony by extending your wholehearted cooperation to them at every stage and in every sphere.

Warm regards,

—**Indulal Shah**, International Advisor, Sathya Sai Organisations (Overseas)
Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust
Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prasanthi Nilayam

Dr Narendranath Reddy to Chair the Prasanthi Council

With the divine blessings and guidance of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation was established at California, USA, in March 2006.

The mission of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation is aimed toward the spiritual upliftment of mankind. The foundation works together with the Prasanthi Council, which administers the activities of the Sathya Sai Organizations (outside of India) in about 135 countries.

Effective November 23, 2011, i.e., the 86th Birthday of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Dr Michael Goldstein was given the charge as Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation and Dr Narendranath Reddy was given the charge as the Chairman of Prasanthi Council.

Dr. Michael Goldstein did his premedical studies at UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) and received the degree of Doctor of Medicine from George Washington University Medical School. Dr Goldstein practiced family medicine in Southern California for 30 years.

He has been:

- Medical Director of Ananda Medical Group, a multi-specialty medical clinic;
- Medical Director of an association of primary care physicians in Southern California; and
- Physician Advisor to four Southern California hospitals, in case management, utilization management, and quality improvement.

Currently, Dr Goldstein is Medical Director of the Medical Education Corporation, which provides medical education and professional credentialing for health care providers in California and Nevada.

Dr Narendranath Reddy graduated with distinction from SV Medical College, Tirupati, India. He received his training in internal medicine at the New Jersey College of Medicine and Dentistry and completed his sub-specialization in Endocrinology and Metabolism at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York. He has been a practicing internist-endocrinologist in Southern California for over 30 years.

Dr Reddy is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians and the American College of Endocrinologists and is on the teaching faculty at the Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California. Dr Reddy also chairs the Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Committee.

Mission of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

The mission of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation is to ensure:

1. The authenticity of all programs engaged in by the International Sathya Sai Organizations (outside of India);
2. That all programs, publications, and interactions with other legal entities are conducted in a manner that is compatible with the principles of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Selfless Love, and Nonviolence;
3. That the actions of the International Organizations bearing the name of Sri Sathya Sai Baba are conducted according to His express guidance and the teachings that He expounded during His lifetime.

The World Foundation is responsible for:

1. All educate, medicare, sociocare, agricare, and any other humanitarian programs that will be initiated by the International Sri Sathya Sai Organizations.
2. All publications, films, photographs, and audio/visual materials distributed by the International Sri Sathya Sai Organizations.

Accepting international responsibility, the World Foundation assumes the role of the supreme administrative body of all International Sri Sathya Sai Organizations and Institutions, while the Prasanthi Council assumes the role of ensuring execution of the decisions/instructions of the World Foundation.

Structure of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

The structure and relationship between the World Foundation and Prasanthi Council enables the directors and members to bring all elements of the Sathya Sai Organizations and Institutions (outside of India) together in a concerted effort toward the spiritual transformation of mankind. The various committees constituted by the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, at present, are:

1. Sri Sathya Sai Education Committee
2. Sri Sathya Sai Health Care Committee
3. Sri Sathya Sai Publication Committee
4. Sri Sathya Sai Cultural Committee
5. Sri Sathya Sai Humanitarian Project Committee
6. Sri Sathya Sai Youth Committee

Each committee has members from various walks of life from all over the world. The current Directors of the SSSWF are:

1. Dr Michael Goldstein (Chairman), USA
2. Dr Narendranath Reddy, USA
3. Dr A Ramakrishna, India
4. Sri H J Dora, India
5. Mr Gary Belz, USA

The current members of the Prasanthi Council are:

1. Dr Narendranath Reddy (Chairman), USA
2. Dr Michael Goldstein, USA
3. Mr Leonardo Gutter, Argentina
4. Dr William Harvey, USA
5. Mrs Marianne Meyer, Denmark
6. Sri Kalyan Ray, India

From the day of its inception, the SSSWF has conducted a number of international conferences around the world. In addition, the SSSWF has released several books and audio-visuals on Sri Sathya Sai's teachings, His work, and His programs in education and healthcare. Many exhibitions have been organized displaying posters and audio-visuals on the international Sai organizations' community service activities, Sathya Sai Educare, Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare, humanitarian projects, and disaster relief work in many countries.

Report of Assembly of November 24, 2011, Prasanthi Nilayam

Message from Dr Michael Goldstein, Chair, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

To: All Sai devotees, International Sai Organizations

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Sai, *Sai Ram!*

Greetings to you all during this season when our hearts are so full of love. Our minds are focused on our beloved Swami: on his love, his holiness, and on all divine names and forms that he has assumed since the beginning. We are all in his divine embrace forever. That will never change. I write to share his divine love with you and to perform the duties entrusted to me by our beloved Swami.

We are Sai devotees aspiring to realize our beloved Sai in our spiritual hearts. In this world, there is perpetual change. Our minds change with every fleeting thought, our bodies with every heartbeat. People change, organizations change, the structure and rules of organizations change. Our beloved Swami has said, “The realm of the Atma is beyond rules and regulations, but we require them in order to control the meandering of our minds.”

The spiritual principles given to us by our beloved Swami are imperturbable. They are forever true. They will never change. The extent to which we apply and exemplify these principles is the measure of our spiritual authenticity. They are our refuge, our light, our way to enlightenment. The divine grace of our beloved Swami imbues us with the strong conviction that enables us to withstand the vagaries of worldly life. We are filled with the selfless love that enables us to realize his divine omnipresence.

We are members of the Sri Sathya Sai Organization, devotees of our beloved Swami, striving to be worthy of his divine name. The inevitable changes that occur in all Sai Organizations must be implemented wisely, lovingly, and in a responsible manner. Toward this end, a “General Assembly” convened in Prasanthi Nilayam on this last November 24. In attendance were: two members of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust—namely, Sri Indulal Shah, first Chairman of the International Sai Organization and member of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, and Sri K Chakraverty, member of the Central Trust and Secretary to our beloved Swami; four of the five members of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation; all the members of the Prasanthi Council; most of the Zone Chairs; and some of the Central Coordinators, Deputy Central Coordinators, and Chairs of the Committees of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation. An august assembly indeed!

Various accounts of this meeting have been circulated. Clarification is required.

The meeting commenced by chanting three *OMs*. Subsequently, special guests Sri Indulal Shah, Sri K Chakraverty, all members of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation present, and all members of the Prasanthi Council were introduced to the general assembly and given an opportunity to address the assembly. Sri Chakraverty advised the assembly of the need for unity and cooperation. He indicated that the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation will continue to work side-by-side in that spirit. Dr Michael Goldstein, Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, will work with the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust to ensure unity and effective coordination of all programs.

Dr Goldstein addressed the assembly and stated that the spiritual organization bearing the divine name of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba should not be abused as a vehicle that confers power and authority. Rather, serving in the Sai Organization should be utilized as an opportunity to accept and discharge responsibility for ourselves and our organization selflessly. Our goal is to ensure the spiritual authenticity of programs and practices performed in His name.

Regarding the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation and Prasanthi Council:

The Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation is the apex body of the International Sai Organization. Dr Goldstein advised the general assembly that we will proceed very carefully over the next one year to ensure that the changes introduced today will remain positive and become productive tomorrow. The Prasanthi Council will continue to report to the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation. Dr Narendra Reddy will become the Chairman of the Prasanthi Council. The current function of the Prasanthi Council members, including the geographic distribution of responsibilities, will remain intact. The Prasanthi Council members will report to the Chairman of the Prasanthi Council. The Chairman of the Prasanthi Council will keep the Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation informed periodically in all matters. Should the new Chairman of the Prasanthi Council have any difference with any of the Prasanthi Council members, he will present these matters to the Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation for resolution. The system put into place early this year, which affords the Prasanthi Council members a degree of autonomy in their respective regions, will be respected and preserved. It has functioned very well.

Zone Chairs will continue to report directly to the Prasanthi Council member assigned to their respective zones for guidance. The Prasanthi Council members will be responsible for making important procedural decisions and recommendations for new office bearers to the Chairman of the Prasanthi Council, who will, in turn, submit the proposed changes to the Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation for review and final decision. We will strive for unanimity in all matters. However, should there be differences of opinion, the Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation will resolve them. This system will remain intact for one year and then be reviewed, if necessary. In order to avoid ambiguity, confusion, or dissemination of misinformation, all international communications will come from the office of the Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation or be authorized by him. This state of affairs will prevail over the next one year.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us all recognize that now we have an unprecedented spiritual opportunity, perhaps lifetimes in the making, to become His divine light in this world. We can realize His message of divine love in these lives that we have been given. Let us not throw away this opportunity of a lifetime, nay, of many lifetimes, by promoting our transient human ambitions. When we promote our ignoble and worldly selves, we demote our infinite spiritual stature.

We are all devotees of Divinity, our beloved Swami.

We all want to serve faithfully and effectively.

We are all deeply affected by the transition from living and loving him in his divine physical presence to living and loving him in his glorious divine omnipresence. Actually it has always been the latter, but our beloved Swami, in his infinite love and care for us, his children, permitted a brief sanctuary in the course of our spiritual journey by joining us on our worldly jaunt. Now we must all come to know him, to love him, in the highest and purest way. Let us all seek his counsel in our conscience and feel his love in our most sacred heart of hearts.

Lovingly, in the Service of Sai,

—**Michael Goldstein MD**

Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

Greetings of Love and Happy New Year 2012

Message from Dr Narendranath Reddy, Chair, Prasanthi Council

Dear Brothers and Sisters: Greetings of loving *Sairam* to all of you. I wish all of you a happy and holy New Year 2012, filled with divine love, peace, and joy. The very first message to humanity from Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was “*Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam*” (hold fast to the feet of the spiritual teacher). Holding on to his divine lotus feet when we sing his sweet name and glories, contemplating on his beautiful form and *leelas* (divine sport), and doing his work while taking refuge in him, the goal of eternal bliss and peace that passeth understanding is assured. We could witness this message of love in action during the recent Christmas celebrations by devotees from 40 countries around the world in the holy land of Prasanthi Nilayam. There was a festive and sacred atmosphere pervading the ashram. Sai Kulwant Hall was decorated beautifully by the devotees from Croatia and South Africa. There was an excellent music program of Christmas carols, an adult choir, and an international children’s choir. Two ardent and longtime devotees, Ms Sylvia Alden and Mr Arthur Hillcoat, shared their experiences of Swami’s love and message. Through the hard work of Radio Sai Global Harmony (www.radiosai.org), a great number of devotees around the world watched the programs broadcast live from Prasanthi Nilayam. Christmas was also celebrated with similar enthusiasm and love in Sathya Sai Centers in many countries around the world, demonstrating Swami’s principle of the universality of all faiths.

In this time of buying gifts and presents for friends, family, and other loved ones, we should remember that the greatest gift is the gift of love. Jesus said, “When you serve the least of your brethren, you are serving me.” In his divine discourse, Swami exhorted, “*The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. God is interested only in love and service. If you can recognize the importance of these two and conduct yourself accordingly, there can be no greater sadhana (spiritual discipline).*” All of us as devotees should strive to continue the legacy of our dear Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, by spreading his message of love through selfless service to all. An act of service can be as simple as a loving word or an encouraging pat on the back. Swami’s love as manifested through loving acts of service have helped and transformed millions of people.

I am very happy to share that currently many devotees from the Sathya Sai Centers around the world are engaged in service projects, such as distributing blankets to homeless people sleeping on the streets, distributing food through food banks, providing medical service to the sick, and singing carols at convalescent homes. In continuation of the relief efforts started in January 2010 in Haiti, food, toys, and two thousand gifts were given to children this Christmas. I am also very pleased to note that the youth are taking active part in all of these service projects.

With the advent of New Year 2012, I would like to recollect His divine message: *“Treat every second as new. Sanctify every moment of your life. This has to be done by realizing the unity of Sath (the Divine) and chith (the individual consciousness). When this union is achieved, ananda (spiritual bliss) is experienced. This is the primary task before everyone. Every second should be regarded as an expression of the Divine.”*

When we practice this message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, we feel his omnipresence in everything, everywhere, ever. There are miracles galore experienced by devotees all over the world—materializations, visions, cures, protection, and guidance. This shows that he was with us, he is with us, and he will be with us for eternity.

Devotees are taking active part in the festivals and events in Prasanthi Nilayam —the Abode of Supreme Peace. Devotees from five countries will be celebrating Chinese New Year on January 28, 2012, in Prasanthi Nilayam. Also, Buddha Purnima celebrations will be celebrated by Buddhist devotees from twelve countries on May 7 and 8, 2012. These celebrations are an opportunity for everyone to work in unity and harmony and express their love for Swami.

Having the greatest divine grace of being contemporaries of the Avatar, having seen him and heard him, let us practice his teachings in our daily life. Swami said that the best way to spread his message is by being an exemplar of his teachings. Swami says that we should not become platform heroes and practical zeroes.

On December 25, 1978, Bhagavan Baba said: *“When Jesus proclaimed that he was the ‘Messenger of God,’ he wanted to emphasize that everyone is a messenger of God and has to speak, act and think like one. . . . When progress is furthered, Jesus asserted, each one can recognize all as ‘sons of God,’ children of God. . . . Finally, knowledge ripens into wisdom and the goal of jnana (wisdom) is reached, when each one realizes, ‘I and my Father are one.’”*

So, too, let us go forward from being messengers of Sathya Sai to being the children of Sathya Sai and finally realize that Sathya Sai and we are one. It should not be business as usual. Let us wake up from the slumber of ignorance and march on to the light of wisdom. As brothers and sisters let us all work together and share how to attain this goal in this very lifetime. “If not now, when? If not us, who?”

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for blessing all of us with the unique and unparalleled opportunity in the history of mankind to participate in his avataric mission. Let us redeem our lives by the practice of his universal and eternal message of divine love. *Samastha Lokah Sukino Bhavantu* (May all the worlds be happy).

With loving regards,
—Narendranath Reddy MD
Chair, Prasanthi Council

Two New Websites Launched: *Sanathana Sarathi* and “Sai Reflections” (Online Photo Ordering)

An excellent website called “The Prasanthi Reporter” (<http://theprasanthireporter.org>) pulls together articles and news postings from various official Sai websites based at Prasanthi Nilayam and thus provides comprehensive coverage of all the goings-on at the ashram. Recently the following announcement appeared during the 2011 Birthday celebrations, among the many reports:

It is with great pleasure that we announce the launch of two new websites to help serve the devotees of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the auspicious occasion of the 86th year of the advent of our most Beloved Bhagavan.

Sai Reflections (www.saireflections.org) is an endeavor by the Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust – Publications Division to bring Bhagavan’s photographs directly to your home through the online medium. This site has two major categories of products. The first is Bhagavan’s close-ups and the second is Programme Photos. The second category is an attempt to capture your memories. If you have participated in any of the programs in Prasanthi Nilayam in the Divine Presence that are listed on the site, you may search for your photographs in that album and place orders. If you are not able to find the program, kindly write to us at photosadmin@saireflections.org, and we will respond to you at the earliest.

Started in 1958, *Sanathana Sarathi* (www.sanathanasarathi.org) is a monthly magazine devoted to *Sathya* (Truth), *Dharma* (Righteousness), *Shanti* (Peace) and *Prema* (Love) – the four cardinal principles of Bhagavan Baba’s philosophy. It is published from Prasanthi Nilayam (the Abode of Highest Peace) and acts as a mouthpiece of Baba’s ashram, as it speaks of the important events that take place in His sacred abode, besides carrying divine messages conveyed through the divine discourses of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. This new website provides an easy methodology for subscriptions and renewals both for the printed magazine as well as its interactive e-copy.

We hope and pray to Bhagavan that these new channels help us in serving you better.

—<http://theprasanthireporter.org/2011/11/sanathana-sarathi-and-online-photos-website-launched/>

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Sathya Sai Newsletter USA:

Take a Look! More Back Issues of *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* Added Online!

We have been busy adding more recent issues to the *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* online archive (<http://us.sathyasai.org/ssn/index.htm>), extending our coverage into 2009. The PDFs of the more recent issues are also of a much more compact file size, making for much easier downloading. The archive can also be accessed from the *Newsletter* subscription pages at the Sathya Sai Book Center of America website, sathyasaibooksusa.org. —Ed.

Recent Arrivals

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 42 Discourses of Bhagavan Baba given in 2009, featuring 18 invaluable discourses by Baba, emphasizing the importance of festivals, upholding morality at the individual and social levels, the origin of the mind and its power, the misuse of cell phones, and many other topics. BA-042\$6.00

Viswavyapi – 2012 Diary, a diary for 2012. BI-900 \$9.00

Swami's Teachings About Virtuous Children, by Dr Charanjit Ghooi, is a compilation of Vedantic knowledge combined with Swami's teachings. It is designed to help parents live exemplary and virtuous lives as a demonstration to their children. Drawing upon her medical background, Dr Ghooi uses sketches and explanatory diagrams to further illustrate the concepts. BI-439\$4.00

Sai Baba My Pilot, by Capt V K Sharma, is an autobiography of the author's experiences as an airline pilot and the divine experiences he had when Sathya Sai Baba was on board the aircraft. He learned of Swami in 1973 and since then has been guided on his spiritual journey by Baba's grace. BI-501 \$15.00