



OM SRI SAI RAM

SAI'S CALL EVER SO TALL



WE, THE YOUNG ADULTS OFFER THIS BOOK AT THE DIVINE LOTUS FEET OF OUR BELOVED SAI

NOVEMBER 23, 2011

SAI'S CALL EVER SO TALL

BIRTHDAY DEDICATION

MADHURI MANOHAR
GREATER BALTIMORE

The great day of 23rd November **alighted**,
Birth of SAI Avatar made us all **delighted**,
Universe we see, His marvellous **creation**,
Making it the spot of our daily **habitation**.

His gift to world a unique **Organization**,
That spreads the values in every **nation**,
Seva and bhajans constitute its **identity**,
Soothing to all is the wonder of **divinity**.

SAI, chanting mantra in every **household**,
That cheers us all, whether young or **old**,
The guiding force to erase any **adversity**,
And bestows in all, peace and **prosperity**.

'Young Adults', all set to flutter its **wings**,
Whispers their Love as their heart **sings**
'Yes to SAI's work', youth's new **mantra**,
That sets their tone for the Parthi **Yatra**.

Youthful we are, we enjoy life's **beauty**
With age on our side, we carry many a **duty**,

'Our Life His Message', tops our **priority**,
'Unity is strength' reflects our **solidarity**.

'Be, Do and Tell', the inner values of **life**,
It sets the sail smooth without any **strife**,
Youth as Torch bearers, make the **future**,
To create new hope for many to **nurture**.

Our lives, we shape as the ideal **humans**,
Our vices, we leave back to the **demons**,
'Strive high, Follow the Right' life's **goal**,
Deserve first, all to become as SAI's **Soul**.

It's time that youth join all their **hands**,
To make a change in the distressed **lands**,
Step on to climb a ladder of **spirituality**,
Make your heart free from **animosity**.

Oh Sai! We offer You a birthday **wish**,
Guide us through from start to **finish**,
We promise to serve with **dedication**,
And live up to your every **expectation**.



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My dear Lord Sai, my best friend, confidant, and soul-mate,

Its true, when it's time to know YOU, to experience YOUR message, to understand YOUR mission, absolutely NOTHING gets in the way. I am a proof of this. You came to me in your gentle, ever-loving way and swept me off my feet to a point of no return. I can't contain the sheer joy that rushes through me each time I think of you or picture your beautiful face in my mind. My heart radiates with happiness just as the big yellow smiley face, without a doubt of sadness or despair. Since you've departed from your physical body, I have had the most unique experiences. I couldn't cry on April 24th. Confidence grew within me that you would stay with us and keep each being in all the worlds, ever so close. The best news is that now my mind doesn't put you in a physical location (Puttaparthi), but is able to freely picture you all around.

I shed a tear of joy as I write this. I can't contain how amazingly lucky I am, how lucky each and every creature is, to have our Lord Sai with us. To know you is the biggest blessing of many many lifetimes!!! THANK YOU MY LORD.

Always Loving You,
Komal



HIS MISSION IS YOUR MISSION

PUSHITA KUNDNANI-LOFFREDA
MIAMI, FL

“No matter where you go, always do your duty as you see it and know that I will be there inside you guiding you every step of the way...There is no need to worry about anything. Whatever is experienced, whatever happens, know that this Avatar willed it so. There is no force on earth which can delay for an instant the mission for which this Avatar has come. You are all sacred souls and you will have your parts to play in the unfolding drama of the new Golden Age, which is coming.”
– Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

My Journey to Sai began in 1974 at the age of 7 when my parents took me to a melodious bhajan session. I was captivated by the photo of Swami that adorned the altar. The image of His loving smile was immediately etched into my heart.

Three years later in December of 1977, we joined a few devotees from the Miami Sai Center on our first pilgrimage to the Lotus Feet. In those years, in Swami's Brindavan ashram there was no covered Sai Ramesh Hall, no Seva Dals or token lines. It was first come, first row. The Darshans were exquisite, with Swami taking letters and flowers, pausing for pictures and blessing all with that Divine smile. It was truly a beautiful time. When Christmas Day arrived, we were informed that certain westerners were invited to have dinner with Swami. Our family was saddened to learn that we would be excluded because we were of Indian Origin. Just as we lost hope, my beloved mentor Bettina (President of the Miami Sai Center) intervened on our behalf and ultimately gained approval for us to attend dinner. The events of the evening were magical with the children singing Christmas carols, Swami serving us dinner with His own Hands, and giving a lovely discourse on the significance of the Holy Trinity.

Our family was subsequently blessed with three more very special trips to our Beloved Lord. We thought our bliss would never end. Then came a “dry spell” that kept us away from India for 12 long years. During this tumultuous period the many challenges I faced forced me to question my beliefs: “why am I here”?, “what is the purpose of life”?, “isn't there only one God”? These Questions would go unanswered until 1990, the year that lit the path back to my Beloved Swami. The beacons that opened my heart and illumined the path were the books, “Transformation of the Heart” and “Divine Memories”. These messages in the books helped me to realize that Swami would guide the rest of the way.

In 1991 I met my friend and sister in Sai, Sangeeta. Together we would embark on the path of Sathya and Dharma that carried both of us from young adulthood to motherhood. In the ensuing months, Sangeeta and I shared our love for Swami and His teachings. We immersed ourselves in search for all things Dharmic, with Seva projects, study circles and bhajans filling most of our time. The mundane things in life slipped away as Swami drew us closer and closer to Him. The inner reflection was starting to manifest in the outer manifestation of our lives. We were blessed with opportunities to be in the presence of exemplary individuals that would further enlighten our path.

In 1995, one magical experience helped to shape the genesis of the Young Adult Program in the US. We were blessed to have Hal Honig as a guest speaker at the Miami Sai Center. Not only did he share his phenomenal experiences with Swami, he also informed us he that would be taking a group of boys to Brindavan during the summer. It was only natural for us to inquire whether Hal would consider including



girls in the group. The answer came back as “no”. As the visit ended we exchanged contact information with Brother Sunil, one of the fortunate boys to be included in the group. Brother Sunil was instrumental in subsequently helping a group of Sai sisters find a way to Brindavan that summer. Little did we know that he would also be instrumental in the formation of the Young Adult group in Miami.

A few weeks later, we received a phone call with the news of a possible group of girls going to Brindavan during the summer. Deepa aunty from NYC would be leading the group. Within a few days we received the criteria for applying. After a rigorous process of essays and interviews, we received the news that we had been accepted. We were going to see our Beloved Swami!

There was a feeling of nervousness and insecurity about meeting the other girls, but once we arrived in NYC

everyone was so filled with love and acceptance, the doubts melted away.

Upon arrival in Brindavan, we were given a large bright lovely room in the VIP building. To our surprise, Hal Honig's group of boys was given the room directly across from ours. The leela's to unfold between both groups would turn into present and future life lessons.

The first morning darshan, the USA girl group, Malaysian girl group and USA boy group were given special seating. The Blessings continued with Swami acknowledging all three groups. On the 19th of May, my 28th birthday Swami granted us permission to attend Summer Course. We were called into Trayee and seated on the beautiful lawn as Swami distributed paper and pencils to everyone. He stood directly in front of me, leaning over to hand out notepads. His divine feet were directly under mine and I took Padnamaskar for as long as He stood there, an amazing birthday gift!

The attention and blessings continued for the entire time we were there. These gave rise to a slight case of rivalry between the two USA groups. The boys were granted the opportunity to spend time with Swami. The more attention He bestowed upon them, the more our hearts became sad. Why was he paying so much attention to them and not us? Even though the boys brought us prasadam from Swami every day, we still felt dejected. Deepa aunty suggested we all write letters for the next morning. As we opened our hearts, Swami opened His. Mirror reflection! From then on we received similar Blessings: The boys sang for Swami, the girls sang for Swami. The boys got photo's with Swami, the girls received handpicked Sari's given to each of us by the Lord himself.

During the last few days, we received a knock on our room door. The gentleman stated, "Swami has called you before bhajans this afternoon, please be at the gates by this time – Sai Ram".

I stifled my emotions until he was out of the building, then shrieked for joy and ran to relay the wonderful news to the rest of the girls. Yes! We were elated that Swami had called us.

We waited patiently at the gates until we were ushered inside. With a slight sense of nervousness, we walked quietly up the ramp into the interview room. The boys entered after just we found our places. Once everyone had settled down, Swami entered and asked if we wanted the fan on. He addressed our groups with a few points that still remain with me today. Our all-knowing Swami knew that we were about to embark on work that would require male YA's and female YA's to work together. He guided us with the following, saying boys, "think of the girls as your sisters". And to the Girls, "think of the boys as your brothers". He also admonished us to, "use your discrimination". He spoke to us at length about Faith - "first self-confidence then faith.

Swami then called us in for our private interviews. The girls went first, and we were able to ask Him anything that concerned us. I asked him something quite personal and he said "Why fear when I am here"? Upon exiting the inner-view room, Swami looked up and asked "where are those two girls"? When the two sisters in our group didn't say anything, I raised my hand and said "we are here, Swami". He said, "come here". Sangeeta and I made our way toward Him. With a wave of His hand, two necklaces with heart-shaped medallions depicting Swami's face, were materialized. He presented one to each of us. It represented many

things, for me, Swami would always be in our hearts. He later blessed candies for us to bring back to the South Miami Devotees.

Upon our return to the US, we received news from brother Sunil that Swami had blessed the publication Sai Student Bulletin (now called Syan). The launch of the USA Sai Young Adults had begun. With Dharma in our heart, Sai Brothers and Sisters from across the country dedicated themselves as Swami's instruments in building an Official YA community. We developed formats for young adult meetings, meditation, SSE teaching, environmental sustainability, engaging in service projects and perfecting bhajans. One of our guiding principles was Swami's statement "the well-being of the world depends on the conduct of the youth. Only when their conduct is good, the world can have an ideal future".

We worked alongside and within the Sai Centers, learning and earning the trust and respect of our elders. Dr's Goldstein and Harvey gave the go ahead for Young Adults to have their own meetings within the umbrella of the Sai Organization. Many of us were given titles for organizational purposes, but it did not affect our teamwork and goals. With Dr. Harvey, Hal Honig and Phyliss Krystal at the helm of the YA wing we embarked upon a journey of leadership development. In 1996 the first National YA conference was held and in 1997 the very first world youth conference took place in Prashanti Nilayam.

Fifteen years on, the torch has been passed to successive generations of YA leaders. The original group of young adults continue to serve Swami in leadership positions within the Sai Organization and in their communities. The Blessings given by Swami, The National Sai Organizational leaders and Sai Center Elders serve to inspire them throughout all stages of their lives. These same Blessings are for all generations of Young Adults who have a sincere desire to serve Swami with love, humility and respect. I am deeply grateful to our Beloved Swami and all those who inspired the path for the Young Adult program. Swami has stated many times "Take 1 step towards me, and I shall take 100 towards you". Take your step and receive His Blessings – Jai Sai Ram



It was Saturday afternoon and the place was bustling with activity. Families pulling available chairs and tables together, a group of friends roaring with laughter over the recent victory of Los Angeles Lakers, the kitchen crew shouting orders, the scurrying wait-staff adding a dimension of energy to an already energy packed setting. And then, there I was sweating profusely in a inconspicuous corner. The place: a Vegan restaurant in Crenshaw district of Los Angeles. Wikipedia will tell you that Crenshaw is a predominantly low income residential area bordering Leimert Park considered to be one of least safest cities in America.

What was I doing in a Vegan restaurant in the Los Angeles metro area? I was assigned to interview the owner of this Vegan restaurant for a upcoming YA presentation. The theme of the YA film: 'In God We Trust.' We were interviewing individuals from diverse backgrounds, nationalities, age and gender as to what this phrase meant to them.

After an agonizing 45 minutes of deliberation and hesitation, praying to Swami, I walked up to the owner and introduced myself as a youth from a spiritual organization working on a special project. As expected, the owner, a kind African American gentleman in his mid- thirties, politely declined to be interviewed. For some odd, inexplicable reason, I continued to engage him in a conversation and finally he said, "what is the name of your organization and who is your leader ?"

Assuming that it might be best to show a picture of Swami first before launching into an explanation, I went back to the table and got a Swami picture from the bag. As I was walking towards the counter with the picture facing the owner, a smile steadily grew on his face. And he said, "I know this guy and have read his books. Of course, I will answer any questions you have for me."

For the next one hour, he shared how he learnt about Swami through a friend and how he delighted in reading several books, discourses and Vahinis. He was moved deeply when he read Swami's definition of God - that God is love and that we are all embodiments of the same divine love! He said that his life was transformed since then. He started a vegan restaurant, has a beautiful family-wife and three children and strives daily to remember and practice that God is love and that divine love lives in all!

This seemingly chance encounter happened in May 2006 and yet, the message resonates deeply even now. On that day, I did wonder how a person born and raised in America, could be transformed by the words of someone living in India, transcending geopolitical boundaries, psychosocial and religious conditioning, unless... God is truly Love! A love that transcends man made boundaries, psychosocial and religious conditioning. A pure and sublime love that unites us all to divinity!

"Believe that all hearts are motivated by the one God; that all faiths glorify Him alone; that all names in all languages and all forms man can conceive denote the one Supreme Being; His adoration is best done by means of love." Baba

Jai Sai Ram!

LIVING IN SAI IS BEING AWARE AT EVERY MOMENT

AYSHWARYA SUBRAMANIAM



SMILES 4 SAI

Smiles for me, Smiles for you,
Remember that Smile that touched you!

A Smile for Love, A Smile for Peace,

A Smile is all we need too...

As Simple as it sounds, we forget how,

A Smile can change the world for TWO!

Our dearest Sai, can be felt inside.

But how?

To express that love for you.

As Life Goes on, Just remember that Sai Smiles.

At any time, that smile is meant

for me and you!



MOVEMENT OF THE SOUL

ROHINI HAK
LOS ANGELES, CA

Movement of the soul...from being apart to being whole...
Knowing of the mind...so free and yet divinely controlled....
Emotions of the heart....flowing in their inherent divinity ..
I find myself every instant ..enjoying this unbounded serendipity..
Living every moment, untouched by illusions...
Faith and Trust, surrendered in my Guru's devotion...
Walking the path...learning..teaching..sharing..caring...
The many roles we play, the many roles our self in this life is bearing...
A quiet whisper from the winds running wild....
Like a fragrance that delights with its sweetness mild...
Something so blissful like a touch of a rose petal...
Protective bubble ..around my world..that makes all turmoils settle..
Unexplained feeling of eternal bliss...
Words fail me when i try to express this...
Filled With bountiful light and grace ..
Encompassed by an immense yearning to see my savior's face,
To get joy even from this mundane worldly race..
Courage instilled in my body from my Atma..for any fears to chase ..

In this embedded glory of Love ..we bask..
To discover our depths and creative self within..is our task..
To be of and be from and be in Love ...
To give to and share with and live in Love..
To be selfless in this journey ...to expect nothing back...
For in this immortal divinity within us ..there is nothing we can desire or lack....
Being in the present ..enjoying my epiphany ...in this felicity. ...Enraptured...& .Ecstatic am I...
Pure..Heaven..Deep...Simple...my soul soars high.. ..the essence of Living In Sai.....

ON A LONG SUMMER NIGHT

KARTHIK SRINIVASAN
WEST HILLS, CALIFORNIA

On a long summer night, when the moon shines bright
I hear a calling and my heart feels so light
It's the voice I know, the distant ring
I hear my dear Lord sing
He smiles at me and my heart skips a beat
I run towards him like a toddler with a tiny feet
I wake up from my sleep and look at the moon
I see his silhouette in my room
I cry and my cheeks are wet with tears
He said why fear when I am near.



SAI BABA: LIGHT OF MY LIFE

ANIRUDDHA BHAT
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

*Sai Baba, light of my life, Lead, kindly Light, I pray
Lost in the world of illusion and play, Salvation is the only way
Ocean of mercy, love and compassion, Bless me, O Lord, this day
Lead, kindly Light, I pray*

How can we truly put in words what Bhagawan means to us? How can we express in any language the height of His towering majesty, the breadth of His all-encompassing Power, and the depth of His infinite Love?

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has been everything to me: the caring mother who wiped away the tears of a homesick child, the loving father who instilled discipline in an unruly teenager, and the eternal master who guided a young man on the high and holy path of duty, discipline and devotion in the quest of Truth. He has fed and clothed me, scolded and praised me, loved and ignored me. He has cured me of illnesses, protected me from harm, and rescued me from certain death. In all of this, I am not unique. There are thousands, perhaps millions, like me. And for each of us, this Lord Sathya Sai, this divine being, this phenomenon beyond human understanding shines resplendent as a beacon of love and truth amid the darkness and depredation of the transitory and illusory world, leading us ever patiently and lovingly to our inescapable destiny of Self Realization.

I was four years old when Bhagawan first appeared to my mother in a dream, commanding her to send her only child to His school in Ooty. It was 1979, and Los Angeles was not, by my parents' estimation, a suitable place to raise their son. My parents had only been devotees for about a year; my mother would take two buses to the Hollywood Sai Center so that I could attend Bal Vikas classes and learn bhajans. My parents went to great pains to provide me with a spiritual foundation, but could not completely shield me from the negative influences that surrounded me. After a gang-related incident occurred while I was playing in the street outside our home, my mother wrote her first letter to Bhagawan, conveying her despair and praying for His intercession in my life. Soon after, He came to her in a dream. In the dream, He appears in a garden on the other side of a gate, like the rising Sun emerging out of the mist. He talks with my mother for a long time, and when she asks Him about my education, He answers simply, with a loving smile: "Make arrangements in the Ooty school." *Lead, Kindly Light.*

Despite numerous obstacles, visa hassles and medical issues, I was enrolled a few months later in the first standard at Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar at Nandanavanam, Ootacamund, a hill station in Tamil Nadu. It was the spring of 1980, and I was not yet five years old. During the first few months, my mother stayed with a relative in nearby Wellington, visiting me once a month. Nevertheless, I struggled with homesickness. I would wake up in the middle of the night, crying inconsolably for my parents, or for spaghetti, or Disneyland, or my toys gathering dust thousands of miles away. Whenever a teacher heard me sobbing, she would rush to my side and attempt to comfort me with vibhuti, stories or songs, none of which helped in the least. The night-time episodes grew so numerous that the school considered calling my mother and sending me home. Then, one day, the episodes abruptly stopped, and I began sleeping through the night without any trouble. One of the teachers finally pulled me aside, wondering how I was adjusting so well. I told her it was because whenever I woke up in the middle of the night, feeling sad or afraid, Baba would appear in the dormitory room and tell me stories and jokes, staying with me until I went back to sleep. Although I am unable to recall

the details of those divine encounters, I know I was not the only homesick child who had this miraculous experience. *Lead, Kindly Light.*

Bhagawan used to visit Ooty once or twice a year. During one of His visits, I was recovering from chicken pox and was therefore quarantined in the sick room along with a number of other children, unable to attend darshan. One evening, as we listened enviously to the joyous buzz of children making their way to the dining hall after bhajans, the doors to our sick room suddenly opened and Bhagawan walked in. He made His way to each of our beds, materializing vibhuti for us, asking us where we were from, and giving us joy. Then He stopped abruptly at the bed of a boy sleeping across from me. This boy was too sick to sit up in his bed, so he simply lay there looking silently up at Bhagawan. Swami turned to the teachers. "Do you know why he is not improving?" He asked. "Every day in the afternoon, the sun shines directly on him through that window. His bed gets very heated up and he is very uncomfortable under this heavy blanket. You are all doing your various duties in the hostel, so you are not aware of this. But I know, because I am here." He paused, then added with emphasis: "I am always with my children. I am never away from them!" He sternly instructed the teachers to move the sick beds away from the windows, like a mother who is unhappy with her child's care. Then Bhagawan sat on the edge of the bed and spoke to the boy in his mother tongue, giving him medicine with His own hands, and promising he would recover soon. The look in His eyes as He comforted the boy is something I will never forget.

In 1984, while returning to Ooty for the start of a new school year, I was waiting with my uncle in the Bangalore bus station at Malleshwaram. Unbeknownst to us, there was a bus driver's strike that day, and none of the state buses were operating. The conditions in the station were beginning to deteriorate rapidly as striking workers began to demonstrate. My uncle had momentarily left me waiting by the bus to inquire at the ticket window about the delay, when I noticed, less than fifty feet away from me, a man with bloodshot eyes walking menacingly in my direction. He was holding a glass bottle with a rag stuffed in its mouth. I searched frantically for my uncle but could not locate him. Then I suddenly heard an urgent voice in my ear: "Go outside now!" I turned to see who had spoken those words, but there was nobody there. I grabbed my bag and ran towards the main exit, and in the process, collided with my uncle. Just then I heard a crashing noise behind me. When I looked back, I saw that the man had thrown the bottle directly where I had been sitting. The bottle had exploded, scattering shards everywhere, and people had begun stampeding towards the exits. Due to our head start, we made it outside without any trouble. As soon as we got our bearings, we discovered we were standing in front of a small minivan with a placard in its windshield reading "SAI SCHOOL BUS." Next to the van were my teachers, singing bhajans and eating dosas. Of course they had room for me. I have no doubt whose voice rang out in my ears that morning to save me from harm. *Lead, Kindly Light.*

During my years in Prashanti Nilayam, Bhagawan was a stern disciplinarian and loving father, instructing us on the proper way to conduct ourselves as students and young men. He was

incredibly detail-oriented, commenting on everything from the crease of our pants and the length of our hair, to our study habits and handwriting, as well as our posture and diction while chanting Vedas or delivering a speech. Every lesson, even the bitter pill of a scolding, was conveyed with love and always followed by the sweet nectar of an encouraging word. And through all the studies and speeches, all the sports meets and music programs, He never allowed us to lose sight of the big picture: the primacy of Love, the importance of inner inquiry, and the necessity of constant integrated awareness. Darshan, seva and sadhana; these were means to an end, not ends in themselves. During my last week as a student in His school, Bhagawan appeared in a dream that felt like a farewell blessing. He said, very solemnly, “You being here with me was written in your fate thousands of lives in the past. You have travelled a journey of countless lives in order to be with me all these years.” In this also, I am not unique. All of us were born in this age of Sai to reap the good fortune of those countless lives, to enjoy the bliss of communion with the Sai Avatar, and to participate in a great revolution of spiritual upliftment. This sublime task - to practice truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence; to love and serve all beings; to make our lives His message – now continues, and must continue unabated. We are, each and every one of us, the heirs and beneficiaries of Bhagawan’s enduring and boundless inheritance of Love.

Lead, Kindly Light. This phrase, the inspiration for a bhajan my father once composed, comes from a hymn written by Cardinal John Newman in 1833:

Lead, kindly Light, amid th’encircling gloom, lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home, lead Thou me on!

Through the veil of our tears, through the gloom that has gripped our hearts, it has sometimes been difficult to remember that Bhagawan has not left us at all. We must remember that He is very much with us, in us, around us, above and below us, protecting us as the eyelid protects the eye. It is only our frame of reference that has changed. We must now seek Him within ourselves: by traveling the path of inner inquiry, by living lives of selfless service, and by seeing Him in our fellow man.

Although the night may be dark, although we may be far from home, the Light of Sai endures. Its resplendence will never be eclipsed. May it always shine brightly in our hearts. May it always guide us along the higher path towards the ultimate Truth. May it lead us home.



Swami said, “I am your mother, you are my children. I have love of a thousand mothers, you will not understand.”

The 1995 Summer Course in Whitefield was a golden experience for 18 boys from USA, with their Divine Mother, Sai . Swami was full of surprises and gave us gifts and blessings beyond our imagination, saturating every word and act with Pure Unconditional Divine Love. Throughout the trip, Swami made us His own, by laughing and joking with us, by playfully teaching us practical lessons, and when necessary, even chiding and correcting us.

I experienced various aspects of this Love. He started as my Ultimate Teacher, pointing out my laziness, anger and lack of gratitude (lessons that I am still working on.) As my Divine Father, with His piercing Shiva looks, Swami revealed to me that there is no hiding and that He knows everything. He guided by saying, “When bad thoughts come, think of me.” I was so thankful for that experience as it opened me up. I felt that there was finally one being who knows everything about me, understands me, and to whom I can confide in without being judged. As my Divine Mother, He then assured, “I will always take care of you, I will take care of your family.” We had the opportunity to clear our doubts and inhibitions and ask about anything, as though Swami was only ours for the time we were there. For us, it was our unique experience of His pure and simple Love, but for Swami, this is His very nature, and He is the same to everyone, at all times. In one of the interviews, a youth asked, “Swami what is grace?” Swami answered so simply, “Love, Grace, Blessings, all the same.” Swami says, “Spirituality is simple, world is complicated.” And here we thought it was the other way around!

One special treat as being His Summer students, every evening our group was invited to spend time in Swami’s home, Trayee, with the other students, staff, and teachers. People were randomly picked by Swami to stand up and speak in front of all on various topics, while Swami relaxed on His jhoola (swing) like a great-grandmother biding the entire family. On one occasion, He called on me and asked me to speak about the Sai Organization in the US. I shared about my struggles, and He listened attentively and later spoke to the Organization leaders in regards to new young adult groups forming in the US. One important piece of guidance He gave was to allow YA boys and girls to meet at the same time as Sai brothers and sisters, but to sit separately. When I showed Swami a portfolio of activities by New York Sai Young Adults, He paid full attention to every single page commenting on the people present, joking and again clarifying (boys and girls separate). He pointed out a picture of a nun I was standing with and said, “Good devotee, good person.” Swami is universal and so is His message, He knows all and belongs to all!

We also had the opportunity to present to Swami the first issue of the Sai Students Bulletin, USA, that later became the national young adult newsletter and an inspiring hub for sharing youth experiences and activities. Swami made a comment that was both editorial and deeply profound. The first article was titled “Swami will Change” . He asked “Change what?”, and we said “transformation of our hearts” . Swami responded, “Swami will not change, you will change”. That He is changeless and He is here to transform our hearts is one of His greatest missions. Swami is always there to guide us, support us from inside as our conscience, and from the outside through the Sai Organization or any other vehicle we find suitable. Another time, Swami asked me to, “Talk about your life.” I shared how my earthly Mother brought me to my Divine Mother, and said about Swami “Look no further, we have found God.” Earlier in my life, through my mother’s

love and encouragement I grew from being puny to a strong athlete and a better student. After finding Swami, my life took an even stronger, more purposeful and meaningful course.

Most importantly, Swami became a friend, my best friend, nay - my only true friend. Once, Swami put me on spot (while my Sai brothers in the group took cover) asking me about my many friends. He asked me, "Who is your true friend?" I said, "You, Swami." He replied emphatically, "I am your only true friend, God is your only true friend." With Swami as my best friend, what do I fear losing? The question is, is Swami only my true friend? Well He is my true friend and He is your true friend too, He just patiently waits for us to realize it. Swami is always ready. In one interview He said "Take me, I am yours."

One day Swami told us, "Tomorrow don't go to darshan, come to my house, but only if you want," implying we have a choice and that He would not come in the way of our free-will. We all shouted, "Swami we want to come, we want to come!" The next morning we got word that Swami is expecting us, so we quickly rushed to His house. We had such a good time; just like good old friends laughing and joking interspersed with deep spiritual guidance and good advice. It was getting late for darshan, and it appeared as if Swami grudgingly said, "I have to go for darshan now. Wait here, don't go, I'll be back soon." And soon enough, He came back and he was so happy to see us and we were so happy to see Him. Like Krishna to His Gopalas, Swami was our true friend and we were His.

One question Swami frequently asked, important for each one of us to ponder on, "What do you want?" To this, one person replied, "Swami, I want to serve You." Swami made a profound, true, yet humbling statement, "I am the Servant. I do not need service." He is only here to help us along our journey of life, for our self-transformation.

Swami says, "Past is past, forget the past. This present is not ordinary present, it is omnipresent." Throughout the Summer Course, I feel we were just fortunate in receiving His love. Like for so many others, He lets us taste it and even years later, still treasure it. I know it and remember it to be so pure, so full, and so selfless such that this Love can and must be available to all people at all times without reservation or condition. We just have to turn on the taps, and let it flow full from our hearts.

The We can all do it together - it is easier, it is more fun - we can learn and grow together helping ourselves and helping one other.

What is your story?!



LIFE IS A MIRACLE

LAKSHMI JAGANNATHAN
BERKELEY, CA

Om Sri Sai Ram. Every moment of my life, I realize more and more how fortunate I am to have Swami in my life. Life without Him means absolutely nothing.

Although my internal 'connection' with Swami started for the first time in 2003 as a young adult, he has been there for me from the time I was born (and I'm sure way before that!). None of my immediate family members were devotees (or even knew of Swami) when my sister or I were born. It melts my heart to know now that both my sister and I 'happened' to be born in a Sathya Sai Clinic in Bangalore, and our doctor at that time was an ardent Sathya Sai Devotee too. So, He pretty much had me from the very beginning!

When I started Balvikas in 1997 in Dallas, I learned of Swami and His values for the first time. I met the most loving teachers, friends, and Sai family. Although I didn't quite recognize it at that time, I'm sure I started changing (for the better!) from the moment I joined Balvikas. The energy I was constantly surrounded with was amazing.

He continued to strengthen my faith by making me very involved in youth group leadership roles and activities. I've been able to recognize that my life is His miracle ever since I first connected with Him in 2003. We were in Sai Ramesh Hall in Brindavan. The Region 10 young adults had prepared a music program to welcome Swami. As we were singing and as He walked in to Sai Ramesh Hall, I received an intense look from Him for a few seconds. It felt like eternity, and I couldn't move for a few seconds after this unforgettable and vivid experience. I didn't know what this meant at the time, but I was able to recognize that my connection with him started at that very moment, and life has changed after this. He has brought me to Parthi as a part of region 10 and region 7 pilgrimages quite a few times after that, and every time, I have been able to learn something about myself and about Him. I clearly became a different person after every trip I made in some way or the other: spiritually, mentally, and physically. This was an internal and a precious realization that Swami and I shared every time.

I began my journey thinking of Swami as a teacher who I have utmost respect for. With my different experiences with Him, He has drawn me soo close to Him, and the only word that I can describe Him with





now is 'sweetness.' He is just Pure Sweetness. In 2009, Region 7 Young Adults and Region 4 embarked on a pilgrimage to Parthi. The Region 4 YA rep at the time and I had the opportunity to present something to Swami. When we went up to dais to show this album to Him, I could feel, experience, and absorb Swami's sweetness with such intensity! He obviously knows everything that we are presenting to him already, but just to have us interact with Him and make us happy, He asked both of us a few questions about the album. He first asked us, 'Which country?' wanting to know which country in Africa the album was about. I replied, 'Zambia, Swami.' Just like a sweet mother encouraging her child, as the conversation continued, he encouraged us with 'Very Happy' and 'Good Good' for what we were showing him. Even sweeter was when he looked at one of the pages and said, 'Map-u' (with a Telugu accent!) for an Africa map that one of the children had drawn in the album. I smiled and laughed right in front of Him when He said this. It was too sweet! When we asked Him for permission for padnamaskar, He said, 'Yes, Yes' so lovingly. He is the sweetest and most precious phenomena one could ever know and encounter!

In the process of doing my PhD now, I stop once in a while in surprise and ask myself, "Oh my gosh, how did I even come up with that idea for my project?" My heart skips a beat when I realize that it could not have been me. There's no way I could have thought of that idea or that solution to the problem on my own. There's no way I could have made through all those impossible qualifying exams and scary weekly meetings on my own. There's no way things could align the way they sometimes do to work properly on its own. I sit down, catch my breath, tear up, and thank Swami for making every day and every moment of my life a miracle. Nothing is impossible when we remember and realize who we have with us and watching over us constantly.

Recently, I feel like He is in the process of really teaching me what 'Living in Sai' means. He has made quite a few changes in my life recently and very quickly. Integrating and practicing what I have learned from Him has been crucial every step of the way; He really wants me to internalize Living in Sai. I look forward to growing further with Him and with all of His messengers (my loving family and friends) by my side. My life is Swami's miracle! I love Him very much and thank Him from the bottom of my heart for everything He has done and is doing for me and everyone around me. Jai Sai Ram!

Some of my favorite memories from the '95 trip:

We landed in India and made our way directly to Brindavan in time for evening darshan. We all washed and changed and moved quickly to the Sai Ramesh Hall where we sat far in the back, nowhere near the front of the hall where Swami sat for bhajans. Later in the evening, Hal Honig, our trip leader spoke with Narasimhamurthy Sir regarding our arrival and pending play performance. To my amazement, Narasimhamurthy Sir reported that Swami had already spoken to him about our group's arrival even before we could. "The American boys look very good, like frogs around the lotus," Swami told him.

"We looked very good?" I wondered. How could He have even seen us amongst the thousands of devotees seated in the hall from His chair where He sat on the dais? As I pondered over this miracle, my amazement slowly melted into humble gratitude that the Lord let us know that He knew we were there with Him. It was an auspicious beginning.

One day as we sat inside the university auditorium waiting for Bhagawan's arrival at the morning summer course session, I found myself sitting on the center aisle. As Swami entered the hall, the entire room fell to silence and every eye watched His form move slowly through the auditorium. Swami didn't talk with a single person and His face registered a serious tone. At some point it became clear to me that He was going to walk down the aisle where I was sitting, and the excitement of being so near Him must have swelled up in me. As He came walking down the center aisle next to me, He saw the smile on my face and with a sudden turn of His head, gave me a great big smile in return. His gesture was so pronounced that other people asked me later what I had said to Swami. "Nothing," I replied. "I only smiled at Him."

At the time, His smile filled my heart and made me happy, but there was a magic to the moment that provoked my thinking. As I ruminated on that wordless interaction, I couldn't help but be awed by His sudden response—it was spontaneous! "What was the cause?" I wondered. I hadn't any questions or concerns for Him at the time. I made no prayers or petitions for His help or attention. I had no yearnings, cravings or wishes. I was just thrilled to see Him, and that was all. Therefore, I was convinced it was only the sincerity in my smile that moved Him to smile back at me. He was moved by sincerity. "I am reaction, reflection, resound," He told us later during this trip, and in His spontaneous smile to me, I realize what He meant.

My last darshan provided a fairytale ending to a fairytale trip. Most of the other boys had left; only three remained, and two of us were leaving after the morning darshan, but Swami continued to talk with us every day. "When are you leaving?" He asked us. "Today," we explained. "Oh, I'll call you tomorrow then," He said dismissively. "No, Swami! We're leaving now, after darshan," we explained, emphatically. "Today?" He questioned. "Then go." And he gestured for me and the other boy to go inside for an interview.

Inside, there was a group of about ten Italians, but it seemed that only one of them spoke English and he perched right next to Swami's chair and interpreted everything He said into Italian. Their joy was expressed in the wide eyes and open smiles on each of their faces as their translated conversation with the Lord continued. Suddenly and completely naturally, Swami cut off the translator and began speaking in very fluent Italian to the group. Now their faces were even happier than before, and I for one, was stunned by Swami's command of languages. They continued this conversation in Italian for a couple of minutes more, and then Swami changed the topic.

"Go inside," He eventually told me. Alone, I moved into the inner interview room. Inside, He spoke freely about my good qualities and "lesser" qualities, promising, "I will bless, I will bless, I will bless." At one point, He pulled a single clove from a small box on a table and put it into His mouth, then pulled open my bottom lip and tucked two or three into my mouth as well. (Three or four fell into my lap, and I saved those few cloves for many years before I finally ate them.) After some time, Swami leaned forward and pressed His forehead to mine and whispered, "I love you, I love you, I love you."

Back outside in the outer interview room, Swami poked me firmly on the sternum and said, "Remember, this is not a two-seat sofa; this is not musical chairs. Your seat is on that airplane, but my seat is in your heart." And then He disappeared through a door and down a hallway into the back rooms of the mandir. We could hear Him opening and closing cabinets and walking back and forth looking for something. Finally, He came back into the room and threw a bag into my lap. "Here, for the center," He said. It was a robe.

The memories of that trip remain my life's priceless treasure. Over the years, I have recounted these experiences hundreds of times in the privacy of my own heart, and I still continue to get fresh tears of emotion as if it were only yesterday. And, each one of these tiny episodes carries a teaching from the Avatar. His every gesture, word and whim conveyed something profound. He filled my heart, but didn't neglect the mind. Sometimes the message was instantly clear to me; sometimes, the meaning only became clear to me many years later. These experiences remain the foundation of my life, and have served as sustenance and solace for my soul's journey in this world.



REGION 10 PILGRIMAGE



...REGION 10 PILGRIMAGE



“Control your mind, and you will never have to suffer.” This is Swami’s lesson to all. In my personal experiences with Sai, I have had many opportunities to be reminded of this message, and the reality is that in the immediacy of an apparent disappointment or mistake, we are unlikely to grasp the entire significance of the situation. There are so many stories to tell along these lines, yet two particular personal examples come to mind:

In 1997, at the First World Youth Conference in Prashanti Nilayam, an international team of young adults stayed up hours on end, skipping darshan and meals, in order to prepare a service exhibition illustrating the vast and varied work by young people around the world. Hopes were high that Swami would Himself come to inaugurate this exhibition; singers, guides, and curators stood at the ready on the appointed opening day, yet when a car arrived carrying yet another VIP, the workers gasped. Elders on hand encouraged all youth to be joyful, to carry on, and to realize that Swami is always with us and knows all of our work. In that moment, the feeling of disappointment was palpable. Later, I asked myself what to make of this seemingly unfortunate situation: I realized that in the five days of working side by side, day and night, with youth from all over the world to create an offering of love, we had together experienced the selflessness and unity of which Swami speaks, which Swami is.

Four years later, my husband and I were married in Puttaparthi, and the day following our wedding, Swami called us in for an interview. Awaiting my turn for Swami’s ear, I made lists in my head of all the worries I wanted to discuss with him: my work, my aging grandmother’s health, our future as a couple... my opportunity at His feet sped past, and throughout the entire conversation, my mind remained foolishly fixed upon my small self. I continued to pipe up about my apparently urgent issues, which Swami patiently addressed. Moments after we left the interview room, I was plunged into grief: given a few personal moments with the avatar of the age, I had squandered them thinking only of minor personal, worldly affairs. Disgusted with myself, I could not eat or sleep. I prayed constantly for one more opportunity to speak with Swami, but believed intellectually that there could not possibly be another, that I had spoiled my chance. Twenty four hours later, Bhagawan answered my prayers, and we again sat at His feet. This time, I emptied my mind and listened to what He wished to say, rather than worrying about what I thought I needed or wanted. In that interview, when I was at last ready to receive them, He offered important instructions for life and living.

So, in each of these initial disappointments – with Him or myself – there were deep lessons about selflessness and unity, about priorities and patience, and above all, about faith. Swami has a unique pedagogy for each of us. When we trust His wisdom, relinquishing the imperative to understand or judge ‘why,’ we can find the peace He offers us all.

Who is Sai Baba?

If someone had asked me this question few years back, my answer would have been, 'Sai Baba is my spiritual guru who walked into my life to transform me into a real human being.' But my outlook started changing gradually as I got connected with Sai more within these years. During my spiritual journey, I heard many stories from the devotees of how Sai Baba transformed their lives and how He touched their hearts. I always used to question, 'Swami, what is the purpose of your presence in my life? I never called you to walk into my life or at least I have never prayed to you. Why were you quiet all these years and what's the reason behind all these acts of Yours in my life now?'

In one of my dreams, Swami gave a profound answer to my question, "You called me and now you are saying, 'I never called you'. I was born with you and it's not your fault that you never felt my presence before. When you felt alone, you called me. I am your loneliness. I am your thoughts. I am your happiness and I am YOU. " This direct answer from Swami made me feel His presence inside me for the first time in my life.

Being born in a family who are not Sai devotees and who care the least about religion and rituals, I never got the opportunity to know about Sai Baba or visit Puttaparthi to see God. Along with a group of kids at school, I attended SSE (Balavikas) classes offered on Thursday evenings after school by my science teacher without having a clue of Sai Baba. I heard people talking about vibuthi (holy ash) manifestations from Sathya Sai Baba's picture in their houses. My curiosity made me question my mom, 'Amma, is Sathya Sai Baba God?' My mom always told me, 'How can you believe a living person is God? If He is God, then you are also God. Stop believing in others. Just believe in yourself. Be good. Don't hurt others.' These words from my mom were struck in my mind for years.

I revisited my same old question after more than a decade when I came to the United States, after leaving my family, behind to pursue my dreams. One day, I happened to visit the mandir for Sai Bhajans with my roommate. I had a real strange feeling looking at Swami's picture. I felt some sort of deep connection and it reminded me of my neighbor's house where I first saw Sai Baba's picture with vibuthi pouring out when I was a little girl. Then my quest started again, 'Is Sai Baba God?'

I always used to think that I am one happy person without commitments or attachments. If everything goes smooth and calm, how can we call it LIFE? A big cloud of loneliness struck me in one phase of my life that made me feel that 'I am alone.' That is when I started seeing Swami in my dreams everyday, talking to me, guiding me, answering my questions, listening to my silly stories. Every question of mine to Swami used to end with, 'Swami, when are you calling me to Puttaparthi? I read in books that Your darshan will take away all the Karma. I want to see you.' I never got an answer for that question in any of my dreams even though Swami was really good at answering all my other questions.

Swami in His own divine way called me to Puttaparthi. My older sister's wedding was scheduled for 23rd May, 2010. There was a group from USA going on pilgrimage to Puttaparthi in the end of June. However, if I visited India for my sister's wedding, I could not join the pilgrimage group because I couldn't take more than 30 days of vacation. I almost gave up on my visit to Puttaparthi as I really wanted to attend the wedding. I convinced myself saying that I can go to Parthi next year but I can't really miss my dear sister's

wedding and upset my family. In spite of all my efforts to attend the wedding, I was not able to make it because of work. I did not get permission to take off during that time and I had to miss the wedding. I was able to get off from my work only in the first week of June, which is when I headed to India.

My family was so upset when I told them that I would like to spend 12 days of my 3 weeks vacation in Parthi. The first reaction from my mom, 'Are you nuts? You are talking like an 80 years old woman who wants to spend time in Kaasi (a holy place in India)'. I convinced my family that I really wanted to go and would never get an opportunity like this again. Finally, with permission from my parents, I started my journey to Puttaparthi. The moment I saw Swami in Kulwant hall, as He came out for an evening darshan, tears started rolling from my eyes. My heart felt that ' My journey has really started now.'

I have seen Swami in His physical form for the first time and last time ever in my life and I can never forget the beautiful moments that I spent in Parthi during the ten- day pilgrimage. That's more than I asked for. Swami granted me the divine opportunity to see His beautiful physical form and gave me some of the most wonderful moments of my life. I did not regret that I was unable to attend my sister's wedding because the moments in Swami's presence meant a lot to me. I felt that His divine darshans purified my thoughts and answered my unanswered question, ' when are you calling me to Parthi?' Since then, my life has completely changed. I got a strong affirmation from Swami residing in me that 'I am never alone. Sai is Always Inside me to guide me and answer my questions and prayers.' I always cherish the fact that Sai is always living in me, and constantly providing mental and emotional healing.

If I contemplate on all the incidents that led my way to Parthi, I strongly feel that Swami does everything for a reason. He made me miss my sister's wedding so that I would have His darshan which I constantly asked for. To me, it was very important because I felt that it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. Now if someone asks me the same question, ' Who is Sai Baba?' My answer would be, 'Sai Baba is my higher consciousness who is constantly guiding me in every step of my life and always reminding me of the 'SAI LIVING IN ME'



Om Sri Sai Ram, I dedicate this poem to my best friend and eternal witness, my dearest Swami. Over the years of growing up in the Sai fold, learning, and introspecting, I find myself reaching back to the same point. He, who is my inner voice, is the truth, where lies no good no bad, no judgment no forgiveness, no light no dark. "He" is none of that and all of it. There is only divine love unyielding with its infinite potential waiting to be unleashed. We only have to let go and allow the nature of the divine to take course.

"Nature of the Divine"

How blessed we are to know the Sun
How humbled we are to behold His face
How grateful we are to say His name
How thankful we are to receive His Grace.

Whilst the stormy season of flood and monsoon,
Torrents of water midst the darkening gloom,
As the nights of summer shaken by the drums
Of the wind-whipped thunder, but then a calm comes,
And the moonlight shines bright, in a majestic sky
Oh, what a play of the divine!

Yet, soon the fall of summer is prey to autumn's snare
Drying leaves and frigid eves, lonely in despair
Dismal skies and dying grasses, dull colors brown and gray
But then I glimpse the harvest moon,
it takes my breath away!

Warm then cold, mist then sun, my faith turns with the tide
Blinded by the thickening sands of pleasure then of pride
Upturned by the hurricane, of joyfulness and sorrow
Flooded by the oceans filled with worries of tomorrow

Swami, I see the clouds you bless me with that gray my fickle mind
Your desert storms blind my sight, yet on I thirst for ego's bind.
Spinning waters, high and low, crying, yet I beg for more
You drown me in my future fears, and gently guide me to the shore.

As flowers bloom with perfume sweet, His voice lingers far, then near
Through springtime breezes, a lovely song echoes loud and clear:
Sing the song of laughter, no more the song of tears,
Exalt in the courage of freedom, no more the shackle of fears
Breathe in the beauty of nature and let silence dim your mind
Feel the moment of oneness and know You are divine!



OM SAI RAM LOVING PRANAMS AT THE LOTUS FEET OF OUR DEAR SATHYA SAI BHAGAWAN.

HARI NEMMARA
HOUSTON, TEXAS

The following is an account of the experiences Swami blessed me with. I have spoken about these experiences to a few close friends and family members whenever I saw them in some need or distress. Swami has spoken of Sargun (with form) and Nirgun (formless), and how much easier it is for humans to connect with His human form. Now with Swami attaining Samadhi and blessing us in Nirgun, I feel the need to share this with all of you and the rest of the world, and hope that our faith and patience continue to persist in Bhagawan knowing He is our sole protector.

To give you a background of how I came to know Swami - I was born and raised in Chennai (then called Madras). We had a group of Sai bhakthas in our colony. As a child, between 4 and 8 years old, I had a close friend the same age, and her mother was a staunch devotee of Baba. She used to have a lifesize picture of Sathya Sai Baba in her shrine and conducted pooja sincerely every day. I used to play around in that house, and at Arati time, I saw mountains of Vibhuti (sacred ash) and Kumkum flowing out of Sai Baba's forehead in the picture. When the camphor arati flame subsided, the black remnants formed the face of Sathya Sai. At the time, all I thought of it was fun and magic. Being around such neighbors, I was joined into Bala Vikas and for a period of about two years, went to classes and also visited Puttaparthi a couple of times as part of a group, ALL FOR FUN. This was back in the late 80's. As situations unfolded with school, I discontinued Bala Vikas and did not have any further attachment or heartfelt experiences with Baba. If I saw Baba's picture, I would offer my Namaskars and that was it, and if a need arose to pray, I prayed to the form of Lord Vishnu my ishta-devata (form of choice).

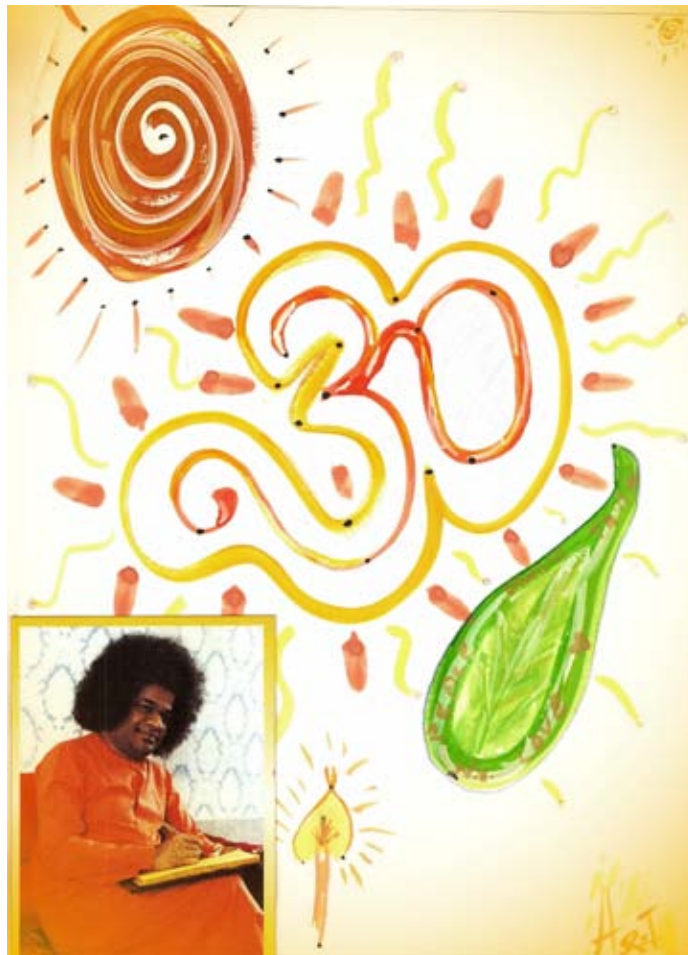
Then the time came, Baba decided I belonged to him. This is how. In 1999, I came to the US to pursue my PhD degree. I have always been pious at heart but at times I did go wayward. Especially back in 2002, I was a carefree person with no sense of need to serve anyone, to be frank, partying my way off. Surprisingly, one day, I decided I needed to meditate and was able to connect very well with my inner self. Two weeks later, I got a call from India saying my mother was critically ill - I was distressed. I love my mother just like any son should, I told my advisor I was leaving to India and may not even return at all - I was prepared to let go of my entire future prospects in the US. **Everything took a backseat to my love for my mother.** Before flying to India, I resolved to go to Pittsburgh and see the Lord Sri Venkateswara. I did, and when I saw the idol, I connected with the Lord mentally (in hindsight, the experience of my meditation two weeks before helped). **I demanded the Lord to come and help me IMMEDIATELY, as this was the time I needed him most and that if he existed he should arrive.** I closed my eyes and immediately felt a step taken forward by Lord Vishnu (my favorite form and another of Sri Venkateswara). I opened my eyes and saw three steps taken toward me - as I looked up from the feet, the garment was a robe orange in color and the face that of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Him wiping his face with a white handkerchief. The vision instantly vanished, I could not believe it and I thought it was a dream. I was shaken a bit (thinking can it be possible) and took a pradakshinam around the shrine. At the back of the shrine was a picture of Lord Satyanarayana/Vishnu - I stopped when I walked past it. As if to allow no more doubts, the face in the picture turned into that of Baba and Baba smiled at me. This was confirmation and I

was convinced. I thanked the Lord and affirmed that if all was well with my mother, I would come with my parents and see him in person. **This is how Baba drew me to him at the time he thought appropriate from across the seas.** As it turned out, when I flew to India, it was my mother who came to receive me at the airport with no sign or trace of illness. Baba's grace allowed me and my parents to take His darshan at White Fields, Bangalore – while walking by, Baba stopped to glance at me from the stage for a few seconds and gave vision as Lord Satayanarayana (same as in the picture at Pittsburgh). I felt blessed, and thus it was that I came under the fold of His Shirdi form and teachings as well.

Further to this experience, **I have always had experiences with Sai Baba whenever I think of him with all my heart, love and devotion.** When I was out of a job in 2009, Baba came in my dream after a long time - I dreamt being at a temple sitting alone when Baba gave His hand and lifted me up, walked to a group of others and recommended to 'take him in your group'. Just a few days later, I got a job by His grace. He has blessed me with a vision of His true nature and I am continuing to see His grace. For this fact, however so doubtful my mind may get at times, I know He is ever with us, ever-watchful and ever-protecting. I would ask of all to have faith and patience, be selfless and earn Bhagawan's grace. He loves us all. If a careless person like me was blessed, I know He will bless all at the appropriate time.

The lines marked in Bold above, I believe are universal and selfless and something Swami preaches and does bless unconditionally. I pray to Baba that He continue to shower His blessings on all of us and guide us in our path to His Divine Lotus Feet. JAI SAI RAM.





Dearest Sai, You are my Life, You are My Light...You are mine....

Full of Love...full of Peace..

Giving me dreams to fulfill.

And oh Dearest Sai, I am yours, to do with what you will.

So...

Use me up at your will...

To Live Truly

With you...

Oh Dearest Sai.

SAI- MY PROTECTOR. SAI- MY FRIEND. SAI- MY GUIDE

ABHIJIT PILLAI
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

*Sai, You are my heart and soul,
You are my path and my goal,
Sai, You make my life, whole and complete, you mean the world to me*

I think the above three lines sums up my relationship with my Lord and Master, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. When I heard about the idea of presenting a book “Living in Sai” to Swami, the first thought that came into my mind was, “Such a wonderful opportunity, my Lord has given me to show my love and gratitude to Him”. Let me do my best, in sharing one of the personal interactions I had with my Lord.

It was in July, 2008 when the Balvikas children and Sai Youth from Maharashtra, like every other year, performed a musical in Swami’s presence, on Ashadi Ekadashi. The Sai Kulwant Hall felt like heaven on earth, with Sai Vitthala showering His choicest blessings on all His devotees who were gathered for this auspicious occasion. Swami enjoyed the play, thoroughly, and He blessed all the participants. Everyone was elated with joy and had such a blissful experience in watching the Lord of the Universe smile and look at each one of us. It was the very same year (in a month), that I was leaving to USA to pursue my higher studies. Swami had given me a golden opportunity to be part of this musical, in spite of me being not sure about being able to participate in the play, or not. After the play, Swami said that He will come amongst us and take group photos. As He came amongst us, I was fortunate to be on His right side, and very close to Him. Just like how a child would hold his mother’s hand, I was holding Swami’s hand as the photos were being taken. I looked at Swami and said “Swami, I am going to America to pursue my higher studies”. Swami replied, “Very happy”. As Swami interacted with the rest of the participants, I asked, “Swami, I am very scared to stay all alone, away from my parents”. To this, Swami gave such a firm reply, “Don’t worry. I am in you, with you, around you, above you, below you”. I kept admiring the Lord, as He was interacting with each one of us. During this time, as I was mesmerized with His beauty, I realized that I was holding Swami’s hand, with no firm grip at all, extremely loose. But on the other hand, Swami held my hand as tight as ever. I later took such a beautiful lesson from this incident. However, distracted we are in our daily lives, as we tend to lose our focus on the primary aspect in our life - Sai, He will always hold us tight and close to Him, and will never let us go astray. So the most important factor that we need to keep in mind is: Always hold Bhagawan’s hand and consider Him as your Best Friend Forever. It’s been more than three years since I have been in the USA. There has not been a single day where I have never felt His presence. Every time I faced a difficult situation, He would hold my hand, sometimes carry me, and help me come out of it. All we have to do is have Faith in Him, and accept that we are mere instruments, in this divine play called “Life” directed and produced by Him.

To me, however stereotypical it may sound, Swami is everything. All I can say is as follows:
Neeve Maa Sarvam, Neeve Maa Praanam...
(You are our all, You are our very life)

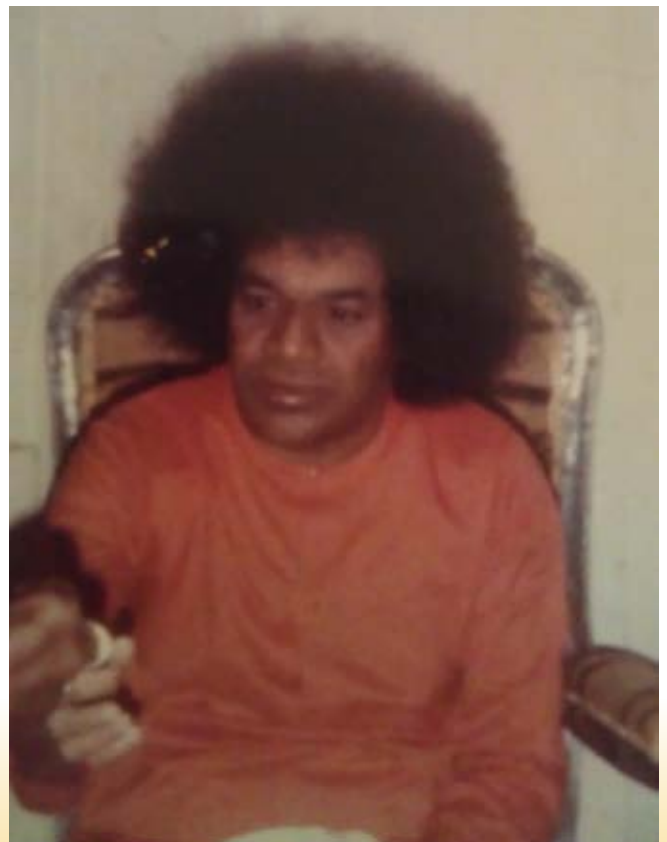
Aum Sri Sai Ram

I pray for Baba's words while I describe my experiences.

My parents were already blessed with experiencing the Divinity of the Lord when I was born. My home in Trinidad was one of the first Sai Centers in the country. Therefore, I was one of the first set of Bal Vikas children and the first set of Young Adults. We moved to the US while I was a young adult and therefore I continued to serve in the youth wing of the organization.

Bhagawan has always been in my life and is all that I know. At the age of six I had my first visit to Parthi with my parents. I will describe what I remember. It was an Aunt's birthday from our group and Baba promised a group interview on her birthday. We were all ushered into the interview room on her birthday. Baba materialized boondi ladhu which flowed from His hands like raindrops and told her to share it with all the females. It was hot and tasted like honey. He then asked the group how many? Before anyone can answer, He said, "twenty-eight" and waved His hand and materialized "calling cards" for everyone. It was a black and white photo with a current updated photo with Baba the way He looked in November of 1980. It had His name and address on it. He told everyone that whenever they need Him, to hold the card and call Him and He will be there. I counted the people in the room, and I counted twenty nine people including myself. He did not count me!! I tugged at my mom's sari saying, "Mommy, Mommy, He did not count me!!!" The calling cards went around to everyone in the room, but none for me. I was distraught that He did not count me. Then, He said, "Where is the little girl?" Well, I was the only little girl there, so the ladies around me raised me up so I could walk toward Him. Oh, what delight in my heart, the Lord of the Universe remembered me, and asked for me too! He was standing in the middle of the room at the time.

As I walked toward Him I could not take my eyes off His beauty. His hair which crowned His face, His eyes which sparkled with the all knowing essence of the Universe, and His smile, a smile with compassion that only words of Love can flow from those lips. He materialized vibhuti and gave it to me. I took it and fell at His feet offering Padnamaskar. I did not want to get up from His lotus feet. It was as though some magnetic field kept me there. It was as though I found my place and I did not want to ever leave but stay there forever. He waved His hand and stretched it out for me. I still did not get up from His feet. Then I heard, "Take it!" I took the gift like prasadam. It was a silver pendant with Baba's face on one side and Omkar on the other. I fell at His feet



again as if begging Him to stay there. He blessed me and I walked back to my mother. As I walked back, He said, "Marriage is not ice cream". Those words did not mean anything to me at the time. However, in my later years I found the truth in the statement and how He would be there for me in every moment.

I always wear my pendant, the gift from the Lord. In my childhood days, there were several times the pendant disappeared. Once, I found it missing from my neck. The next day I went directly under a mango tree in my school's yard and found it there under the earth. One day the hook which attached the pendant to a chain broke. After asking Baba, what I should do with it, I had a gold clasp made so that I could continue to wear it. This pendant became a tool He graciously blessed me with to have continuous communication with Him. There are so many incidents subtle and conspicuous. Once, I was locked outside my apartment when I came from the park with my two children. I held my pendant, and said Baba please send someone to open the door. I opened my eyes, and there was someone there to let me in the building. In my childhood years, I would faint in school and the teachers would bring me home. My dad would then apply vibhuti to the pendant, then my forehead, and I would immediately regain consciousness.

In a second interview we had with Bhagawan, He spoke of Love, Love, Love. I was ten at the time. I cried the entire time while He spoke. I was sitting in such close proximity to Him that my body and senses could not contain the amount of Love energy that was poured from Him onto me. Tears flowed like a river. I did not know why. I just knew it was the purest form of Love that I will ever receive. That Love, that will always be accessible to me whenever I close my eyes and think of Him. Whenever, I breathe in that moment of Love, He is there! This Love which He poured could not be contained in this body. It had to be shared with everyone. After that interview, in the following years, I would have to develop my heart to heart connection with the Lord. Through every period in my life, it was an opportunity to "surrender, trust and accept" His Love. As I served as a young adult, I poured Swami's Love in every service activity I did. I served as Bal Vikas teacher for a few years and was so happy to see some of my Bal Vikas students as Bal Vikas teachers themselves.

As Young Adult representative of region three, USA, each activity that I poured my heart into, brought my brothers and sisters closer and we served Sai as one. Bhagawan present in each one of us has taught me how to expand my love. So much joy pervades in serving Him. There is bliss all around. Every moment was



a learning opportunity. As Bal Vikas teacher, I would have to practice a human value before I can teach the lesson. As YA rep, I would have to take the initiative before I can tell my brothers and sisters we are going to start a certain sadhana. I would have to let His love flow through me so that I can truly be His message.

One of the final offerings we offered in His physical form was graciously blessed by Him. With His words resounding in our hearts, with the goal for all to benefit, in November of 2010, region three offered an audio CD to our Lord for His 85th birthday. It was entitled "Love of Conscience" by Rita Bruce. At one of the retreats that was held in our region, we were inspired to put into practice His teaching and have His words accessible to all. In the month of February during the Shiv Ratri festival the CD was physically presented to Bhagawan. He kept it on His lap and blessed.

Each subject matter which was presented to our region made me delve deeper into His teachings. Whatever I am here for, I asked that He allow me to accomplish that task in the way He wants. Be it a daughter, wife, mother, or teacher. All these different roles of Maya allowed me to realize there is only one purpose. There is only one reason I am here, there is only one reason we are all here; it is to realize what He has been saying to us, "You Are God!"

As I continue as a YA graduate with a greater awareness of His infinite Love, I find myself using every moment I have as a golden opportunity to think of and serve Him. Phylis Krystal's symbol is a learning opportunity which opened up for me as a child when Baba introduced the COD program and again when He spoke in the World Youth Conference of 2007. Using these tools to cut the ties, and ultimately accept my true reality is a lesson which I will continue to work on until it is accomplished. I know by His grace it will definitely happen for me as well as all of my brothers and sisters. He has granted the opportunity for these meditation sessions to be conducted on a regular basis in my home.

Thank You Bhagawan for all the tools You have given to us, for us to become a reflection of You. I pray that all who read my humble offering will also delve deeper into their love for You, whether it is through service or sadhana, with the ultimate goal realizing Oneness with God. I love you. Aum Sai Ram.



LOST IN THOUGHT ABOUT GOD

SUDIPTA MOHANTY
PITTSBURGH, PA

How could a God so great,
Care for someone so small,
And at the same time
Have the same concern for all?

How could a God so good,
Love a person so unsound,
And still give us the continuous faith,
That we might one day turn around?

How could a God so high above,
Help us in the smallest ways,
Patiently walk us through the steps,
And guide us through our days?

And yet somehow, God cares, God loves, God helps ...

On and on, I can ponder.
God's ways, such a wonder.
A love I cannot even comprehend,
Yet a love that will see me to the end.

Reminiscing on these thoughts, a smile warms my face,
To think of this mysterious force bringing us comfort and solace,
To think of this benevolent being, doing good for no return,
To think: who is this God? To know, my soul yearns.

But I will probably never fully know,
Nor ever fully appreciate,
So to this ever perplexing God,
This is what I would like to communicate:

God,
I can't wrap my head around You,
But nor do I even need to.
I know You're there,
And as long as I'm aware,
I'm happy just to be with You.
You are everything to me, more than I can ever understand.
And that's okay. Just keep me in Your hands.



What does it mean to be living in Sai?
Is it something that changes, with the blink of an eye?
Does it require me to live quietly and in isolation?
Or must I be a doctor, who seeks to treat the next patient?
Holding the elevator, getting someone a cup of tea,
The small things in life, define Sai to me.
It's a challenge I face on a daily basis,
Living in a land that's not quite an oasis.
But with every breath, blink and sound that I hear,
The resounding message is that my Boss is here.



MY DIVINE EXPERIENCES WITH THE LORD

PAVITHRAH THARMASEELAN
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

Sri Lanka is a beautiful island situated in the Indian Ocean; it is often called as the “Pearl of the Indian Ocean” because of its size beneath Bharat. I was born and raised in Sri Lanka. Due to the ethnic conflict, I had to adopt Canada as my foster Motherland and after marriage United States as my motherin- law land. Growing up in a family, which dwells in strong Hindu beliefs and strict Tamil customs, I have always felt blessed and the Divine presence throughout with me. Though I participated in family rituals and customs, I always felt as if I was missing something in my life. I was always thriving to find the Divine peace in my life. This was when, without me even realizing, I got in to Swami’s fold at a tender age of five. I was greatly blessed to accompany my sister and my parents for the first World Youth Conference (WYC) which was held in Prasanthi Nilayam in 1997. When I first saw Swami, tears just came down my cheeks. His walk amongst the many millions of devotees made me realize that I was fortunate to witness the Present Avatar (Incarnation of God) in this Kali Yuga. Above all, when Swami said, “No one can step in this soil without the divine will” I was mesmerized and understood that Prashanthi Nilayam is the Abode of Highest Peace. Swami gave Pada Namaskaram to my father. That trip itself had caused a fair amount of transformation in my family and me. After returning from Prasanthi Nilayam, we, all our family members, started to intensely follow the Nine Point Code of Conduct, which was strongly stressed by Swami in the WYC. One of which was to adopt family Bhajan session once a week. With Swami’s permission, every Saturday 8 PM was chosen for family bhajan and has been continuing up till now. If any obligations come, one of us will remain at home to conduct the bhajans. Apart from family weekly Bhajans, as one of Swami’s strict commands, we also converted ourselves to be vegetarians. Whenever we conducted the family Bhajans, we felt Swami’s Divine presence in our house. As years progressed, it was time for me to apply for University. I always had remained as an average student. At one point, I was not able to handle my high school examinations due to my Grandfather’s death. It deeply affected me because I was very attached to him. Though I explained my situation to the school councillor, she stated, “I doubt if you would enter University because your marks aren’t high enough.” Though she mentioned like that, I had strong belief in Swami. Leaving everything to Him, I applied to the Universities anyway. By Swami’s grace and compassion and to everyone’s surprise, I had been accepted in to University of Guelph, Canada with an entrance scholarship. I knew it was not me, but it was the Divine Leela of Swami, and I was extremely happy for Swami to shower His Divine Grace personally on me. Dark clouds started to fall on my face in the first year of my undergraduate degree. To testify my human nature, ego attacked me because “I Entered University.” Due to my ego, Swami did not interfere with my examinations. Consequently, I slowly started to feel lower grades on my examinations. To take me back to Divine nature, Swami, in the form of Conscience, hit me quite hard when I received the letter from the University stating “I was On Probation.” I cried loud and called Swami in great agony. I asked Him to show me His Divine Presence if He was God. I was deeply hurt as I did not know what to do. This was when Bhagavan’s Divine Presence was shown in my house. May 20th, 2004 Swami smeared Vibuthi (Holly ash), Kum Kum (Divine red ash), Amirth (Honey), and Sandalwood powder in the altar of our house. His Divine visit and presence are still felt in my house till this day in Canada. He blessed not only me but also my family with His Divine Presence. If it was not for my beloved Swami, I would have not graduated

...MY DIVINE EXPERIENCES WITH THE LORD

PAVITHRAH THARMASEELAN
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

from the University and entered in to Graduate studies. I have always taken Swami as my father and mother. I wished and prayed that my marriage should take place in Prashanthi Nilayam with His blessings. I never comprehended that the prayers would come true in the near future. With the blessings of Swami, my marriage took place in Janaki Ramaiya Kalyana Mandapam in Puttaparthi on January 21st 2010.

In conclusion, if we take one step towards our most beloved and dearest Lord, Swami will take many thousands of steps to carry us in His both arms. We just have to dedicate our entire life to Him, do His work and the rest will fall in place. It is not necessary to ask Him for what we want. He has come to give us what we seek for. Golden era is approaching. We, as His devotees, are blessed to be guided by our dearest Lord and March along His Divine Mission to the Humanity. Swami has changed His saying from, "My life is My message" to "Your life is My message." Let us all devote our entire life to our dear Lord's mission and merge in His Divine nectar of love.

Jai Sai Ram.

images: Presence of Swami at our house in Toronto, Canada



I was in 10th grade and the state wide examinations were but a month and a half away. The school used to give some days off for the students to prepare for these exams. I had the habit of preparing much earlier. In fact, I had time tables etc for preparing for the exams. Hence by the time the study holidays were round the corner, I was already “quite” ready for the exam. I will write some other time about the meaning of the quotes around quite.

I looked at the holidays given to study as a chance to go get Darshan of the Lord who was then in Brindavan. I was secretly hoping He would give me a trinket - maybe a pen or something else. I convinced my mother to take me to Bangalore. We had planned a four day trip to see the Lord.

After the first day's Darshan in the morning, we went outside the ashram for looking at the stores and we ran into my mother's friend, Mrs. Bhuvana. My mother introduced me to her and said that we were here to get Swami's Blessings for my exams. Bhuvana aunty wished me well and we returned to our room. Three days of wonderful Darshans passed and it was the dawn of the last Darshan after which we were to leave. My mother was sitting in the first row from the front and I was sitting in the first row from the Aisle. Swami came in through the stage entrance, came down the stairs and stopped just in front of the stage. I could tell He was looking straight at my mother. The next minute, He was in front of her and she was taking Padanamaskar. I was very upset that I was not next to her so that I would have had that chance as well. Even as that thought flashed through my mind, I found Him standing in front of me. I took Padanamakar. Swami finished the Darshan, called a few people for interview and left.

Darshan was over and we were not part of the interview group. I was very disappointed that there was no way to get a trinket as Swami usually blessed us with a Padanamaskar when He bid us farewell to return home. I went back to the room and was helping my mother pack our bags. Around lunch time, there was knock on the door and in walked Bhuvana aunty. She was visibly very excited. She gave me a picture of Swami's 60th Birthday celebrations wherein Bhagawan is throwing Laddus. The picture had a rather fresh signature on it “With Love Baba”. When questioned, she revealed that she and her family were called for an interview after about 20 years. On the day we first met her, she had purchased that picture to give me as a gift. But she never met me or my mother after that. She had hence stored the picture in a book. Incidentally on that day, she had that very book in her hands. While waiting to go in for the interview, she noticed the picture in the book and was reminded of me. She decided to get Swami's signature on it for me. Even though they were getting a chance of an interview after 20+ years, she could only think of me and my exams!

As they walked into the interview room, she handed the picture to Bhagawan, mentioning about my exams and requested His Signature. Swami took the picture, smiled at her and continued in. He sat on His Throne and held on to the picture. The interview lasted for over an hour and the picture was all the while between His Two Hands.

Every now and then Bhuvana aunty reminded Him about me and the picture and received a smile as a response.

At the end of the interview, He took a pen and lovingly signed there “With Love Baba”.

Narating this incident, she gave me the picture and went away. All I asked was for a trinket but I got Him instead.

LIVING IN SAI – LIFE; NO SAI – NO LIFE

NIRANJEN KANEPATHIPILLAI,
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

*When Truth is Rightfully followed,
And Peace is gained through Love,
Then Life becomes Non-violence
This is the way to Living in Sai*

When Swami wills to bring an individual under His protective wings, none in this universe can be in the way of Swami. No matter how the person is, He brings the person to Him and starts transforming him/her to be the ideal. This soul is no exception to Swami's way of bringing me in to His fold. I was 8 years old when Swami willed to enter in my life in a very subtle way. Years rolled, and Swami, by now, became the favorite deity of our family. Thursday became the only auspicious day for anything to be performed, such as starting anything new, medical treatment and etc. Being in a politically unstable county, Sri Lanka, where the Civil war was swallowing people's lives on an hourly basis, the ONLY refuge for us was Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and His name. Despite all the disturbances, Swami's work, both devotional and service, continued without any break. I am always, even now, inspired by the dedication and devotion that the people of Sri Lanka had/have for Swami. Swami has been charioting my life, knowingly or unknowingly, throughout, till this very moment. I would like to personally attest that it is only by Swami's love, mercy, and blessings that I am living - living by Sai- living in Sai. If there was NO SAI, then there is NO LIFE.

Although I was growing up with the belief that Swami was God, and He was taking care of us, I honestly was not following His teachings. I elected not to go to Balvikas, though would go to Center regularly with my father. I was associating with all kinds of friends, definitely not good company. My studies started deteriorating. During this time period, Swami showed His mercy on me through one incident. My pet dog fell ill. The doctors lost faith in treating the dog. Being an 11 year old, I was very upset and sad about the fate of my pet. I made the dog lay in front of Swami's chair before I went to sleep. Before going to sleep, I applied Swami's vibuthi on my dog's body and put some in her mouth too. When I went to bed, she was lying down on the floor as if she was unconscious. At 4:00 AM, very next morning, we woke up to her barking. I was in a paradise. It was none other than Swami, who wanted to show mercy on the dog and the little eleven year old master. It was all His compassion. This may not be an important thing to others but to me, especially at that very young age, this strengthened the faith in Swami. Swami could have chosen to let my dog die and made me suffer the separation. He has many more important people to take care. Yet, He chose to show His mercy on us. That is His pure and unsullied love towards each and every living being. Not only He blessed my dog with His love, but also blessed the little dog with His compassion and granted an extension to her life. My little dog lived by Sai, and I continued to "Live in Sai."

Bhagavan decided to call my father and me to have His divine darshan in 1992. I was 12 years old when I saw the Lord of Universe in human form. He was so beautiful, and I loved His composure. His sweet smile captured my heart to the limit. His soft spoken words and melodious voice really stuck to my heart. Those perfect straight footsteps symbolize His truthful nature. The

perfect composure of His physical frame will be missed forever.

As years went by, the faith in Swami remained strong. However, the teachings of Bhagavan had not entered in my life yet. I was still not doing well in school. I could not secure a seat in the University for the program that I wanted to do. I had no idea about my future. I was just passing time. My life was in a total mess. My parents were worried about my future. I surely was not doing well at all. Again, Bhagavan launched a rescue mission. In 2001, Swami appeared in my dream for the first time ever. He granted Padanamaskar to me. Within a couple of months, I landed in the United States as a Permanent Resident. Swami ensured that everything happened before my 21st birthday, which was within a month. I moved to the US, and this was when He really started working on me. I started reading Sanathana Sarathi, and that was when I read about Swami's teachings. This really made me understand the importance of practicing Swami's teachings. I soon became a vegetarian. Since then, I am trying to put His teachings into practice. I cannot attest that I have succeeded, but I am consciously trying harder and harder. Swami started interacting closely with me through dreams. He made sure I performed well in University. When I went home after the first year, I received a letter from the college congratulating me for being an Honor Student. My parents' happiness felt no bound. I left Sri Lanka with a questionable future, but within a year I was an Honor Student. I am an Engineer today only due to the Grace of my Lord Sai. When He wills, He can change the whole world up-side-down. His Will sets things correct within a nano-second. Who and what I am today is only because I am preceded with name Sai. If there was no Sai, there is definitely no living. Therefore, it is Living in Sai.

Knowing my nature, Swami found my life partner, a Sri Lankan born Canadian, in a very mysterious way. Her devotion to Swami is exponentially higher than mine. He connected us via the most advanced communication medium, e-mail. One day, she received an e-mail from me saying that I wanted to speak to her. I also got an e-mail with the same message and in the same way. The fact is that we did not know each other and did not send any email to each other. We introduced each other, and with the blessings of our parents, our marriage was decided to take place in Puttaparthi on January 21, 2010. Swami is a hard task master, and He tunes our faith to the finest point. My Indian visa was taking time, more than 3 weeks, so I left the US with the previous visa I had. The previous visa was to expire on my wedding day. That day, I realized that whatever Swami does is only for our own benefit. When the Young Adults were making a pilgrimage to Puttaparthi the previous year, I had applied for an Indian visa. I received the visa, with 6 months multiple entry, two days after my proposed departure and ended up not being part of the pilgrimage. I was very upset with Swami for not making me part of the trip. Six months later, I realized that only because I received the previous visa two days later that I was able to leave for India for my marriage. I was able to get an extension to my visa from Sri Lanka just within 30 minutes. With the blessings of our most beloved Swami, our marriage took place at Janaki Ramaiya Wedding Hall (in the name of Swami's younger brother) in the holy soil of Puttaparthi. Despite all the challenges, including planetary positions, that prevented our marriage, it is only due to His Will that we are together now.

The life we are living is His gift. We owe all our life to Him. He is our Life. We live for Him. We live in Sai.

Swami has shown us the way to live an ideal life. His teachings are based on the five human values, Truth, Right Action, Peace, Love, and Non-violence. Living in Sai is nothing but living the human values. We, as Sai Young Adults, have the utmost responsibility to live His values and to Live in Sai. We are heroes only when we are preceded by the name “SAI.” When we are only the YAs, then we are nothing but a big zero. The association with Sai, living for Sai, and living in Sai installs us in a higher state than others. Therefore, it is our responsibility to live up to His name and ideals, and continue to be Living in Sai. Swami wants us to be the courageous and fearless leaders like Lions. Let us all be living in Sai and be the roaring Sai Leaders.

Live! Live! Live in Sai!!!





My brother was always told he was good at science and should pursue a career in this field when he grew up. Life worked out for him that way and he is on the path of becoming a doctor. I, on the other hand, was average in everything but English and debate. Thus, my family always pushed me to become a lawyer. I was never interested in law, but thought I would do it just because everyone pushed me in this direction. However, being uneasy about this career choice, I went in as an undeclared major to UC Irvine back in 2008. I was thinking of going into the humanities or sociology field from there. The sciences never crossed my mind because after all that was my brother's area of expertise.

So, when my second year of university rolled around, we were told we had to declare our major and could not stay undeclared anymore. I was nervous at this point because I still did not know what I wanted to be. I prayed really hard to Swami that week, and a day before I had to go tell my counselor what field I wanted to declare in, I had a Swami dream where I was begging with Swami to allow me to be a science major. I don't even know why I had this dream. I NEVER wanted to enter the science field, but here I was close to Swami in the mandir pleading for him to make me a science major. I woke up that morning puzzled, but I was certain Swami had a plan for me. So, when I went to meet with my counselor that morning, I asked her to make me a Public Health Sciences major. I would still be doing chemistry and biology, but it still had the English and debate aspect I craved.

I thought my life would be easy from here. I finally declared a major and Swami approved my major in my dream. But life just got harder. I went in without the slightest knowledge in biology and chemistry, which lead me to do poorly my first two quarters. That's when I thought to myself "maybe the Swami dream I had was just a hallucination and I made a rash decision based on such a silly delusion." After that realization, I ended up dropping out of my science classes that quarter and taking classes to go towards law. I found myself hating these classes and kept thinking about my science classes I dropped. I did not possess the same curiosity towards political science as I did in my science classes. That Wednesday, I went back to my counselor to try to get back into my organic chemistry class, which I would need if I wanted to continue with my science degree, and she said that I would have to get on the waitlist to get back in.

I was waitlist position 9, which meant I had no hope of getting in that quarter and I would be stuck with my political science classes. I called one of my fellow Sai sisters and cried my eyes out to her. I told her I messed up any hope I had to do something in the future and I had no direction to go from where I was. She calmed me down and reassured me that whatever Swami is doing to me right now, he is doing because it is all part of his plans. She told me everything was predetermined and I should just give my worries to Swami. This put me at ease, but I couldn't stop being mad at Swami. That night I went to bed overstressed thinking I would not be able to sleep peacefully. But, that night I had another dream. This time, however, it was a dream with Hanuman. I have always been very fond of Hanuman and my parents do Hanuman puja every Saturday morning. In my dream, Hanuman was not the size of you or I. He was sitting crossed leg over six foot tall. His eyes

were closed and he was this beautiful shade of light blue. There was a visible aura around him. My mother was performing puja for Hanuman in my dream. I stood in front of him transfixed. I could not even blink. It felt like hours of watching Hanuman meditate and my mother performing the puja. He then slowly opened his eyes and gave me an intense stare. I wish I could describe the sense of peace that ran through my body when he did this, but no words could describe that moment with justice. It felt like the inside of me was empty and I could not even remember what I was worrying about. I just continued staring back until all of a sudden I heard my alarm clock ring. I turned off my alarm clock, but I refused to jump out of bed. I just wanted to go back to that sense of peace I just felt. I wanted to continue watching my mother performing puja on Hanuman and I was so disappointed by my alarm clock for waking me up. After a few minutes of trying hard to go back to sleep to get to that state of bliss again, I realized it was impossible for me to get back to sleep. So, I woke up and went to go grab breakfast at the café. It was around 10 am at this point. I turned on my computer and checked my email while eating and saw one particular email that caught my eye saying “You have been added into Chemistry 51a.” I could not believe the subject line. I was waitlist number 9 yesterday! My counselor said I had no hope getting in again this quarter. But here was the email saying I have been added. I checked when the email was postmarked and it was 9 am.

I would have thought getting that email at Thursday at 9 am was a mere coincidence if I had not had that dream the previous night. My parents have always taught me that Thursday was an auspicious day and 9 is an auspicious number. Having the Hanuman dream and connecting the dots to the day and time I received this email made me realize being a science major was Swami’s plan for me. He had approved this from the beginning, but I just refused to put my share of effort into his plans.

Needless to say, since that day I spent hours at end at the library to put a 100% effort into my studies. I started attending the Hanuman puja with my parents every Saturday since to pray for my education and Swami has never let me down. I went from being an average university student to an honors student. Although I’m about to graduate right now, and am not decided on a specific career path yet, I have learned to not worry about the future. Like my fellow Sai sister told me at the beginning of this whole journey, it is all predetermined. Swami has plans for us that he was already written. I’ve learned that even when you feel like you’re falling and feel like you’ll be hitting rock bottom, Swami will catch you and lift you up. He will never let you fall. What better superman can someone ask for?



MY INITIAL RESPONSE...

BALASUBRAMANIAM, BALAKUMARAN
HARBOR CITY, CALIFORNIA

My initial response when asked to share an experience is to throw up walls and deny any experience with God worth sharing. I do not think much of my spirituality. Of what there is, I enjoy in seclusion. It is ironic because anyone hearing my music gets a glimpse of the inner me. I am a carefree person –almost certain God will not leave me hanging off a cliff without some support; though I don't think I have complete faith in God. To me, absolute faith is absolute surrender to His will. What follows is a memorable lesson in faith.

It was 2004, the year of the tsunami that swept through parts of Africa and Asia. Earlier that year, the youth had prayed for Swami's blessings to be given the opportunity perform a music segment to his corporeal form. We settled on some songs remarkably quickly and got to practicing. As a group, we practiced weekly; the musicians had additional practices. We added songs, we dropped songs... we practiced even more. Everyone had issues to deal with before a visit to Puttaparthi. My turmoil eased when I infrequently remembered to adhere to the groupassigned sadhana. The solidarity of the youth group was shown when those who were not able to travel to India would come support practices, pick up the slack in service projects, and help out in many other ways. Then we left America.

We arrived in India. We took a bus. We were in high spirits, nothing could bring us down. Parthi had been invaded by a horde of young adults from Southern California - God seemed indifferent. He stopped by us during darshan often as not. We continued our practices till we were told our selection was not ideal. We were asked to switch from songs to bhajans. We scrambled to come up with something different. In kindness we were told to keep it simple. Relief at not having to work as hard colored our practice. I slacked off in my intensity during practices, but did not lose the assured feeling that Swami would let us sing in front of Him. Christmas was exquisite. Less than a week after we had arrived in Parthi news of the tsunami came to the ashram. Ecstasy at being with the Lord overrode any concern.

Days passed by. A trickle of doubt and worry seeped into the mind. Swami had given no indication he wished to hear us. Sadhana initiatives began anew. Dissension broke out amongst the group and it showed in our music and singing. The oneness that had been achieved was shattered by wavering faith. Swami continued to pass us by. There were days when Swami directed to be rolled away from the men's side of the Kuluwant hall. Every time I saw him wheel away, tears collected, my heart did not glance back. I do not engage in much self-introspection, but when I do, it is with the aid of music. Practices began with renewed fervor. Swami could be moved. If He didn't look at me it was because I wasn't worthy of His glance... yet.

The day the group was meant to officially disband was so close. Where had the days gone? New Year's day was looming over us. Most of us were sick. We decided to have Swami hear us whether He chose to allow us to sing in the hall or not. There was nothing figurative about this; we were going to sing with our collective hearts and lungs. We belted out those bhajans. No ears were

spared for the duration of our very public call to our Lord. We were one again. I felt centered.

Awakening to the dawn of the new year with beautiful decorations done overnight was, in its own way, more colorful than Holi. We were told to keep our instruments to the side and maybe Swami might allow us to sing a few bhajans. We weren't concerned. He had heard us the night before. The bands paraded, the national and international choirs made beautiful music. Every heart was filled with joy. Swami was approached. He listened, and He looked. If you haven't been at the receiving end of these looks you don't know the meaning of the phrase "piercing gaze," He holds you with that look and like a deer trapped in headlights: all thought is depleted from your mind. You cannot move. You cannot think. Everyone in our group had frozen at that glance. At the barely perceptible nod we scrambled to move ourselves to be directly in front of him. My legs were shaking, my hands felt like putty. The rush of joy that accompanies the playing of music combined with the trepidation of keeping God waiting for us to finish our setup left me hopping to be ready and gasping for a calm breath. What followed have become brief flashes of memory. I remember being seated less than six feet in front of Swami. I don't know how I played the keyboard with shaking fingers. With voices hoarse from the night before we sang to our Lord. He sat, listening to every bhajan we had practiced until we ran out of bhajans to sing as a group. He gestured for arathi, blessed the prasadam before motioning it to be dispersed amongst the crowd, and glided away on his wheels.

When discussing the experience with friends and fellow youth, they recall the oneness we experienced singing the night before in that stuffy little double-room; devotees hanging over the edge of their respective balconies to listen; praying with every fiber of our beings and yearning as one for the One. That was the experience; one that can be relived as often as we desire. We just have to want it more than anything else. I haven't lost my passion in music and I keep vying to get closer to God. At the time of this writing, I am in the process of becoming an SSE teacher - another facet for looking into Divinity. But I shall always cherish looking up at Divinity on that New Year's morning, secure in the knowledge that He will take care of everything if we leave it all to Him... I guess that is surrender.



HE UNDERSTOOD, HE UNDERSTOOD

NEETU MULCHANDANI
BOSTON, MA

For a one month period, Swami ignited the flame of Divine Love in my heart, filling my mind and heart with His Presence. This was the most blissful period of my life, and enabled me to work extremely efficiently to execute a monumental task in my academic life for which I only had one month's time to prepare. This task demanded my full attention and intellectual capacity. What I didn't realize initially was that Swami was melting away my deep fears through his Love.

Several months before my task, I began to have considerable anxiety. I tried balancing my usual work and preparing for the upcoming exam, but was not making as much progress as I had wanted. I began receiving messages in which Baba reassured me that He would help me in my upcoming task. This surprised me, as I did not ask Swami for assistance; I assumed this task was my sole responsibility. But, in His way, Swami was telling me that this was His work, and I was just His instrument.

Soon, the month of concentrated activity was upon me. There were some setbacks and delays, but with Swami's presence, I knew I could handle them. Then, suddenly, I received a voicemail early one morning from my Mother. She informed me that Baba had died. I was incredulous, shocked, and deeply affected by the news. In the few months prior, He slowly began opening my heart after what seemed to be many, many nights of prayers. In His earthly body, He initiated in me a reawakening of my heart, the greatest gift of humanity. As I recalled this over and over, tears spilled down my face. The experience of His Divinity through His form and those of others, His Divine voice, dreams, and flashes of insight all ran through my mind like a movie. I attended bhajans that day, and was struck over and over by the fact that His life was one of pure love. Indeed, His life was His message.

On my way back home from bhajans, there was a touch of anxiety that seemed to be growing like a weed. By the time I entered my apartment, the weight and discomfort had spread all over my chest, and I could perceive traces of despair mingled with the anxiety. Although I knew Swami was not the body, a part of me was frightened that my dear Lord, my Guide, was gone. My words pierced the silence surrounding me, as I called out to Swami and told Him of this anxiety. In an instant, the anxiety vanished. I was dumbfounded. There was no doubt Swami was responding to me, and that the death of his physical body would not change His presence in the lives of His devotees.

I knew Swami would want me to execute my duty within the established timeline, even in this situation. I couldn't bear reading the news of His death without grieving, so I resumed my relationship with Swami as it had been, avoiding the news and updates for some time, and continued on.

Throughout the month, His love filled me over and over. Several mornings I would wake up and spontaneously, bhajans would flow from my mouth. Sometimes these would be bhajans which I had not heard in several years and which I did not even know all the words to beforehand. Regardless, the eternal truth within these bhajans evoked a pure love within me which brought tears to my eyes. Over time, I noticed that whichever bhajan that flowed from my mouth that day turned out to be the advice I would need later in the day as I encountered obstacles. Sometimes Swami would announce His Presence through the strong scent of incense, lasting several seconds. As my mind focused entirely on my work or Swami when I wasn't at work, I had no desires. In this state, He took complete care of me. He arranged nutritious food at my apartment every week, wrapped me in His love, and most importantly, was completely present in my life every second of my experience. In this month, I realized the deep joy in loving God.

The Grace of Sai transformed me, for in this experience, Swami accepted me and loved me as I was. My trust in Him grew by leaps and bounds because through it all, I realized that He understood me. Knowing all that was light and all that needed reformation within me, He still chose to stand beside me in each and every moment. As I reflected on the magnificent responsibilities of the Lord and the suffering in the world, I could not help but shed tears for His intense love and care even for one devotee, a tiny spec in existence. Such is the love of our Sai.

WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE LOST IN THE WOODS

SUDIPTA MOHANTY
PITTSBURGH, PA



When you feel like you're lost in the woods so deep,
Remember to call on God's name so sweet.
His grace will shine light through the leaves,
And show you the path to His Lotus Feet.

Go Green
Live Better



Om Sri Sai Ram

I offer my salutations to my most beloved Bhagwan.

A cool gentle breeze on a warm sunny day, the loving embrace of a mother, the soft drop of a flower from atop the Lord's portrait and it becomes clear that Swami is making His presence known. I have begun training myself to see Him in everyone and everything. I search for Him in the eyes of friends, I listen for His voice in every bhajan, I imagine his silhouette in the empty space next to me knowing in the depths of my heart that He is everywhere.

This is how our relationship has always been, never quite seen but, felt immensely through the heart. I was very fortunate to be born in a family that had two generations of Sai devotees. My grandmother was one of the first in her family to follow Swami's teachings, subsequently passing her wisdom to all her children. My mother inherited my grandmother's undying faith in Swami starting every step of her life with "Om Sri Sai Ram" on her lips. So, naturally, it was not long before I became acquainted with Bhagwan. It was not so much of a discovery rather than a rekindling of an old and beautiful friendship.

Throughout my childhood, my mother would often recite the exciting stories of Rama and Krishna in an effort to stress on the importance of virtues. However, I was always left with the baffling question: "Who is God"? Can a God that abided strict laws of justice be carefree and play with gopikas? Is that even allowed? I began pressing my mother for answers (usually when she was in the middle of a story) demanding an explanation for what seemed to be a complete contradiction. Being only human she usually responded with "God does everything for a reason". It was not until my sixteenth year when I began reading Swami's discourses that I gradually learned that the Lord's unpredictability exists only to bring us closer to Him.

Although physical interactions with Bhagwan were limited, He bestowed a most unusual method of communication through dreams. Here, in our own private dimension, away from the distractions and judgments of reality lay yet another world created by His will. Its setting is designed to teach without words while still enabling one's free will to explore. Of course, nothing takes more precedence than the glorious form of the Lord Himself. With a personality just as engaging as in His physical form, Swami taught me many lessons about life, the atma, and even the afterlife. Through each dream, our friendship deepened and soon Swami became my most beloved and trusted friend.

One of the most memorable experiences I had with divinity started out as a rather mundane day. I woke up, took a bath, and sat down for prayers as usual. Normally when I perform prayers I sing bhajans while maintaining eye contact with Swami's picture in order avoid distractions. So, like any other day I began singing bhajans. As I continued to stare into Swami's eyes I began to notice how his eyes oddly resembled mine. Suddenly, a revelation occurred to me: Swami is me and I am Him. The last few lines of "Bolo Bolo Sub Mil Bolo" stumbled out of my mouth as this revelation left me speechless. I stopped to stare into Bhagwan's eyes for a long time wondering if I had gone crazy. His eyes continued to look like mine. Not wanting to insult the Lord by stopping prayers half-way I quickly wrapped up the pooja and walked into my room feeling dazed. I began looking at family portraits as if seeing them for the first time. For several minutes I stared intently at both my parents and searched for my eyes in theirs. There it was! Suddenly, it occurred to me that both my parents were not separate but just variations of myself and we are all just variations of the Lord. For the first time in my life I felt a connection to my parents unlike any before. My parents were me and I them! For

a moment, my heart stopped beating and I had to catch my breath. Then I thought “wait, it’s not enough if you see yourself in your parents. Of course you see yourself in them! You are their offspring. It’s only natural. But, the real test is, can you see Swami’s eyes in their eyes?” So I took a closer look searching for that spark of divinity in their orbs and I instantly found it. I realized there was absolutely no difference between Swami’s eyes and their eyes.

That night we went to the Krishna temple in Woodland Hills to recite slokas. I assumed that by now this sensation of oneness with others would have left. I was wrong. The moment I entered the temple I continued to feel that oneness with all who were present, including the picture of their Guru. I saw my eyes in everyone and most importantly Swami’s eyes in all. I began thinking, ‘wow, all these people are just different versions of myself. I could have been born as any one of them and it wouldn’t have made a difference because we’re all the same’. The inhabitants of the temple began chanting the thousand and eight names of Vishnu and I closed my eyes to immerse myself in the sanctity of the environment. I concentrated on that feeling, allowing it grow stronger. It felt like I was sitting in a room surrounded with various images of myself, and the synchronized voices melding to form the words of the sloka were the voices of the atma coming together to pay homage and glory to the ultimate atma Himself: The Lord. With this thinking in mind I began to realize that God is nothing but the culmination of all our divinities put together. So, when we pray to God we are really expressing love to ourselves because we are all just one atma divided into many forms.

It was directly after this unique experience that I began to view life differently. I now understand why Rama and Krishna were so different in personalities yet, revered as the ultimate Godhead. Both are embodiments of the one Truth. Both exemplify how man should be despite the multitude of personalities we have been gifted. Now, when I see Swami I see an image of what we can all become. It is the most comforting feeling to know that the Sai in You loves you just as deeply as You love Him.



As a recent college graduate, I realized some of the experiences over the past four years are things I would like to remember forever, not only as lessons learned, but also as way to keep certain emotions raw. It is important to understand those feelings of euphoria, so I can re-create them one day. It is equally important to remember heartbreaks in their painstaking details, so as to understand the more somber moments of life.

I write this, to explicitly remember my heart breaking into thousands of pieces, as I grieved for my Beloved Swami. I knew and know no life without Sri Sathya Sai Baba. In hindsight, this makes perfect sense, as I literally grew up around Swami's presence.

Ever since I can remember, I have been walking amongst stories, bhajans, and the many leelas of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. My most fond childhood memories involved my infant self sitting for Bhajans ever second Saturday at my grandparents' house in Hyderabad, India. Those days were magnificent; the preparation that went into organizing the monthly Bhajans was something akin to that of a royal wedding. My grandfather would special order pedas from Almond House, the neighborhood bakery, and pick up the brightest of flowers from the roadside florists. Meanwhile, my grandmother spent the afternoons washing silverware, making certain Swami was welcomed with the shiniest diyas. By 6:00 pm, the living room of my grandparents' was filled with friends and family, dressed in their best, sitting quietly - just like they would at Prashanthi Nilayam.

The second we began chanting the Omkars, I was instantly transported to Sai Kulwant Hall, where the floors and pillars vibrated per decibel. We were immediately singing for Swami, in front of Him. This entire experience was only reinforced post the Bhajans, when the womenfolk exchanged stories from their recent Parthi Yatras, sharing a few laughs over something our ever humorous Baba has said. Such, my childhood built its foundations upon Swami's lessons of love and laughter.

As I grew older, I moved past the pomp and circumstance that surrounded Bhajans to the more sober aspects of the Sai fold. The most important lesson I learned from Swami to date has to be "Love All, Serve All." Albeit, I strayed from this a few times through my angsty teenage years, but the foundations remain untouched.

Swami was everything to me - God, spiritual presence, conscience, parent, grandparent, friend, all rolled into one. He was (is) my confidante. I knew, as I began my undergraduate career at UC Davis, that He was growing older, and getting sicker. I'd hear it from my Mom, aunties, or other family members how He was sick, and Darshans at Puttaparthi were not as regular. In the summer of 2010, Swami made it a point to invite his devotees from all corners of the world to see Him. We all wondered why, but swept the concern aside, to embrace His love firsthand.

Earlier this year, we caught news that Baba was extremely sick. Sai Centers across the world organized prayers for him. I made it a point to attend our regional one in Livermore, California, despite a busy Senior Year. I would receive daily updates via the phone from my mother about His health. Doctors in India did their best to not alarm the millions of devotees worldwide.

However, a week in April came along where I felt uneasy. I could not shake the feeling, despite my attributing

it to stress of midterms and projects. I thought I was homesick. I had asked my parents to drive up for the evening on Saturday, April 23, 2011. We ate and were simply catching up, when I received a phone call. That phone call at 9:00 pm on Saturday, April 23, 2011, shook my very existence.

I learned that Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has left his physical Self.

I don't even know when I started crying, whether I was still speaking to a fellow Young Adult or if I was frantically conveying to my parents what I was told. I could not stop crying. I literally had to hold my chest, because I thought it would explode. I do not think there are enough words to explain what I went through that night. Because every time I try to fathom what had happened, I can feel my heart threatening to shatter into pieces again.

Now, I am not saying that I am the most pious of people out there. But at that moment, the entire foundation upon which my life was built upon was broken (never permanently, of course). But, my Swami was GONE?!?!?! Really?!? How was this even possible? I think Swami somehow knew that I would not be able to handle this by myself either; He made sure to send my parents to me, because for that night, I was no longer the mature to-be graduate, but a crying infant once again.

The prayers the next morning were a mix of emotions and thoughts flying around. It was Easter Sunday. Swami said He would never leave us. What about Prema Sai? Will Swami come back like Shirdi Baba had? Why was He sick? Anger. Pain. We were all so distraught. People could not sing. People could not follow along. The SSE children did not understand what was happening. But, the Young Adults, we understood. And understood how. We were at that awkward point in our lives where Swami guided us all through our childhood, only to orphan us at the most crucial of times. Or so it seemed at that time.

My life as I knew it changed with Baba leaving His physical body. That week, when I saw the live stream of Swami's last rites on my laptop, I decided then and there that I will never think of Swami as "not here" anymore. The pain otherwise was unbearable. And honestly, Swami IS here. With me. With all of us. He is watching over me, as I write this. He is watching over those who are reading this.

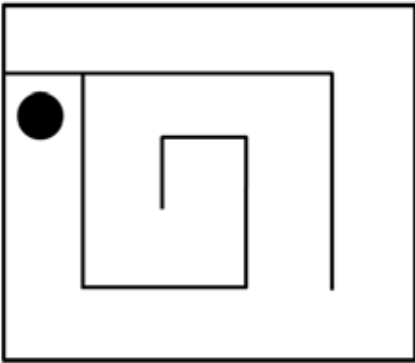
Surely, there come times where images of the Samadhi appear in my eyes. Yes, I immediately compare it to Baba sitting there instead. Yes, tears do come to my eyes. But, at the same time, He fixes it.

I love Swami. I miss Him. Him leaving us (physically), was his way of making me grow up. It was spring quarter Senior year. The final leg of my "childhood," so to speak. And boy, did I grow up! I got my act together. I don't think I've ever been the same since. Almost seven months later, I now know that I need to get further involved in service. Swami's lesson of "LOVE ALL, SERVE ALL," has a whole new meaning now.

Sai Ram.

WHEN I WAS WORKING...

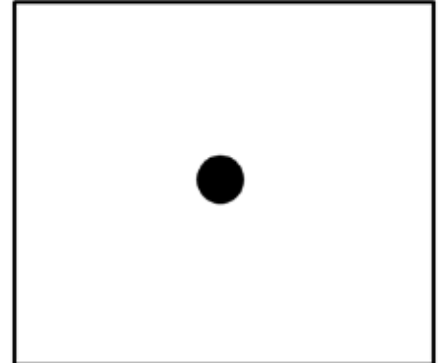
HEIDI OJAH DAUB



Pain with Dead Ends



Fear during Self Inquiry



Content in Self Realization

When I was working as an orthopedic resident at the University of Southern California (USC), I had it all figured out. I knew the job I was supposed to have after graduation (an Adjunct Faculty Clinic position), and I knew why I was qualified for the position. As I went through the residency program, it became increasingly clear (and increasingly painful) that I was not going to be considered for that position. As if my higher-self had to prove a point to me, my “back up” was a fellowship position at Kaiser that I felt overqualified for; but again, I was not selected for the position. The icing on the cake was that some of the “students” I taught through the residency program at USC were hired as Adjuncts at the Faculty Clinic when they graduated...and I, as their “teacher,” was not even considered for the position. My reaction? Months of self pity and feeling as low as I’ve felt my entire life. I “knew” what was best for me, and yet, when I desperately tried to control the moving pieces to create “my” reality, I realized I could not.

But did I “know”? After some long nights of journal writing, soul searching, and cups of chai at starbucks, I re-remembered that I am not really Heidi Ojha and Heidi Ojha is definitely not in control of the world. All the months of building walls and forming attachments to my own worldly desires came shattering down when I hit multiple dead ends. What I ran after was ripped out of my hands. Memories flooded my mind of when I was twelve years old with Swami in an interview trying to muster up courage to ask Him to pierce my ears. I remember sitting there scared frozen and all I could do was put my fingers up to my ear and mumble “Swami”. Swami just stared at me and said firmly, “Desires, Desires, too many desires!” (which my husband gets immense enjoyment reminding me about at times). And here I was at 30 years old, obviously needing to learn the same tough lesson. But if this position was not written into my plan, what is my plan? I know God has my best interest at heart...but does He really know what He is doing?? Taking a step back from everything, I realized that perhaps my job is just as important as a pair of earrings. Perhaps learning the lessons is what is most important for realizing who we are: isn’t that the point of life? If initially hitting those dead ends was as low as I’ve ever felt, letting go of the control (I never had) was the most scared I’ve ever felt. Yet I could sense that it was a “good” unsettled feeling because I was moving forward.

At that point, one of my dearest friends encouraged me to apply to a Full time Faculty which I personally thought was completely out of my reach. To make a long story short, I ended up moving to the east coast when I was offered my first Faculty position at Temple, one of the top rated programs in the country. Initially I thought “if I had obtained any of the previous positions, I wouldn’t have even applied or been available to consider this current amazing experience”. However, I immediately realized this whole drama wasn’t about Heidi Ojha’s job. It was about ‘not being Heidi Ojha’. It was about being and feeling like an extension of God’s Will. I am ready to serve in any capacity, with the knowledge that these are not my skills but God’s skills. I am not higher nor lower than anyone...we are all in this crazy world together for a definite purpose: to learn from each other. Remembering how previously I was trapped within the confines of my desires, I felt new found freedom realizing that the walls I had created did not actually exist. I was ready to be pushed in any direction, surrendering to my inner self...surrendering to God’s compassionate will.



THERE ARE NO WORDS...

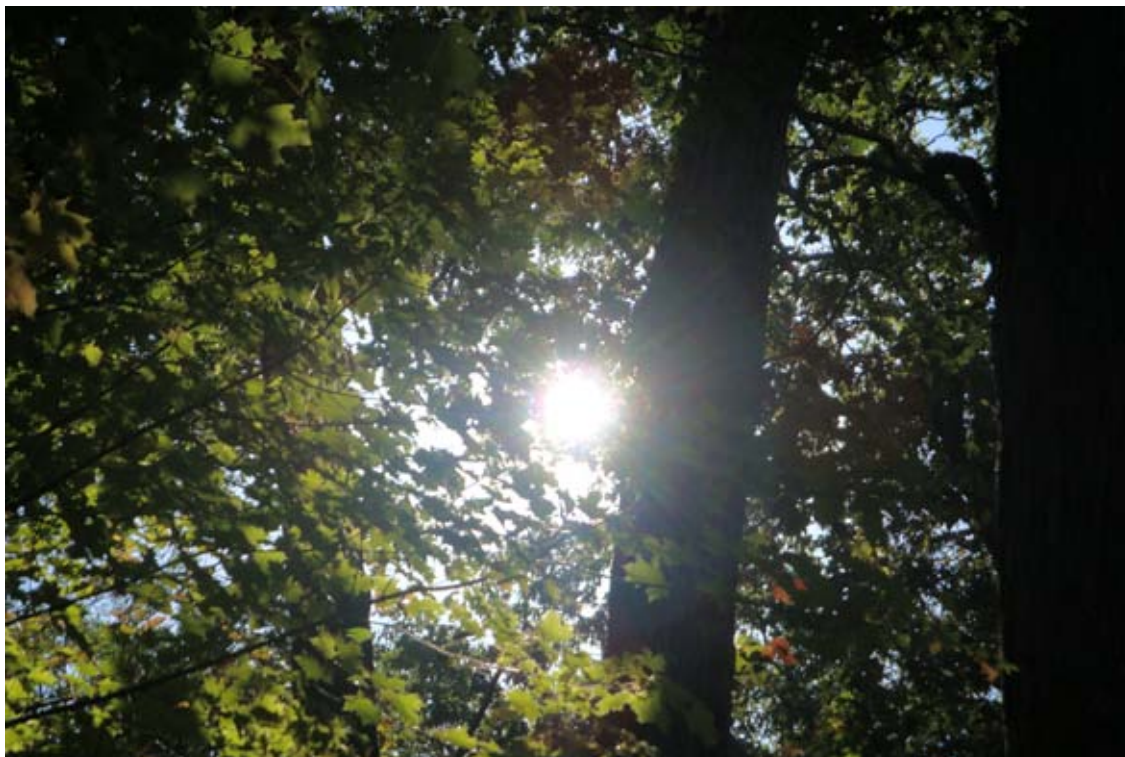
SAMANTHA ISACKSON
DENVER, CO

There are no words that can completely describe my experience with Sai Baba, it is more a silent happiness emanating from my heart. From the moment he entered my life in his form, I have experienced an amazing journey, one that is nowhere near done because as we all know the soul lives on forever. My biggest lesson the past five years has been to learn how to forgive and to trust LOVE(unselfish love that is) and through Baba's teachings and LOVE, I learned these two wonderful lessons. He taught me SELFLESS unity also, that I use everyday in all situations. Even though he isn't in form anymore, does not mean he is gone and in fact he is very much alive within us: ATMA. So thank you Sai Baba for coming into my life and changing it for the better. I look forward to the coming of Prema.



PICTURE OF SUN THROUGH TREES, OCEAN

RAMI BALAGANGEYAN



"God is the Sun and when His rays fall upon your heart, not impeded by the clouds of egoism, the lotus blooms and the petals unfold." -

Sathya Sai Baba

THAT WAS IN THE PAST, LET'S TALK ABOUT THE FUTURE

SANGEETA LEKHI
NEW YORK, NY

Swami replied when I asked Him about spending my life in service. Little did I know then, more I am understanding now. It was 2001, and there were 15 of us in Hal Honig's (last) group trip to Prashanti Nilayam. In one of the interviews, Swami repeatedly told us to ask only spiritual questions. Every time we would ask about something personal, He would not respond and remind us that He will speak to us personally next interview, but that this interview was to address any spiritual questions we have.

He was so hungry to help us grow spiritually, and we were so distracted to ask Him about the world. Still, Swami divulged nothing about our personal lives, and revealed everything about our personal doubts and inquiries. "How can we control the mind?", I asked. "Work More, Think Less", He answered. "When should I serve?" His response, "Serve 24 hours a day!" ... leaving them to become the mantras to live my life by.

In Summer of 2004, we were blessed with a baby boy. A few months later, I was appointed the Female USA Young Adult Representative. Both His Divine will and grace, and both needing 24 hour care! I was soon learning and living His words of "serving 24 hours". But, it all started much earlier...

That was in the Past

The USA Young Adult program has been Swami's gift to us youth from 1994. Though it didn't come to us easy, we were destined to be blessed with the opportunity of having the company of like-minded youth, to share with and discuss how to apply Swami's teachings into our adolescent and ever-changing lives.

Engaging in more service activities, and formulating Sai study circles relating to peer pressures and other common young adult challenges, were the need of the hour. As though they just fell into our laps, programs such as Summer Showers in Brindavan, General Chibber's Leadership Workshops (as requested by Swami), 1997 & 1999 World Youth Conferences in Prashanti, and the Sai Students Bulletin (national YA newsletter), all catapulted the USA Young Adult Program into a haven for the 16 to 30 year old Sai devotees in the USA, and in the world. The support of the Sai Organization, and being involved in these events and programs became the building blocks of my 'future'.

During Summer Course 1995 in one of my early and most significant experiences with Swami, I observed, I learned, and I understood what Swami expects from youth, and most importantly, how much Swami loves us. In a nutshell, I would describe His message as thus: Take the energy of youth, infuse it with wisdom, frame it with discipline and dedication, and live it with love and happiness.

Swami's Love was boundless. His teachings were serious, but He never lived seriously. In an interview during Summer Course, Swami asked the young boys in the room, "How was the Summer Course?" "Very good Swami", they all joyfully replied. Swami immediately joked, "How do you know? You were too busy looking at girls!" The room broke out in laughter, as did Swami. Suddenly in the very next instance, He looked serious and said with a firm voice, "All girls are your sisters, except one."

In that interview, He demonstrated for us one of the most important teachings for youth. Swami asked, "What is the essence of the Summer Course?" The answer was easy, "Controlling our Senses". Though when speaking to the Lord, one quickly learns that nothing is ever simple. Then, Swami gave us the example of being amongst a group of friends who are speaking negatively. He took His hands and covered His ears and said, "Can you stand there with your ears closed? What if you see something negative? Will you cover your eyes? No. We have to

DIVERT our senses, not CONTROL our senses. If you are in a negative situation or with negative people, walk away. If you see something negative, turn your vision towards something positive.” And with that, He left us with how to practically live a Sai life.

Let's Talk About the Future

The experiences of my past surely shaped what was facing me ahead. Without my awareness, He was preparing me and teaching me. The (necessary) symbiotic relationship with the adults of our Sai Organization is key for a healthy Sai Family, filled with unity and harmony. It was the adults of my Sai Center where I grew up, who taught me through example, and gave me and other Young adults the opportunity to introduce creative applications of His teachings. The greatest gift they gave us was allowing us to lead projects and events, and picked us up and encouraged us when we fell. Little did they know how valuable their open-mindedness contributed towards our growth.

From the start of my term as Female YA Representative, my greatest lesson has been to Surrender. For why He places us in positions and what He wants us to learn, if we leave it to Him and become hollow as a flute, we allow Him to play beautiful music through us. One such music piece was played during the 3rd World Youth Conference (2007).

Planning an Exhibition for the Conference was the least of my expertise, interest, or focus. But it turned out to be the most of my experience and key learning. Having no artistic talent or background, or proficiency in carpentry, I could be deemed the least preferred candidate to lead such a project, though in Swami's School of Life, I turned out to be most suitable. Making every decision based on asking within, and practicing the notorious phrase “Nishkama Karma” (perform actions without any reward), my ego had very little to do with the planning, leaving my SELF to take care of it all!

Perhaps an even greater lesson was yet to be learned. Due to the immense work in preparing and operating the Exhibition, we were unable to see Swami in Kulwant Hall during the programs. Instead, we learned and grew the vision to see Him everywhere and at all times in the Exhibition Hall through the visitors, through the volunteers, and through the efforts of youth worldwide. Unbeknownst to us, this became our supreme most message then, and an unexpected prelude of our lives ahead.

I share this ultimate lesson with the youth of today, who are the present leaders and apprentices of the Sai Organization, even though:

Not being able to behold His beautiful form gliding in the Kulwant Hall during darshan, not being able to reach out to hand Him a letter of gratitude as He stops in front of your line, not being able to see the joy on His face as He interacts with His students, not being able to savor His gleaming smile as He looks upon His children, each one of us...

...But being able to see Him everywhere as His energy permeates throughout the Kulwant Hall, but being able to hear His discourses reverberate through the Veda chants, but being able to smell His fragrance through the sweetness of jasmine flowers, but being able to feel His infinite, unconditional Love for all His children, for each one of us.

From the Past, For the Future