



SAILIGHTS



Magazine of the Sri Sathya Sai Global Council, Zone 1

April 24, 2022

Volume 2



Aradhana Issue

**Offered with Love and Reverence
at the Lotus Feet of our Dear Lord
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
on the Occasion of Aradhana Day, April 24, 2022**

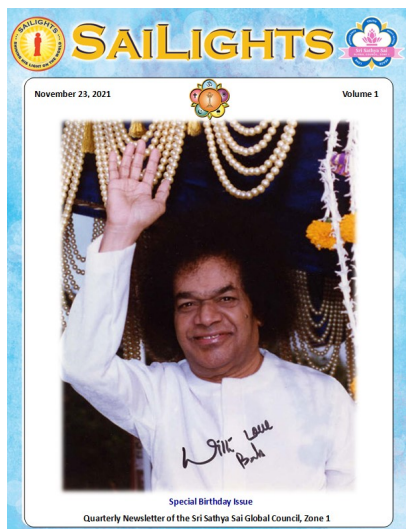


***“Why fear when I am near and dear?
You should have full faith in Divinity.”***

*- Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks Vol 31*

SAILIGHTS

Inaugural Issue Offered at the Divine Lotus Feet on November 23, 2021



Dear Sai Brothers and Sisters,

It is once again our great privilege to bring you Sailights, magazine of the Sri Sathya Sai Global Council, Zone 1. We were thrilled to be able to place our inaugural issue at the *MahaSamadhi** on Swami's Birthday; we are every bit as excited, this *Aradhana Mahotsavam**, to offer Vol 2 at His Divine Lotus Feet.

This issue of Sailights offers a glimpse across Zone 1 of developments since Swami's Birthday.

- ♦ At the Zonal level, the committees that were set up last fall - nearly a dozen of them - to oversee progress in priority areas are now moving briskly forward with their action plans.
- ♦ At the center level, reports from individual Sai Centers show the remarkable energy and dedication animating devotees' activities in the service, SSSE, and devotion wings, despite the ongoing challenges of the Covid virus.
- ♦ The section "*Aradhana: Words to Ponder...*" offers a panoply of reflections on how best we may worship our Beloved Lord, eleven years after He gave up His Avataric Form.
- ♦ Finally, we draw your attention to "Shivaratri Experience in Prasanthi", "Ati Rudra Mahayagna", "Awaken the Jesus Within You!" -and the offerings of the poets among us, young and...not so young.

As we issue this second volume of Sailights, we offer our deepest gratitude to Swami for His Inspiration and Infinite Grace. Our sincere thanks also to all who have contributed to this issue. We welcome your feedback at sssgc.newsletter@gmail.com

Loving Sairams
SaiLights team

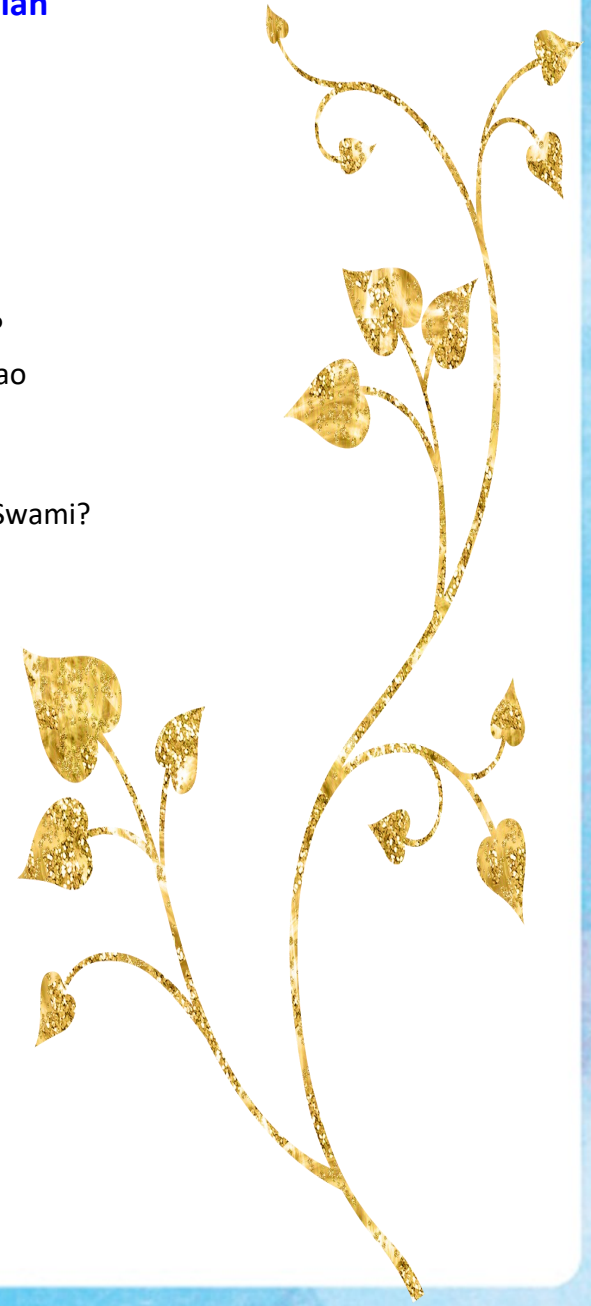
* *MahaSamadhi* is a sanskrit term signifying the end of an Avatar's life on earth; here it refers to the altar around the resting place of the physical body of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

* *Aradhana Mahotsavam* is a sanskrit term connoting the celebration and commemoration of the ascent of the Avatar.

SAILIGHTS

Table of Contents

5	Message from Zone 1 Chair
6	Zone 1 Committees At A Glance
7	Zone 1 Committees' Reports
	Zone 1 Centers' Highlights
17	- Service
24	- Sri Sathya Sai Educare (SSSE)
27	- Devotion
29	- Young Adults
30	Shivaratri Experience in Prasanthi - Bavani Rajagopalan
33	Ati Rudra Mahayagna
38	Awaken the Jesus Within You!
	Aradhana: Words to Ponder
40	- Swami's Mahavakya: "Manasa Bhajore"
41	- After the MahaSamadhi: Can we ever experience Him again?
42	- The Spirit and Significance of Aradhana Day – by V. Emany Rao
44	- Sai Gita – The True Devotee of God! (a poem)
45	- Aradhana (a poem)
46	- Eleven Years Later: What Has Changed in How We Worship Swami?
49	- MahaSamadhi – A Symbol of Spirituality
50	Poems and Artwork by SSSE Children
53	Sai Pearls: Absence - by Kasi Sridharan
	Sai Nuggets
54	- O Holy Night! - A Shivaratri Quiz
57	- Life is a Game: Play it!
58	- Asked...and Answered by Swami
59	- Spiritual GPS
60	SSSGC Zone 1 Media App
61	Media Links



Message from Zone 1 Chair

Om Sai Ram!

We welcome all of you to this auspicious 2nd edition of Sailights, now being introduced as a magazine. The dedicated team has reached out to devotees from throughout our Zone to collect articles and present this offering during the sacred occasion of Aradhana ('Worship') Day on behalf of all of us. As we read, reflect, and draw inspiration from this offering of worship, let us imbibe the prescription from our Divine Doctor:

The basic moral prescription for every devotee who aspires to be near and dear is to worship God and offer Love to Him in every living being.

- Divine Discourse, August 2, 1986

With Swami's immense Grace and Blessings, Zone 1 of the SSSGC has been able to continue to share numerous initiatives for the spiritual development of ourselves and our communities. The following are highlights of just some of the many initiatives devotees have been diligently working to offer:

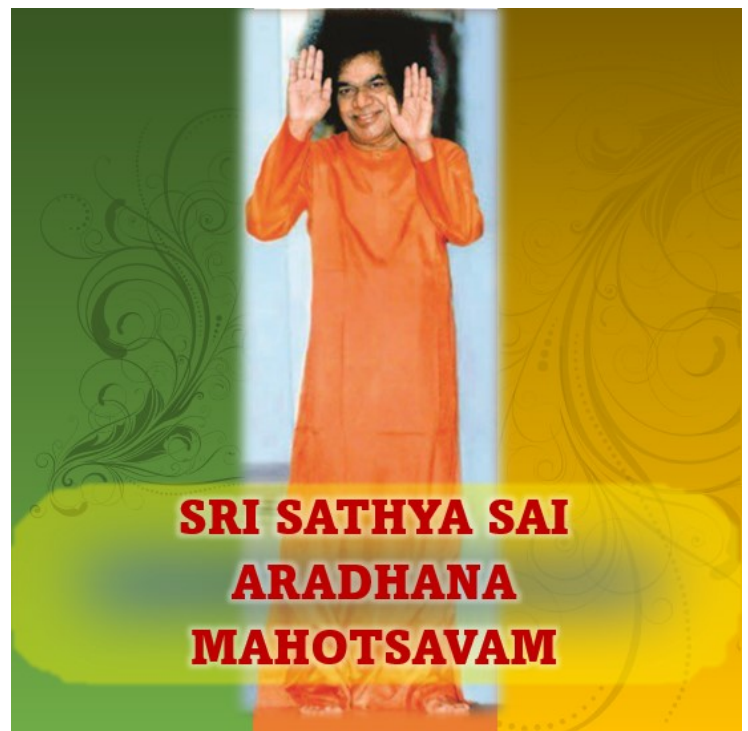
- * National Teachers Training in February
- * Sri Sathya Sai Educare monthly guides: Harmonious Homes, Teacher of Truth
- * Vedas through the Sai Lens talk series
- * Green Team Water Sense Activities
- * Sri Sathya Sai Program for Awareness of Human values and Educare (SSSPAVE) first Orientation Session along with the launch of the Jump Start Training to prepare for community support
- * Sri Sathya Sai Educational Program (SSSEP) Awareness Course
- * Humanitarian Relief efforts for Tornado aftermath victims in the Kentucky area and for Eastern Europe Refugees
- * Young Adult Workshop: Embracing a New Norm: Connection in These Changing Times
- * Sai Jeevan Health and Education Talks
- * The SSSGC Series on World Religions - The Essence of All Religions is One episodes on Christianity and Judaism

- * Awake, Unite, and Inspire series featuring interviews with devotees from around the world
- * The Ati Rudra Maha Yagna conducted April 11 - 16, 2022 in California.

As we look ahead, in addition to the continuation of many of the activities listed above, most centers will now once again be meeting in person for even more educational, devotional and service opportunities. Also, the dates for the Guru Purnima International Medical Camp in Prasanthi Nilayam have been finalized to be from July 10-13, 2022, for which health care and general volunteers signups are ongoing and preparations are underway.

Most importantly, the Zonal Pilgrimage: Pathway to Prasanthi, from July 10-17 has been approved and the entire Zone will be busy excitedly planning and preparing for this monumental trip of a lifetime!

Dr. Axay Shanti Kalathia
Sri Sathya Sai Global Council (SSSGC), Zone 1 Chair



SSSGC Zone 1 - Zonal Committees

At a Glance

Call Sai

Set up means by which members can serve fellow members in need. Keep database of skill sets, volunteers who are willing to help and a common number to call to be directed to the right people.

Medical

Resources for all medical related service opportunities in our Zone and liaison for opportunities around the world including Swami's institutions in India.

Ladies Wing

Discussion and support group to meet periodically to discuss issues and concerns and set up subcommittees.

Green Team

Discuss ways to educate and implement awareness of environmentally related issues and to recommend tips and best practices for use by devotees at home and at Sai functions.

SSSEP

Sri Sathya Sai Educational Program

Separate from regular center Education programs which are under the direction of the Devotional coordinator. This committee will address special programs for young and older adults including Human Values, Awareness and Leadership courses which can be completed with culmination of certificate presentation and ceremony in Prashanti Nilayam. Education for physicians and healthcare providers.

Humanitarian Relief

Help coordinate evaluation response and education regarding floods, fires, hurricanes and earthquakes with coordination for providing relief supplies and support.

Social Justice

Use Sri Sathya Sai Teachings to help understand and guide various social issues we are facing in our communities.

Media / Tech

Development and support for all media and tech related areas including electronic communications, database management, website design and management, social media including TV, Radio, and electronic newsletter.

Cultural Integration and Outreach

Explore commonalities and differences with Eastern vs Western cultures with regards to speech, customs, rituals and norms so that each can understand each other better to further enhance quality of interactions and communication at center events, community service events, and any other community wide interactions.

Vedas and Sacred Chanting

Discuss and facilitate the introduction, teaching and regular practice of Veda chanting. Also incorporate education for meaning and significance as well as planning for periodic group sessions for world peace. Also explore educating on short chants from multiple faith traditions.

SSSPAVE

Sri Sathya Sai Program for Awareness of Human Values and Educare

Teaching opportunities in the community that are values based. Also provide template to approach low income/disadvantaged local school systems to offer volunteer tutors to help children with homework on site or virtually.



Sri Sathya Sai
GLOBAL COUNCIL, ZONE 1

Zone 1 Committees' Reports

As reported in the first issue of SaiLights, a total of 11 committees were set up in the summer/fall of 2021 to support SSSGC's vision of helping devotees incorporate Swami's teachings in many practical areas of our lives. This issue reports on the progress being made. As always with Swami's teachings, the starting point is to understand what He has said on the priority area in question. For example, what does Swami say on environmental responsibility? What has He said about the role of women? These words then form the basis for identifying next steps and actions needed to help communities and center members apply these teachings in their daily lives. Several committees have sprung into action, for example, the Media/Tech, Humanitarian Relief, Education Programs, and Vedic Chants teams. Others, such as the Social Justice and Cultural Integration teams, are taking a more deliberative approach given the underlying complexity of those issues. **The Zonal Committee Reports are presented below in alphabetical order.**

Call Sai

You are never alone!



Muthu Bhoopathi, Chair,
Call Sai Committee

"Call Sai" is a free and confidential helpline service launched during Swami's 96th Birthday in November 2021. It is a Zonal initiative of SSSGC Zone 1 aimed at serving Sai devotees across the United States, Canada, and the West Indies, by providing information and services or connecting to resources within the Sai fold, wherever feasible. Services cover, but are not limited to, health and wellness checks, career guidance, tutoring, transportation, general IT support, and medical consultation.

Call Sai supports Sai devotees through volunteers from our Sai family who may have the required expertise or information about publicly available resources. If we need to reach outside the Sai fold, the volunteer will connect with the caller for confirmation before connecting with external entities. Call Sai does not, however, endorse any specific resources, services, or providers.

How to be a part of Call Sai. Members can be a part of this noble initiative in two ways:

- registering as volunteers through our website (<https://callsai.org>) if they have skills or expertise that could be useful to the Sai community
- dialing in toll-free number 1 272 225 5724 i.e. (**1 272 CALL SAI**) if they need assistance or services for themselves or family members

How Call Sai works. Anyone within the US can reach out via the number or website above, and one of our volunteers would respond back within 24 hours. Volunteers provide information based on details available to them. Callers are not obligated to use the information provided and should use their discretion in choosing a service or resource provided. Maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of callers as well as volunteers is of utmost importance. All communications between Call Sai volunteers and callers is voluntary and will be treated with complete confidence. For more information about our service offering and volunteer registration, as well as to download our privacy and confidentiality policy, please visit <https://callsai.org>.

Next Steps. Call Sai calls are currently handled by volunteers from Region 3, but our on-call team will soon expand to include volunteers from other parts of the US. We are also currently working with SSSGC National leadership in Canada, to explore expanding the program first to Canada and then the West Indies.

Zone 1 Committees' Reports (Continued)

Cultural Integration and Outreach

Girish Jandhyala, Chair,
Cultural Integration and Outreach Committee

Explore commonalities and differences with Eastern vs Western cultures with regards to speech, customs, rituals and norms so that each can understand the other better to further enhance quality of interactions and communication at center events, community service events, and any other community wide interactions.

Since the launch of the Cultural Integration Committee during Zone 1's offerings for Swami's 96th Birthday, we have taken a first step to understand the current state of all the centers in Zone 1 on the subject of Cultural Integration. As part of this effort, a survey was sent out to all Sai Center leaders, through their respective National leaders.

Our thanks go out to all who have taken time to respond to the survey. We are currently reviewing the feedback received and categorizing the inputs into long/short term projects, best/ideal practices and ideas for us to be able to implement to reach a better future state in terms of cultural integration. A quick overview of results reveals a very heartening picture with respect to how various centers are addressing the Culture issue and are adopting many creative methods and ideas to bring the best from east and west.

In this effort we would like to partner with each one of you to make a difference consistent with Bhagavan's vision. If you have not already participated in the survey, please do so using the [link](#) and let us know how you are addressing this subject in your respective centers. We look forward to updating *SaiLights* readers on the progress being made, in the next issue.

Humanitarian Relief

Rajen Ghayal, Chair,
Humanitarian Relief Committee

The Humanitarian Relief Committee (HRC) was formed in the summer of 2021, and with Swami's Grace and Blessings, an introductory team meeting was held last December. Since then, the team has sprung into action with relief efforts for various disasters in the United States.

Collection drives. So far, several collection drives for humanitarian relief supplies have been successfully completed, for:

- * Haiti earthquake victims in Les Cayes
- * Hurricane Ida victims (through the Samaritan Homeless Interim Program in Somerville, NJ)
- * Hurricane Ida victims in Dulac in Louisiana
- * Tornado victims in Kentucky
- * Ukrainian refugees (through local Ukrainian churches and organizations)

Handling of Funds. In keeping with Sri Sathya Sai Baba's teachings, funds are never solicited. The preference is for devotees to provide hands-on in-person services and loving interactions. Due to the nature of many crisis that need help, often providing financial support is the only possible means to provide relief in the early stages, and therefore opportunities for devotees who are moved to provide such support are provided. For recent support the following respected trusts, [The Prasanthi Trust](#) and [Sarva Dharma Service Center](#), with a long history of supporting various Prasanthi Nilayam projects graciously provided devotees an opportunity to participate via their respective websites. With Swami's Grace, now the **Sri Sathya Sai Global Council Foundation** has been set up to allow those who wish to provide support a means to do so. For more information please email SSSGCF at treasurer@sssgcf.org.

Zone 1 Committees' Reports (Continued)

March meeting: Support for Ukraine. A meeting was held March 23, 2022 to discuss ways to intensify the Ukrainian humanitarian relief efforts. Participants included Dr Kalathia, SSSGC Zone 1 Chair, Dr Karanam, SSSGC USA National Chair, Mr. Wadhwani, SSSGC Zone 1 Advisor and chairman of the Prasanthi Trust, Ms. Desai, the Secretary of the Prasanthi Trust, Connecticut, USA and Mr. Barade, President of the Sarva Dharma Service Center, Farmingdale, New Jersey.

An estimated 3 million Ukrainian displaced refugees are coping with grief and considerable loss. The meeting reviewed ways in which devotees could render immediate assistance. These included organizing collection drives, maintaining inventory and distribution of supplies; providing water purification systems; arranging medical camps for medical, psychological, and other conditions; deploying cleaning and disinfectant initiatives; deploying financial aid; and engaging in prayer. Longer term service projects could include aid for casualty losses that result from the damage to property; help with debris clearing, light construction, and rebuilding; educational initiatives; vocational and other training to provide victims with the means to earn a livelihood.

The meeting also discussed ways to collaborate with the SSSGC Humanitarian Relief counterparts in Europe to render humanitarian relief. HRC will follow up on those options shortly.

For more information or clarification, calls may be addressed to the chair of the Humanitarian Relief Committee, Mr. Rajen Ghayal at (Mobile: 1-732-551-6349) or (Email: righayal@gmail.com).

Educational Program

Dr. Raja Rao, Chair,
Educational Program Committee

The Sri Sathya Sai Educational Programme aims to rekindle the ancient wisdom present in Bhagawan's teachings, course-correct, and help participants move toward a higher purpose in life.

On February 12, 2022, the Zone 1 Sri Sathya Sai Global Council piloted a three-course educational program to help participants refine their understanding of who they are, how they should interact in all aspects of their lives, and subsequently develop leadership skills as they assume responsible roles in Swami's organization and our society at large.



On February 12, the Sai Awareness course commenced. Every second and fourth Saturday of February – June 2022, a guest speaker introduces a specific course topic for 25 minutes, to help guide the group discussions in breakout rooms. The reading material, composed of Bhagawan's quotes, is provided to the participants before each session. The interactive 40-minute group discussions are guided by relevant, practical questions that deal with issues, challenges, and struggles that participants face daily. Upon completing the first course, participants will receive a certificate during the Zone 1 Pilgrimage to Prashanti Nilayam, July 10–17, 2022, at the MahaSamadhi, Prasanthi (regardless of whether the participant will be able to visit physically).

In the inaugural session, guest speaker Dr. P. V. Shankar expounded on two aphorisms, viz., *God is Love*, and *God*

Zone 1 Committees' Reports (Continued)

is Truth. Regarding the former, he shared the five maxims of Love he received directly from Swami, which include i) give more, receive less, ii) appreciate more, criticize less, iii) always have a positive attitude, iv) control, if not eliminate anger, and v) always have unity in thought, word, and deed per Swami's teachings. Regarding *God is Truth*, he explained the difference between *Nijam*—fact or worldly truth, *Rutham*—conscience or intuitive truth, and *Satyam*—absolute truth that never changes.

The second guest speaker Mrs. Geetha Mohanram emphasized that unless we understand Swami's teachings, we cannot practice His teachings. She began her presentation with a question: *Why don't we remember that Swami is present every moment of our life?* She then shared several personal experiences which conveyed that God is an eternal witness.

Dr. Stanley Wetschler – the third speaker, presented three aspirational goals for his audience to understand and practice: i) the messages of Sathya Sai Baba as they relate to health and wellness, ii) the benefits [gifts] of performing selfless service, and iii) to remember that everything happens in perfect order according to Baba's Plan. He concluded his presentation by praying to Swami thus: *Thank You for the good times, Thank You for the bad.*

Dr. Vedapurisan Viswanathan was our most recent guest speaker. He noted that we often think detachment means to hold nothing, but in reality, detachment means nothing holds you! He narrated two beautiful examples to drive home this oft-misunderstood point. He also shared a few personal experiences, which brought out the true meaning of sacrifice.

Guest speakers for the future sessions of the Sai Awareness course include Dr. Ramya Gopinath, Dr. Andrew DeMil, Dr. Geetha Kamath, Dr. Indira Hewlett, and Mr. Ramesh Wadhwani.

Sri Sathya Sai Program for Awareness of Human Values and Educare



Sainath Vadathirthanathan, Chair,
EHV / Tutoring Committee

Swami's grace and kindness have allowed the formation of the SSSGC Zone 1 - **Sri Sathya Sai Program for Awareness of Human Values (SSSPAVE)** committee. With seven members, the core committee has in recent months deliberated its role, vision and mission of the committee, which has helped us in formulating and executing our plans. Each one in the committee has contributed tremendously in various ways.

We have now:

- ♦ formalized a new name for our committee and our Programs, namely SSSPAVE (Sri Sathya Sai Program for Awareness of Human Values and Educare).
- ♦ finalized our Vision and Mission statements
- ♦ agreed that the main aim of our committee is to extend awareness to external communities and organizations of Swami's message of universal Human Values and virtuous conduct
- ♦ begun to focus on training volunteers on how to spread awareness of Human Values in the community, identify outreach opportunities, tutor underprivileged school children, and create an external web portal
- ♦ finalized the name for the Tutoring program, to be SSSACT (Academic Counseling and Tutoring)

Devotees may send an email to SSSGCEHV@GMAIL.COM to provide feedback on or participate in any of our programs.

We have formed the following sub committees, to focus our time and energies in specific areas.

Zone 1 Committees' Reports (Continued)

EHV training:

The committee decided to have a pool of trained teachers/trainers before conducting EHV programs. We were fortunate to interact with devotees like Bernice Mead, Dr Pal Dhal and Brother Abhimanyu Kaul, who provided critical inputs on how to go about implementing EHV programs. The first Orientation program was conducted on March 6, 2022. Brother Abhimanyu Kaul coordinated this program in which around 45 volunteers participated.

The Jump-start training programs will begin on April 2 for 5 consecutive Saturdays (2-hour session on each day). We have 34 enrolments as of today excluding the core committee members.

ACT:

An academic tutoring volunteer enrollment form was sent to Sai devotees; we currently have 20 volunteers enrolled. On February 24th the volunteers met via Zoom, and many ideas and suggestions were discussed.

An introductory letter was sent to the community about the ACT with a short video about this program and testimonials of current tutees and tutors.

Governance:

The task of this committee is to draft guidelines, processes, and procedures for launching our program

Web Portal subcommittee:

The subcommittee has started work on the contents of an independent web portal for the SSSPAVE programs suited for external communities and organizations and to exhibit neutrality and Global outreach. Swami willing, the plan is to launch the portal on Swami's *Aradhana* Day.

Outreach:

The sub committee has decided to build a strong grassroots level of volunteers who could identify potential communities to implement our programs.

We felt our service coordinators in each region/Sai center would be the ideal group to collaborate with us in identifying opportunities and reaching out to the communities/organizations. We had approached the national service coordinators and they were more than willing to coordinate with us in implementing the programs.

Plans are under way for the committee members' first meeting with the US service team to explore ways and means of collaborating with partners and implementing the programs in the US.

We will leverage this experience in extending to Canada and West Indies once we set the working template in US.

Green Team



Sridevi Maharaj, Chair,
Environmental Awareness Committee

Any use of the elements over and above legitimate bounds is a sacrilege. So too, each element must be used under some limitations, not as and how you like. Treat the elements as a vesture of the almighty.

—Sathya Sai Baba, March 11, 1978

SSSGC-Zone 1 has established a **Green team** comprising team members from USA, West Indies and Canada, to provide tips, resources, activities and insights into being more environmentally responsible in our daily lives. Developing a spiritual connection and personal transformation through nature-based initiatives is the ultimate goal. The **Green team** aims to achieve this by creating national guidelines for sustainable center practices, expanding the scope of regional conservation service projects, and providing resources to individuals for eco-conscious self- and home- improvement so that they


Zone 1 Committees' Reports (Continued)




can expand and share in their own communities.

Starting with captivating games such as crosswords and Wordles to motivate kids and jumpstarting SSSE and YA-led conservation projects at the center level, the **Green team** aims to **H.E.A.L (Help the environment-Act with Love)**. After all, everything we do as individuals changes the attitudes in our families and communities. For more details, please visit our website (sssgc-zone1.org/green-team-1/#eventdetailsenviro).

We revere all the 5 elements of Nature, starting with projects based on understanding the importance of WATER and water conservation - **WATER SENSE**. We implore all Sai Centers to be aware and take the right steps to make all Center events eco-friendly as a loving service to the community, and do their best to save Mother Earth. For Mother Eswaramma day, the **Green team** has taken up Water Conservation as the first project, referred to as **WATER SENSE**. For Guru Poornima, Earth is the element that will be featured in **EARTH SENSE** and constitute Recycling and Garden Initiatives. For Swami's Birthday, Fire is the element and **FOOD** and **ENERGY SENSE** activities will be featured. Air and Space related activities will be pursued in the following year.

Follow our journey on H.E.A.L – 
[SSSGC Green team](mailto:sssgc.enviro@gmail.com) sssgc.enviro@gmail.com

Share your inspiring green ideas and projects 
[Insta link-Weekly digest - Fun learning activities](#)

Ladies Wing

Dr. Ramya Gopinath, Chair,
Ladies Wing Committee

Past, present, or future, for all time, women are the backbone of progress, the heart of the nation, the very breath. They play the chief role in the dharma of life here below, a key role that is charged with holiness.

- Dharma Vahini, Ch. 5

The mother is the pillar of the home, of society, of the nation, and so of humanity itself. Mothers should know the secret of mental peace, of inner silence, of spiritual courage, of contentment, which is the greatest wealth, and of spiritual discipline, which gives lasting joy.

- SSS Vol 1, Ch 16, 1958

In 1969, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba began the Mahila Vibhag or Ladies Wing of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization in India with the goal of engaging women as Bal Vikas gurus, to lead societal transformation through the restructuring of education for, and blossoming of human values in, children, and to encourage women's participation in devotional and service activities. He emphasized the special character qualities and attributes that women possess – love, compassion, sacrifice, patience, strength, forbearance, determination – and constantly highlighted the critical role of mothers in the upbringing of children and creation of harmonious homes and communities. In 1995, Swami declared that November 19th would be celebrated each year as Ladies Day as a constant reminder of the central role of women in all arenas of life.

The mission of the newly-established SSSGC Zone 1 Ladies Wing is to understand, embrace and share the teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to empower women to

Zone 1 Committees' Reports (Continued)

blossom to their full potential in all aspects of life and in the multitude of roles that they fulfil. With Swami's grace, and with great enthusiasm, the Zone 1 Ladies Wing Committee began work in October 2021 by discussing Swami's vision for women and the Ladies Wing and researching best practices from existing Ladies Wings in different countries.

To help conceptualize and focus the activities of the Zone 1 Ladies Wing, a survey was circulated to seek ideas from our sisters throughout the Zone, on how best this initiative can support the practice of Swami's teaching in all our myriad roles as women, the spreading of love through service activities, and our spiritual growth through devotional activities. The Committee is currently formulating focused educational/discussion modules that explore Swami's teachings to address topics and issues central to women. We hope that these materials along with the collated survey results will support the establishment of active, engage Ladies Wings at all levels of the SSSGC Zone 1 Organization. We also look forward to organizing Zone-wide conferences, workshops, talks and other shared activities.

Media / Tech

Sai Sravan Cherukuri, Chair,
Media / Tech Committee

With Swami's grace, the SSSGC Zone 1 Media team began its seva on 2021 Guru Poornima as one of the first SSSGC Zone 1 committees. The team immediately sprang into action by starting up the official website for the zone (www.sssgc-zone1.org). In addition, the team released the websites for the countries within the zone, USA (www.sssgc-USA.org), Canada (www.sssgc-Canada.org)

and West Indies (www.sssgc-wi.org). In parallel, the team started operating the zone's own YouTube channel (YouTube.com/sssgczone1). The channel quickly grew into a sprawling medium of communication for the devotees and attracted close to 1000 followers within a short period.

The team launched **Telegram, Instagram, and Facebook** channels to disseminate Bhagawan's information in different forms of media. The team also rolled out a magazine named '**SaiLights**' that collects articles from devotees, highlights center and zonal activities.

Standard templates were defined to setup websites for regional and other centers. While the team continues to maintain the zonal and national websites, the regional and center sites will be turned over to the corresponding media designee. The team has developed websites for other countries as well. A standard workflow was developed to process and publish all Logos, Flyers and Videos for Awake, Unite and Inspire series, SSSEP, SSSPAWE, Medical (Sai Jeevan series), Vedas and Sacred committee.

The media team has also developed and deployed a discussion forum for the SSSEP course participants. It also offered the following websites at His feet: Call Sai, Sai Tunes, Sai Support, Parthi Pilgrimage and for zonal committees.

The media team also serves as the focal point for all devotee - related contact information by centralizing the collection and providing access to specific slice of the data to those officers who need them.

It is truly an immense pleasure and the media team feels very blessed to serve Swami with humility in what has turned out to be the only medium of communication during the COVID era.

Zone 1 Committees' Reports (Continued)

Medical

Dr. Geetha Kamath, Chair,
Medical Committee

By the immense grace of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, we plan to resume our medical camps nationally and internationally.

The last two years have been a challenging time for the medical community. We were unable to provide important medical services for those in need. On the positive side, these two years have taught us to go within and grow spiritually. We have learned that every opportunity given by Swami is sacred and should not be taken for granted.

Our first International Medical Camp is planned for July 10th to July 13th 2022, during Guru Purnima Celebration in Prasanthi Nilayam, Andhra Pradesh, India. This will be a pilot camp to assess the safety of conducting medical camps in the future. We hope to expand the camp during Swami's Birthday in November of 2022.

I urge all medical and non-medical volunteers to make themselves available for this sacred service. Our Zonal Medical Committee is available to assist you. Let us all join hands and practice Swami's teaching: *Love All, Serve All*.

It is your good fortune that you have become doctors. Sacrifice is a hallmark of a true doctor. So, Doctors should have the spirit of sacrifice. They should be compassionate and considerate towards the poor.

-Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. January 19, 2001.

The year 2019 brought about some very unexpected changes: Covid -19 affected mankind in unfathomable

ways. As medical professionals, we witnessed at close quarters the drastic effects of this pandemic. To help make a difference, we launched "**Sai Jeevan**", to share information with Sai devotees on our Beloved Swami's teachings on health and well being.

Following is a summary of our activities to date:

- Our introductory session in November 2021 started with Dr. Geetha Kamath, Dr. Sangeetha Varnasi and Dr. Sai Lakshmi Pallimalli discussing the main objectives and goals of Sai Jeevan. A number of general health questions and Covid-related questions were answered by the doctors.
- In December and January, Dr. Geetha Bhumireddy spoke about prevention and promotion of cardiovascular health. Our February session had Dr. Susmitha Apuri talk in detail about early diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer.
- We marched into our March session with Dr. Susheel Bathla's topic on Healthy and Happy Feet.

With our Beloved Bhagawan's Grace, we intend to continue these sessions and expand our target audience to more and more Sai families.



Zone 1 Committees' Reports (Continued)

Social Justice

Ketan Kharod, Chair,
Social Justice Committee

Many of us are familiar with Swami's words when it comes to relationships - that first comes understanding, then adjustment. In a 1999 World Youth Conference discourse, He stated more broadly, *"conflicts are on the rise as there is no proper understanding and adjustment among people. Adjustment will be possible only when there is proper understanding."*

With this backdrop, our zonal leadership took the initiative to create the Social Justice Committee, as many devotees are inspired to apply this understanding/adjustment concept to social justice issues. For example: (1) to gain greater understanding and awareness of inequalities based on race, ethnicity, gender, etc. (not to mention our own implicit biases and privileges); and then: (2) adjust our thoughts, words, and deeds accordingly as necessary.

The primary goal is personal transformation – by answering difficult questions from seemingly simple teachings (e.g., how do we define "all" in "love all, serve all"? what does it mean to love or serve in that context?). Committee brainstormed ideas for future activities, including: compiling source material from Swami, applicable to social justice issues; facilitating discussion groups for interested devotees on issues related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); or to identify non-traditional service or community immersion activities – but with Swami's teachings at the core.

Anyone interested in serving on the committee, or to volunteer in a less-formal capacity, please contact Ketan Kharod (advisor.yam@sssgc-usa.org).

Vedas and Sacred Chants Committee

Arunodayan, Chair,
Vedas and Sacred Chants Committee

"Veda Samrakshana" (Preservation of the Vedas) is one of the chief purposes of the Divine Incarnation of our Lord Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, as declared by Him. Preserving the Vedas is vital to the re-establishment of Dharma. As part of 96th Birthday offerings to Swami, the Vedas and Sacred Chants committee was set up, to foster study of the Vedas across Zone 1 of SSSGC and provide the support that Centers may need to pursue this Sadhana prescribed by Swami, in a sacred manner. The committee will initiate activities to collate learning resources and organizing events to bring about greater awareness and enhance the knowledge of Vedic Wisdom among centers and devotees.

Swami's instructions on Vedas can be broadly grouped under four types of activities, highlighted below.

Listening to the Vedic chants

In a discourse delivered during the Dasara festival in 1989, Swami said, "The potency of the Divine vibrations emanating from the *mantras* is such that they confer unique blissful experience on the listeners. Among the eight Divine potencies attributed to Vedic mantras, *sravanam* (listening) is considered the foremost." (04 October 1989). Swami has also said, "Sound is the first attribute of God. Veda Shabda is all-pervasive." Thus, a clear first step in the practice of Vedas is to develop a habit of regular listening; allocating a few minutes of each day is all that is needed!

Learning to chant the Vedic mantras

"Everyone should necessarily learn the Vedas,

Zone 1 Committees' Reports (Continued)

contemplate on them and chant them wholeheartedly. There is no point in merely learning the Vedas if you do not chant them. There are some who chant the mantras when they are here but forget them when they go outside. You may go anywhere but repeat the mantras at least in your mind. Never become a *Vidya Drohi* (one who does not do justice to the knowledge acquired). A *Vidya Drohi* will also become a *Daiva Drohi* (rebel against God) and will ultimately miss the chance to become a recipient of God's grace." The above are a few firm words spoken by Swami during the discourse delivered on 19 October 2004 during another Dasara festival.

Living the principles

"The chanting of mantras should always be synchronized with practicing of the prescribed Karma. By such practice one can realize the Divine. By merely listening to mantras and failing to practice, one can never get happiness or peace. In order to realize the Divine, you have to practice the precepts prescribed in the Vedas."

These words were spoken by Swami on 18 October 1993 during the Veda Purusha Saptaha Yajna. In order to heed this advice, we must first understand the meaning of the Vedic chants and learn the principles expounded in the Vedas, so that we may practice them.

Cultivating and strengthening Divine Love

All the spiritual practices that we take up have the ultimate goal of growing the Love principle within us. These practices take us closer to God and help us experience Divinity all around us. Swami has gifted us all that we need to embark on this journey: His Form, His Name, His Words and His Life are all aids which He has granted by coming down on earth. Utilizing these blessings will allow us to view Vedic Principles through the "Sai Lens". Through precept and the example of Vedic practices in Prasanthi Nilayam, Swami has shown us how the Vedas may be upheld in the current day.



Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - Service

Throughout His Avataric Life, Swami urged us to “Love all, Serve all”. In this 11th anniversary year of His MahaSamadhi, Zone 1 Sai devotees are following this dictum as earnestly as ever. With the Covid virus now entering its third year, communities have become more vulnerable, suffering from food insecurity, homelessness, and physical and mental health issues. Natural disasters and, over the past year, conflict, are also taking a toll. Sai Centers have risen to the occasion, seeking out those at risk - be they homeless, poor, aged, infants in need, or victims of abuse - and expanding the volumes of assistance where possible. The circumstances for Seva are not without challenge; but what greater motivator than the joy of seeing what a piping hot meal does for a cold, homeless person?

Allaying Food Insecurity



Virtually every Sai Center has been engaged in food service activities, be it in the form of hot meals, fresh produce, or non-perishable canned goods. Among Zone 1's larger centers, the South Bethesda Sai Center has been able to offer cooked food regularly to four service facilities in the Washington DC-Maryland area. Keenly aware of the Covid-induced hardships experienced by so many, devotees have prepared and delivered the meals with love and fervent prayers for the well-being of those partaking of the food. The Center also regularly holds drives for non-perishable packaged foods. Other

examples include snacks for schools and warm, healthy breakfasts served monthly by Virginia's Loudoun Center, which also notes a food drive yielding an impressive

Baltimore's Narayan Seva: Stepping Up To The Plate

- ◆ “We have been doing an ongoing monthly Narayana Seva for Elizabeth House, a soup kitchen in Laurel, Maryland. For the past five years, six families volunteered to cook homemade food with standardized recipes and deliver them to Elizabeth House.
- ◆ As the pandemic and economy worsened, the number of guests doubled, from 40 to 85 guests. Centers have been delivering food twice a month (1st and 3rd Saturdays).
- ◆ Families have participated by shopping for groceries and preparing meals in the comfort of their home. We have about 11 fixed vegetarian recipes compiled specifically for Elizabeth House which are very easy to follow.
- ◆ We are very grateful to Swami for allowing us to continue this seva during the pandemic. Elizabeth House is a small facility where resources are limited. Our donation helps those in need with fresh homecooked food.”
- ◆ *Want to see one of the simple but yummy recipes? Vegetarian Baked Ziti: In a large skillet, add chopped onion with crushed red pepper and olive oil over medium heat. Stir for 3 minutes until onion starts to soften, then add garlic and stir one minute more. Add crushed or whole tomatoes with their juices, a sprinkle of salt, and a pinch of sugar. Stir until bubbly; taste; and use however you'd like!*



Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - Service

(Continued)



donation of about 800 pounds of food - including pasta, rice, sweet potatoes, and fruit) to a DC Kitchen that provides cooked food to a local shelter. An example from **Baltimore** also reveals how needs have grown in the wake of the pandemic (see box). Other efforts worth highlighting include **Columbus'** Sai Center, offering 500 sandwiches once a month to a women's shelter; the **New Jersey Sarva Dharma Center** supporting Weekly Brunch Bites and Weekly Grocery for Needy Families projects; and a new seva project in **Toronto** (Canada), where Young Adults and others will cook and serve 200 meals at a Senior Home. **Trinidad and Tobago's Milton Sai Center**, meanwhile, has supported food security through monthly distribution of food hampers to needy families, while a new national YA project is distributing seedlings to needy families to grow their own food.

Helping the Homeless

A large part of Sai Centers' food service activities benefit the homeless directly or through support to homeless shelters, but in many cases such efforts extend well beyond food. Members of Maryland's **South Bethesda's Center** have for many years accompanied hot breakfasts with donation of new, plush winter blankets for distribution to homeless individuals in DC parks and shelters, extending warmth in more ways than one. The center also delivers winter care kits to two interfaith

women's shelters, and marks Swami's Birthday by serving breakfast to residents at the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless. In **San Diego** also, Centers have engaged in "Narayan Seva" regularly for 35 years, with unyielding energy and fervor; now the packages include hygiene supplies such as facemasks, hand sanitizers, sleeping bags, blankets, and ponchos. Centers in **Phoenix** support a variety of service initiatives for the homeless, including drives for hygiene items and winter blankets along with fresh and non-perishable food. Similarly, New Jersey's **Medford Center** distributes winter kits for homeless individuals, while **New Jersey's Sarva Dharma Center** donates hygiene kits and clothes for battered women, and baby blankets and caps for little children. Devotees in **Loudoun**, Virginia, meanwhile, participated in a Winter drive to collect and distribute 200 kits made up of blankets, scarves, socks, and caps.

Whatever talent a person has should be dedicated to the rest of humanity - indeed to all living beings. Therein lies fulfillment. All men are kin. They are of the same likeness, the same build, molded out of the same material, with the same divine essence in each. Service to man will help your divinity to blossom, for it will gladden your heart and make you feel that life has been worthwhile.

- Swami

Responding to crisis

Several Sai Centers were involved with support for crisis or post-crisis situations. Members of the **Loudoun** Center opened their hearts to support humanitarian relief efforts for Ukraine refugees, who have been in the throes of great turmoil. Devotees from **New Jersey's Sarva Dharma Center** have been helping humanitarian relief efforts also in Nepal and Sri Lanka and providing baby blankets for little children in need from the disaster in Louisiana. Similarly, the Sai Centers of **Phoenix** have been engaged with partners in Western Kentucky Tornado Relief, and also supporting refugees from Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan.

Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - Service (Continued)

The **South Bethesda Center**, meanwhile, has had a “Resettle a Refugee Family” program in place since 2021, when refugees were evacuated from Afghanistan. Devotees’ generous contributions have covered a range of kitchen essentials, towels, sheets, children’s items and much more. The center also supports a Grassroots Crisis Center, a 24/7 single point access for behavioral health, crisis and homeless services for individuals and families, as well as Shepherd’s Table, which serves individuals experiencing homelessness, unemployment, mental health challenges, substance abuse, and physical disability—all forms of personal crisis. **Trinidad and Tobago Centers** also tackled such personal crises, helping to rebuild two homes destroyed by fire and to pay for the surgery of a child. *Please see also the Humanitarian Relief Committee report on page 8 of this magazine.*

Responding to Medical Needs

Sai medical camps have for some years been supporting the health and routine medical needs of vulnerable communities; but as in every other sector, the Covid 19 virus has wrought havoc. Poor families have become poorer and sicker; the medical camps too had to curtail their activities in light of Covid. But with the virus on the wane, possibly, Sai medical teams are cautiously setting up afresh their islands of healing. A powerful example follows.



Focus:

Huntington Park Medical Camp - Results on the Ground

Huntington Park is a low-income community in Southern California with 24% of the population (or double the national average) living under the poverty line. Every year since 2013, devotees of the Southern California Sai Center have held an annual medical camp, offering high-quality health care free of cost—a principle epitomized by the Sathya Sai health care organizations in India. In 2020-21, the camps were not held due to the pandemic; but on April 10, 2022, the California Region of the SSSGC held a medical camp, partnering with the City of Huntington Park and several other civic-minded and pro-health organizations. The numbers tell the rest of the story:

- 411 patients received free services from a team of 40 medical professionals and 155 general volunteers
- 300 families received 30 lbs. of non-perishable food items
- 242 prescription eyeglasses were made on-site and distributed
- 127 glucose tests and 91 cholesterol tests were done
- 76 dental filling and extractions were performed
- 22 Covid-19 vaccines were administered

A patient, Beth, commented, “I’ve lived here for 21 years, and I didn’t know about this medical camp. I’m amazed that you have been doing this for seven years!”

In

Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - Service

(Continued)

Caring for babies

Babies, as vulnerable as they are adorable, are a relatively new area of focus for Sai Center service activities. **South Bethesda's** Knots of Pure Love and **East Brunswick's** Sew4Seva activities (see box) speak for themselves; most notable, perhaps, is the love experienced by the knitters themselves, as they spread warmth to the bundles of joy. Other centers helping to address babies' needs include **New Jersey** (baby caps and blankets) as well as **Baltimore, Columbus** (diapers) and **Loudoun** (baby caps).

In Focus: The Sadhana of....Knitting?

Praying, meditating, chanting vedas. Tried and true ways to achieve spiritual growth. But knitting, sewing, crocheting—who knew that these activities could lift us up spiritually? The ladies of the South Bethesda and East Brunswick Sai centers knew, all too well! Following are two heartwarming stories of women with caring hearts, creative hands, and a commitment to serve, in the name of Sai.

Knots of Pure Love

South Bethesda Center, MD

Swami says, “**Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray**”; what better way to serve than to care for newborn babies, who hold our nation's future in their little hands?

In the months leading up to Swami's Birthday on November 23, 2021, members of Maryland's South Bethesda Sai Center came together to knit hats for newborn and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit babies. Workshops were held to teach interested devotees to how to knit the hats, and the knitting group named itself “Knots of Pure Love”. The women knit the hats during their free time at home; the hats are collected and packed individually with loving messages.

A chat group serves to inspire, hand-hold, and share, all

helping to make the hats ever more colorful and joyful.

Nearly 30 ladies have participated with great enthusiasm, knitting around 250 baby hats that were donated to hospitals in the Washington DC and New Jersey areas. The seva has inspired many—experienced or not—to pick up the loom. “Truly blissful!” is how devotees describe the experience; increasingly, they say, they feel Swami is working through them. The project continues to grow.

Sew4Sai

East Brunswick Center, NJ

How to usefully engage mothers while their children are in SSSE class? Thus was born Sew4Sai.

The starting point for these “mothers”, broadly defined to include grandparents and others present, was instruction on how to make baby caps using a loom. Items were donated to a New Jersey-based nonprofit organization that collects and distributes donated baby items to soup kitchens and local shelters. Amid much enthusiasm and energy, the quickly expanding group evolved into “Sew4Sai”.

As years passed, ideas grew. Love for Swami motivated participants to learn more skills - crocheting, knitting, using a sewing machine

using a sewing machine. Projects now cover baby caps, receiving blankets, burp cloths for a local hospital, and “new mom” packages for hospitals in Puttaparthi. Woolen scarf-cap sets are being sent to Ukraine and Russia; and the team also made cloth masks during the initial phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, workshops at regional retreats and other venues continue to teach knitting.

“Sew4Seva” is never short of eager volunteers, or material. Participants see in it a way to connect with

Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - Service (Continued)

Swami. Some find fulfillment and a sense of purpose while serving others; others say it has helped them overcome the stress of day-to-day life. For many, the interest has become a passion, and a chance to chant God's name. While hands knit, lips do Namasmarana to send positive energy to the recipients.

And...participants derive great joy and soul satisfaction seeing mothers and children cherish these handmade items. "Through sewing, we are connecting with God!", say the ladies.

Seva comes in all shapes and sizes!

We've heard of two-party coalitions, east-west coalitions, but... diaper coalitions? Once a month, **Columbus Sai Center** volunteers head to the Columbus Diaper Coalition facility. They open big boxes of donated diapers, and count and repack 2500 diapers in sets of 25. The diapers are distributed to families in need...and baby stays dry!



Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - Service



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL!



Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - Service



Zone 1 Centers' Highlights

Sri Sathya Sai Educare (SSSE)

In 1978, Swami said, “*Bal Vikas* (now Sri Sathya Sai Spiritual Education) is the primary basis of the great movement to restore *dharma* (righteousness) in the world.” To realize this grand vision, Swami has anchored the SSSE program in the five human values, namely Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema, and Ahimsa (or Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love, and Non-Violence). At scale, SSSE can transform a nation by putting future generations on the right path; at the individual level, the program seeks to help bloom, in each child, the flower of divinity that lies within. What does an SSSE program involve? This section offers a glimpse of Zone 1 centers’ SSSE activities that promote a focus on Human Values; the practice of compassion; integration of SSSE with the centers’ devotion and seva activities; and close parental involvement..

Focusing on Human Values

Many lesson plans go one level below the five core values to “sub values”, to deepen children’s understanding. **Baltimore**, for example, has selected a theme for 2022, namely the three “P’s”, or Purity, Patience, and Perseverance (see box). Lesson plans have also focused

Baltimore: Focusing on Purity, Patience, Perseverance

Group 1: “Know More About Swami”— Learn from parents who are alumni of Swami’s institutions

Group 2: Learn to control anger, jealousy, forbearance; learn about purity of senses, purity of mind. Weekly Life Application is rewarded with “*Bangaru* of the Week” Blue-Ribbon award!

Group 3: Learn how Nature is the best teacher of Patience; explore what aspects of Nature relate to patience.

Group 4: Learn “Freedom through the lens of Right conduct”; learn that an act can be considered “free” as long as self-control is being exercised and the voice of Conscience is heard.



on concern for the environment: “*Treat nature with reverence*”, Swami has said. **Trinidad and Tobago**, for example, has children working on a recycle project as a part of its Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) program. Similar themes run through the poems and art submitted by SSSE children in Virginia’s **Loudoun** Center. Loudoun Center children recently offered an EXPO to Bhagavan, where, in addition to *vedam* chanting, *sloka* recitation, and bhajan singing, they also made small *chinna katha* presentations and talked of SSSE’s impact on their daily lives. In Maryland’s **South Bethesda** Center, meanwhile, Group 3 and Group 4 participated actively in a workshop, “Dealing with Ethical Dilemmas Using the Sai Way”; one can only imagine the range of human values and sub values featured in that discussion!

Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - SSSE

(Continued)

Practicing Compassion

SSSE children regularly take part in the Center's Service activities, be they food service-related or environment-oriented, or something else. However, some SSSE-only Seva activities are also worthy of mention. Several SSSE students made heartwarming cards for others: the **Phoenix Sai Center** delivered 121 beautiful hand-made Christmas cards to a senior living community, which the seniors appreciated greatly. **Loudoun Center** children made holiday cards—and much more! (see box). **South Bethesda** children also prepared Send-a-smile cards with loving messages to a local interfaith women's center and an interfaith emergency shelter, and wrote letters to seniors. The **South Bethesda** Center also supported the



Schoolwork Assistance Initiative (SAI), with Group 3 and Group 4 SSSE students tutoring underserved children in communities where resources have been limited. **New Jersey** students, meanwhile, have been supporting 10th Grade Tutoring.

Integrating SSSE with Devotion, Seva, and YAs

SSSE children participate actively in center devotion and seva programs. Integration with Center-wide activities can be inspiring and motivational for children; such events expand their opportunities both to see Swami's teachings put into practice and to share with the Center what they have learned. In **Baltimore**, for example, SSSE children offered a dance drama on Swami's Birthday, along with presentations on everyday life events as they related to *Trikarana Shuddhi*, or the principle of unity across thought, word, and deed. Children are a big part of Center-wide Christmas celebrations: the **Baltimore** Center had carols singing by families, and the reading of excerpts from Swami's discourse; the **Flushing** Center too featured carols singing. In **South Bethesda**, children have been well represented in the Global Akhanda Bhajans and Shivaratri Bhajans offerings. In other efforts at integration, Center members have been providing one-on-one Veda chanting instruction to SSSE children, while SSSE Group 3/Group 4 students have been reading aloud

Loudoun: Spreading the Joy of Christmas!

SSSE students of Virginia's Loudoun Center spread joy and love during Christmas time, bringing smiles and happiness to the residents of Gardens Assisted Living Center, wrote "Thank You Cards" to our veterans and a Note of encouragement to the children at the Ronald McDonald House Charities. Students collected Tabs to support the fund raising Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Christmas Carols for the Gardens Assisted Living Center: SSSE kids came together to record carols. The carols were offered as a recording to be enjoyed by the residents of the Gardens Assisted Living Center. Spread the joy!

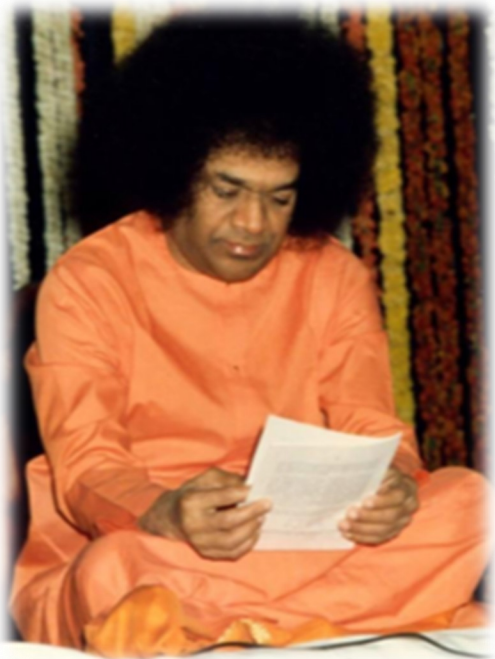
Cards and Gift wrapping for the Toy Drive: SSSE children made holiday cards and wrapped the holiday gifts to be handed to the kids and adults at Leesburg and Manasas shelters.

Veterans, we thank you! Our children wrote very thoughtful and beautiful messages to our men and women in uniform in honor of Veterans Day. Their messages were printed on cards and mailed to the Veterans Affairs Medical Center. A huge thanks to everyone who made this possible!

Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - SSSE

(Continued)

the "Thought for the Day", just before the start of the bhajan session. Integrating SSSE children with YAs can be especially productive: a new series initiated by Loudoun's YAs envisions a conversation between currently and recently graduated SSSE students, with the latter reflecting on how Sai teachings helped them in college and at work and how their relationship with Swami has evolved.



Phoenix: Connect and Inspire!"

With Swami's Guidance and Grace, the Phoenix Sai Center has started a monthly series called "Connect and Inspire". The idea? To hear from and be inspired by parents who were blessed by Swami to send their children to SSSE and help them become successful in their lives, and more importantly, good human beings. On a selected Sunday of the month, invited parents, over 30-45 minutes, talk about their experience as SSSE parents and the impact that the program has had on their children's lives. *Phoenix SSSE would like to thank each and every parent who was a part of this inspiring series and pray to Swami to make these sessions useful for the SSEcommunity.*

Promoting Parents' Involvement

Children's time at home is far greater than in the classroom; seeking parents' involvement to improve education outcomes therefore makes abundant sense. This is all the more true at present, when, because of Covid, classes have been online and children have been mostly home. It is further true because the curriculum being covered is not geometry or geography but how to respect your elders or how to forgive your friends. As part of a Zone-wide, Center-based effort to promote parental involvement, the South Bethesda Center held, for all SSSE parents, two sessions of "Harmonious Homes: Human Values Parenting" - National Parenting Initiative", covering the first module. Under the same program, Loudoun Center held a parenting workshop, breaking down the importance of human values and how they are an integral part of parenting. Meanwhile, parents inspiring parents is an idea being explored by the Phoenix Sai Center, with promising results. The Center has also introduced a new parent-driven initiative, called "Sathya to Sai" - A Sai Katha on Swami's Early Life. Under the initiative, one episode of the Divine Story is posted every Thursday and Sai parents are requested to spend 30 minutes watching the video with the whole family. Centers also recognize the important role of teachers, of course. To that end, the Flushing Center has put in place a new teacher training program, while Canada will soon hold a Gurus Retreat.

First and foremost, the parents should put human values into practice in their own life and then encourage their children to develop these values. The parents should guide their children on the right path by their own example. At the same time, the children should not cause any trouble to their parents... [They] should develop the understanding that they have made progress in life only due to the sacrifice of their parents and hence should show gratitude to them.

- Swami

Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - Devotion

As the pandemic appears to recede, some Sai centers are beginning to meet in person while many others have continued to meet online on a regular basis to conduct devotional programs. Despite the challenges, they continue to be creative and inspire each other to practice Bhagawan's teachings, engaging in various devotional activities. While centers broadly adhere to the practice of weekly bhajans and study circles, highlighted below is a panoply of thoughtful and innovative approaches to devotional activities across the centers of Zone 1.

It is not easy for the human mind, immersed in worldly concerns, to turn to God. It is only when the mind is transformed... that the body experiences Divine Bliss (Ananda). The means by which the mind is transformed is devotion (*Bhakti* - intense love for God). Progressively, turn your mind towards God until it merges in God. Meditation, repetition of the names of the Lord, group singing of devotional songs (*bhajans*), reading of scriptures and other such activities are designed only to purify the mind so that it can concentrate on God.

- Swami

- ♥ Sai center members at Sammamish, WA began chanting Rudram everyday since the start of Covid pandemic and continue this activity of praying for everyone's welfare.
- ♥ Members from SSSGC centers in Phoenix area have initiated a new activity to learn Bhagawan's *suprabhatam* with the objective of being able to recite as a group on a regular basis. They have also taken up 1008 sadhana at the center level and are engaged in regular study of Swami's vahinis and chanting of Gayathri mantra.
- ♥ SSSGC centers of Columbus and Dallas have initiated a series of talks as part of the devotional program. On a regular basis, a devotee or their family from the center membership narrates their journey to Swami and discusses Bhagawan's teachings that have had most significant impact on their lives.

- ♥ Many centers have been coordinating programs to mark festivals and special days. Kansas Sai center celebrated Makara Sankranthi with a special program that included a talks by guest speaker.
- ♥ Atlanta Sai center celebrated Valentine's Day in a very inspiring way. In numerous discourses that Bhagawan gave, He taught us the true meaning of the often used word "Love" and how one can practice and realize it through spiritual discipline. A special program was put together, titled *Prema Bandham* – "Loving Bond" with Baba, focused on this true meaning of Love that Bhagawan taught.
- ♥ On the occasion of Holy Shivaratri, most centers across the country have celebrated by organizing special programs, chants and bhajan sessions. A 24-hour Akhanda Bhajan session was conducted collectively by SSSGC centers of Flushing, Baltimore, Bridgewater, East Brunswick, Falls Church, Loudon and Virginia Beach. The program was also streamed live on zoom providing access to all to join in these bhajans.
- ♥ Members from the Milton Sai Center, Trinidad and Tobago, hosted for one night the Chinmaya Mission, which was performing a 108 Ramayana Yagna.
- ♥ Canada devotees have planned to offer 97 bhajans, in commemoration of Swami's 97th Birthday, in advance of the Pathway to Parthi Pilgrimage taking place in July 2022. This initiative was started by Young Adults on January 1, 2022, when the first 17 bhajans were completed.

Also highlighted below are a few centers whose devotional programs comprised multiple activities, giving the faithful repeated opportunities to offer their prayers, study Swami's teachings, and put them into practice:

Virginia's Loudoun Center: Members have been participating in the following Sadhana Programs for 2022 and as part of 1008 Sadhana in connection with

Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - Devotion (Continued)

centennial Celebrations of Bhagawan:

- * **Regular Chanting's** of Sai Ashtothram, Sai Gayatri, Gayatri mantra, Om Sri Sai Ram, Jyothi Meditation at Weekly Center Devotional Sessions every month.
- * **Sri Sathya Sai Vahini's Satsang** : Center-initiated Vahini's Series Satsang that will be year-long, starting with "Prema Vahini".
- * **Sri Sathya Sai Vratam** – Center-initiated Sri Sathya Sai Vratam providing an opportunity to all center



members to show their gratitude to Bhagawan by performing the Sai Vratam; this is performed every month at a member's house, on Ekadasi or Poornima day.

- * **Sri Sathya Sai Rudra Abhishekam** – Center-initiated Sri Sathya Sai Rudra Abhishekam for all

interested members of center who can avail the opportunity to do Rudra Abhishekam at their homes on every Maha Shivaratri of the month by chanting Rudram and performing abhishekam.

- * **Sri Sathya Sai Festival Bhajans Hosting** – Center-initiated Festival bhajans hosting where devotees can host important festival bhajans at their home (online/virtually) of year 2022.



- * **My Service & I Initiative:** Center started a series of My Service & I with special guest speakers from within our center and from other centers across the region, and this series will be an ongoing offering to Bhagawan on every 3rd Sunday of the month. The primary goal of this series is to share experiences on how devotees connected to Swami through service and/or how His teachings influenced them to connect and take part in service activities in our communities.

Maryland's South Bethesda Center: A rich devotional program has included the following:

- * **Weekly Study Circles:** Completed Soham, Jyothi meditation sessions coupled with videos from Swami's speeches regarding faith, surrender, and mind control to help us strengthen our resolve to progress spiritually.
- * **Global Akhanda Bhajans:** Participated by sending video recordings for use by both Radio Sai and our Zone 1 programs. Eleven singers recorded for GAB zone 1 and seven for Radio Sai.
- * **Ladies Day:** We had 4 short skits on the role of a mother in shaping great citizens of the world who have made a huge contribution to humanity, i.e. - Nancy Lincoln, Aryamba (mother of Sri Sankaracharya), Jane Goodall and Mrs. M.S. Subbulakshmi. We also recorded interviews with our Center's senior women devotees who shared their precious experiences with Swami, understanding of His message, and contributions to the Center.
- * **Swami's Birthday program:** We created an audiovisual program entitled "My Life is My Message" which chronicled the Avatar's Life from His advent and included His extensive service to humanity in the form of the Super Specialty Hospitals and Water projects. The program was a loving offering from many Center members and others who not only narrated this divine story but sang and recorded the music.
- * **Shivaratri 2022:** We had a 2-hour special program on Feb 28, 2022 which included Rudram chanting, Bilvashtakam and Bhajans by both SSSE children and adults.



Zone 1 Centers' Highlights - Young Adults

SSSGC-YA National Team

Ketan Kharod

On behalf of the rest of the national YA team (national YA coordinators, Dr. Alekhya Rao and Jaysai Ghayal, and my co-advisor Geeta Reid), I offer our gratitude to Swami for this opportunity to put His teachings into practice amidst the energy and enthusiasm that is the hallmark of the Sai Young Adult program. Between the pandemic and organizational challenges, we have repeatedly heard from YAs about the importance of "connection" – not just their internal connection to Bhagawan and His teachings, but also the external connection which comes through *satsang* and in-person activities (e.g., devotion, service, etc.) which are now slowly resuming, or on the horizon.

To that end, we recently organized an online YA workshop, entitled "Embracing the New Norm: Connection in these Changing Times." Dozens of YAs across Zone 1, and across the 18-35 age range, came together on March 19 to share practical tips on how to have "real conversations" with others, strengthening one's faith, and reflecting on the personal growth and challenges YAs have experienced in the last two years. We hope to continue these types of inspirational workshops or interactive sessions to supplement local and regional YA activities, so... please reach out with your ideas and feedback!

A YA Favorite: When you said "Yes" to Me

When you said "Yes" to Me you gave up the right to be like everyone else.
That is why you draw experiences to yourself that will cleanse yourself of that which does not fit
who you are.

Over, and over, again, and again until I make you see that the past no longer works.
I challenge you and tempt you every day with your past, so that you may see that the past is ultimate
delusion.

When you said "Yes" to Me you gave Me your body, your thoughts, your actions.
When they don't suit the new you, the uncomfortableness is unbearable.
It is so EVERY time until you realise this fully; then and only then will you completely give up
desire.

For this is the only way man will learn.
Very seldom does he learn by quiet reminders.
Man's desires and pitfalls are placed there so that I may do my work.
When you give up totally, then the temptations will fade.
I will never give up on you.

Every slip will become harder to bear and less easy to remedy.
You will tire of your foolishness because I love you and whether or not completely aware of it, you
did say "Yes".

- Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Shivaratri Experience in Prasanthi

- Bavani Rajagopalan, South Bethesda Center, MD

"You take one step towards Me, I take ten steps towards you"

Parthi is a 'Punya Kshetram', holy place, but with a difference. All can experience The Lord without any intermediaries. It is a little overwhelming to be here, to tread these hallowed grounds where The Lord of the Universe walked. It is somewhat surreal! This was the blissful feeling I felt when I arrived at Parthi to observe holy Shivaratri.



The year was 1999. I had taken the first little step when I boarded the rickety bus to Parthi. The sleepless bus ride from Chennai was bumpy, full of jolts, resulting in stiff back and painful knees. Indeed the path of devotion is paved literally with bumps, pits and stones alright, I thought. On reaching the portals of Swami's Abode of Peace, I saw Lord Ganesha, installed by Swami to greet and assure His devotees—"God is in His Heaven, All is well with the world". Yes, Swami is always in charge, I felt very secure in Mother Sai's shade, my aches and pain forgotten. I offered grateful prayers to dear Lord Ganesha, and got soaked up in the festive atmosphere of Prasanthi Nilayam.

Thousands of people were descending in Parthi a few days before Shivaratri, people from all over the globe, not to speak of the pious villagers from neighboring areas

Mrs. Bavani Rajagopalan had her first darshan of Swami in 1971, when she visited Whitefield campus in an official capacity as Controller of Examinations, Bangalore University. But it was only 14 years later that she became a devotee, she says, developing the faith to seek Him out and travel frequently to Puttaparthi where she could experience His divine Glory and Love. Bavani Aunty has been an active member of the South Bethesda Sai Center for decades; the sandwich and Narayana Seva programs hosted by the Rajagopalan family were a memorable Center highlight for many years.

thronging in the thousands. Prasanthi Nilayam was abuzz with activity. The whole place was fully decorated with flower arrangements and festoons. The fortunate sevadal volunteers inside the Ashram were busy helping the 'pilgrims'. Everywhere I saw blissful glowing faces, drawn here by the greatest magnet, Swami's Love. On the whole, one feels very fortunate to be here during this festival.

Why go to Parthi for Shivaratri?

On the evening before the holy night of Shivaratri, beautifully decorated Sai Kulwant hall was full, with eager devotees waiting for Darshan of their loving God. Veda chanting by the institute boys set the perfect ambiance for the beginning of Shivaratri celebrations; and a soothing gentle breeze started blowing as if to alert the devotees of their Lord's imminent arrival. Before long, I saw our beloved Swami gliding through rows of eager devotees. Oh, that orange robe, the very epitome of selfless Love and sacrifice!

Speaking of the 'Orange', during one of my later trips to Prasanthi, one of my sister Sai devotees was lamenting about getting only (!) Paada Namaskaar, and not vibhooti like other sisters nearby. I told her she was fortunate to get 'Paaada Namaskaar' and that I would be glad to have just a glimpse of that orange robe of His. The Omniscient,



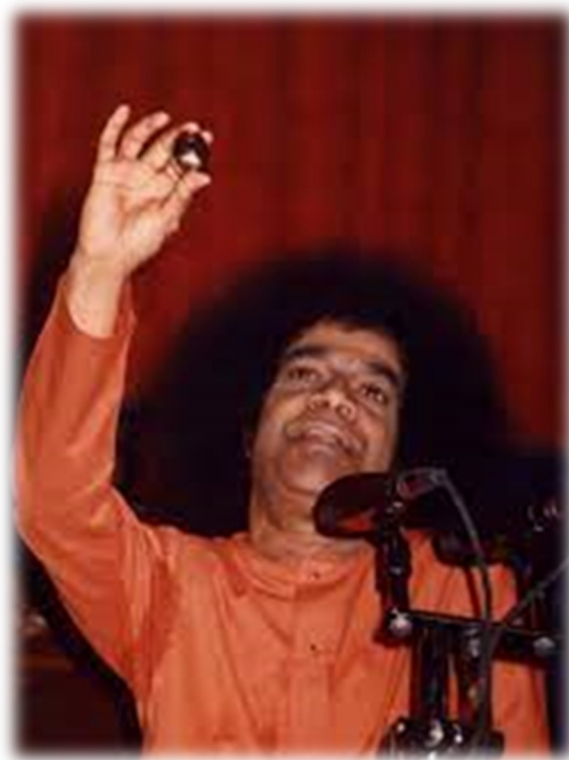
Shivaratri Experience in Prasanthi

Compassionate Swami granted my wish the very next day during evening Darshan; yes, Mother Sai let me feel and play with the hem of His robe, while 'Devi Bhavani Ma' Bhajan was being sung! Though it was only for a couple of seconds, it felt timeless; I shed tears of joyful gratitude: 'naram' (tears) from 'Nayana' (eyes), for Narayana!

It is overwhelming to be in the Presence of Divinity, beyond Time and Space! I am one with the multitude, thousands of heads, thousands of eyes, focused on the Orange presence of "Sahasra Sheersha Purusha, Sahasraaksha Sahasra paad", the Divine Presence subsuming Time, Space, Mind and Senses! This is the unique experience of Shivaratri in Prasanthi. This experience cannot be relegated to memory in a little nook of our brain, it is ever present in our very being, this is all in **present tense**. For, memory is the function of the intellect, not the Atma. How fortunate we are to have this proximity to the very form of Siva to help us on this auspicious day navigate through this Samsara! This is why, we yearn to be in Prasanthi for Shivaratri.

Swami lit the Akhanda Jyoti, then the night-long bhajan singing and vigil began. Enthusiastic devotees from far and near were lending their voices to augment the divine vibrations in Prasanthi. Heartfelt singing of the divine names purify the heart, readying it for receiving Swami's Love. All our indriyas, instruments of action and knowledge are fully engaged: tongue singing the praise of the Lord, hands clapping away the evil, nose breathing "So...Ham.", all ears and eyes focused on the Avatar, eagerly aspiring for the Lord's merciful glance.

Moon is associated with mind in many cultures. "On Shivaratri night, the fourteenth day of waning moon, when the power of mind is the weakest, it is easy to control the mind by godly thoughts and feelings to turn the mind towards the Divine."



Lingodbhavam

"Om is the sound symbol of God, Lingam is the form symbol of the formless form of Godhead". Sun rose to greet Sai Visweswara, Vayu (wind) did his part, announcing His arrival with a soothing gentle breeze; thousands of eyes focused on the 'Sahasraaksha', (one with thousand eyes) arriving in Sai Kulwant Hall to bless His devotees who kept the night-long vigil, singing His glory. Swami sat on His chair on the dais, and started drinking water, glass after glass. An elderly lady sitting next to me exclaimed "Swami is going to bring out Lingam!" True to her word, at 6:15 am, out came the "Hiranyagarbha Lingam" from His mouth! We were in awe, our Sai Siva blessed all the devotees there in Kulwant Hall on that day with the holy phenomenon of Lingodbhavam, even as He is described in Puranas (Hindu spiritual texts) to have done so eons ago, granting the darshan of the luminous formless form to Brahma and Vishnu!



Shivaratri Experience in Prasanthi

In this context, It must be said, Swami had stopped lingodbhavam in public for 22 years. I had heard about Swami creating lingam(s) during sivarathri festivals, but had not witnessed one until that auspicious morning. One can imagine the bliss and gratitude of the crowd. One thing I remember is the energy and freshness experienced for several days after returning to Chennai.

Shivaratri is not a *thamasic* (dull or listless) sleepless night, but an energizing auspicious night of wakeful awareness.

With a sense of fulfillment, I walked to the bus station in Parthi for my return trip to Chennai. I felt very energetic even after a whole night of keeping awake. I remembered my little first step, the tired sleepless bumpy

ride to Parthi with the sole desire to have just the Darshan of Swami. But on my return trip, I was oblivious to the bumps and jolts of the bus ride, and was suffused with energy, heart brimming with the bliss of Darshan and Swami's immense Grace of lingodhbhavam, a giant leap indeed for my mind and spirit!

It is not enough just to feel joyful after this gift from our Swami. What is it that Sai devotees can do to thank Him? The answer is clear: put into practice His teachings. Swami emphasizes the importance of Namasmarana for purification of the heart, getting rid of bad habits, control of senses, and loving service to the needy. 'Love all serve all, help ever, hurt never', is the dominant theme in His discourses. We seek His blessings to help us practice His teachings.





Ati Rudra Mahayagna

Ati Rudra Mahayagna Vedic Powerhouse for World Peace

April 12 to April 16, 2022

A most auspicious event, the Chandi Sahita Ati Rudra Mahayagna (CHARM), was conducted in Orangevale, California on April 12 to April 16, 2022 for universal healing, peace, and prosperity. Our Global Council brothers and sisters of the Sathya Sai Center of Sacramento, California joined with devotees from throughout the country and world to fulfill Swami's divine injunction to revive the Vedic culture and its message of Unity, Purity and Divinity that is saturated with Love and Sacrifice.

Context and Significance

A world in need. The world seemed to be in a desperate need for such an event as we witnessed an increase in human agony, with loss of life, increase in fear and depression generated by human conflict, environmental destruction, a global pandemic, and regional conflicts and outright wars. It is in these very times that Bhagawan Sri

Sathya Sai Baba's love and message most needs to be put into action by serving locally and connecting globally with prayers for universal healing and peace for all beings everywhere.

Unity of faiths. This Sacred Ceremony brought together the prayers and loving message present in all the great traditions of the world. Symbols from the great traditions were prominently on display including a beautiful depiction of Lord Jesus Christ. Remarkably the auspicious timing of the event incorporated the Hindu Holy Festivals of Rama Navami and Sri Hanuman Jayanthi, the Islamic Holy month of Ramadan, the Christian Holy Week with Good Friday, the Jewish celebration of Passover, and the Sikh Holy day of Vaisakhi.

Fire: Symbol of God. In every religion, God is revered as Fire and Light. In fact, in every religion fire finds a place in rituals as it is the symbol of God. Yagna (which means Sacred Fire Ceremony) is the most ancient form of worship from time eternal. Fire and Light are at the core of all major religions. The Christians declare that their God is a consuming fire. In the Bible (John 9:5) it is said, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."





Ati Rudra Mahayagna



"God is light." Zorathustra worshipped Ahura Mazda as fire which is the main altar in every Zoroastrian temple. Moses witnessed God as fire in Mount Sinai and the Jews revere the pillar of fire. Vedas with Yagna invoke fire to offer worship to various Gods.

Event Preparation

The offering started on December 8, 2021, with 587 devotees across 11 countries registering as volunteers, chanters and Ritwiks (mantra chanters). Since then, on an average 250 devotees joined the daily Sri Rudram (a combination of chanting Namakam and Chamakam Vedic chants) and other prayers that occurred 4 times a day, across time zones for 121 days till April 9, 2022. This accounts for 30,250 times of Sri Rudram chanting which equals to more than two Ati Rudra Parayana prior to the CHARM event (an Ati Rudra consists of collectively chanting 14641 Namakams and 1331 Chamakams) (Parayana is repeated chanting).

In addition to the regular Sai Center service projects, several devotees across greater Sacramento and California Bay Area worked tirelessly in preparation of CHARM in helping with procuring and transporting material locally as well as from India, assembling and painting over 350 wooden stools for the event, constructing 12 homa kundas (fire pits), preparing and serving food for volunteers for several weeks, etc.

As a Divine Leela (play), when the homa kunda construction was about complete on one of the days, Bhagawan was seen leaving the Yajnasala (see the

picture). In addition to the above, more than 150 devotees learned, practiced, and offered Devi Mahatmyam as part of the Shata Chandi, both before and as part of the event. Overall, CHARM is in true spirit an offering filled with SAI (Service, Adoration, and Illumination). It is sheerly Bhagawan's love, grace, will, and blessing to have been a part of this sublime offering. Bhagawan's presence was felt through the entire time, starting from October 2021 when the event was announced.

Event Overview

The event began on April 7 evening with the consecration of Omkareswara, a special lingam that was blessed by Bhagawan with materialization of 2.2 kgs of vibhuti and 21 crystals prior to the installation.

On April 10th, the auspicious Sri Rama Navami, Bhagawan entered the yajnasala (place of yagna -ritualistic sacrifice) in a procession along with Omkareswara and Shirdi Sai Bhagawan. The event began with Lighting the Lamp, worshipping the Cow and Calf, and welcoming the 11 priests and 268 Ritwiks that participated in the event.

A stunning altar enthralled the hearts of all with magnificent back drop of Sapta Shringi mountain along with Baba, 132 Kalasams (pots) of the primary deities as well as waters from major rivers across the world backed by the presence of Bhagawan and Jesus the Christ, an abhishekam (the act of lovingly bathing the Shiva lingam and various representations of divinity) table adorned with the murthi's (idols) of Shirdi Baba, Omkareswara,



Ati Rudra Mahayagna

Chandi Yantra, Golden Bhagawan Baba, Panchamukheswara with Mahaganapathi in the front, and symbols of all the major faiths at the front of the stage. In addition, the 6,000 square feet prayer tent was adorned with the stunning visuals of Vallabha Ganapathi, Guru Trinity, and the 25 avatars of Shiva captivating the presence of all.

What followed was an intense downpour of prayers with each day starting with parallel chanting of Aruna Prasna and Mahanyasa Parayana, Panchamrita and Ekadasa Rudra Abhisheka followed by Rudra Homa. On an average 300 devotees chanted the Sri Rudram for eleven times every day. Everyone was given an opportunity to offer Abhishekam irrespective of caste, creed, country, religion, gender, and age. Sri Rudra Homa were offered by 267 Ritwiks and 11 priests twice a day from April 11 to April 16. Each homa kumdam had at least 11 to 13 Ritwiks and a Priest.

On an average 400 devotees were served prasadam (consecrated offerings) thrice a day with 1,000+ devotees attending the grand finale on April 16. All the eight aspects of Shiva Shakti were present in full potency to adore Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba; cold, heat, wind, rain, rivers, clear skies, sunshine, and full moon! Simply incredible to feel their 'CHARMING' and unusual presence, all in a span of week. It is not an exaggeration to state that a Yajna of this magnitude has not happened before in California, and perhaps in the United States of America. On Good Friday April 15, auspicious Chaturdasi evening, Shata Chandi Homam was offered to honor the incredible sacrifice as in surrender of the "I" and the "mine" in the sacred fire of the Heart to emerge great, grand, and holy. This is the quintessence of the sacred act of Jesus the Christ on Good Friday as well as significance of Devi Mahatmyam. Mahapurnahuti was performed on Saturday April 16, the auspicious full moon day that signified the birthday of Hanuman, the epitome of SAI in work, worship, and wisdom. A befitting musical program of the

Saint Tyagaraja compositions extolling the glory and story of Sri Rama was expounded and submitted at HIS Lotus Feet. The CHARM program concluded on the eve of Easter Sunday with Sri Sathya Sai Sathyanarayana Vratam, the 11th Aradhana Mahostavam of Bhagawan!!

Positive thoughts generate positive energy, and in a similar fashion, positive energy creates positive thoughts. The Yagna is a 'colossus of positive energy' which brings in positive energy and collective awareness for universal healing and peace. There is a saying by Sri Sathya Sai Baba: "As is the fire, so is the smoke. As is the smoke, so are the clouds. As are the clouds, so is the rain. As is the rain, so are the crops. As are the crops, so is the food. As is the food, so is the intellect". The divine vibrations from the sacred prayers and offering in the fire enters the clouds, results in purification of air and the rain that results in sacred food that results in positive thoughts to help and serve our communities.

May All the Beings in All the Worlds have Happiness and Peace!!

- Sathya Sai Center of Sacramento

For those interested in learning about Ati Rudra Maha Yagnas: Please refer to the following links:

- Discourse given by Swami on Ati Rudra Maha Yagna <https://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeak/volume39/d060809.pdf>
- Article regarding Ati Rudra done in 2006 in Prasanthi <https://sathyasaiwithstudents.blogspot.com/2015/08/the-first-ati-rudra-maha-yajna-at.html#.YkxnijMK3A>
- Article regarding Ati Rudra done in 2007 in Chennai https://sathyasaiwithstudents.blogspot.com/2015/01/sri-sathya-sai-at-ati-rudra-maha-yajna_21.html#.YkxrXCjMK3A

For those wishing to view recordings of the CHARM 2022 event please refer to the following playlist https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzeHXOz7mSyHKrRU77yX_7UttY3m03mPR



Ati Rudra Mahayagna





Ati Rudra Mahayagna

Ati Rudram Maha Yagnam Goes Green!

“The purpose of life is to experience the sacredness of nature as a projection of the Divine.”

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.22/Ch.35

More than 1000 participants from 11 countries assembled at Orangevale for the week-long celebration of the Chandi Sahita Ati Rudram Maha Yagnam. The Yagnam provided the **Green** Team of SSSGC, Zone 1 with a wonderful opportunity to spread its message of Nurturing Nature:

- ◆ All the *Mahaprasad* (food that is sanctified and then partaken by devotees) every day, amounting to at least 1000 meals a day, were served in completely compostable and biodegradable plates and sporks (single combined fork and spoon).
- ◆ Food wastage was highly discouraged and the YA and SSSE children came together and demonstrated the appropriate disposal of the used plates into biocompostable bags.
- ◆ All devotees brought their own reusable water bottles.
- ◆ All in all, the event served as a great model of excellent preparation and perfect execution of a large event, in line with Swami's teachings. Kudos to the **Green** Team!



The First Ati Rudra Maha Yajna at Prasanthi Nilayam

[Sathya Sai with Students: The First Ati Rudra Maha Yajna at Prasanthi Nilayam – Part 1 \(A Photo Feature\)](#)
- Blogger

A new dimension was added to the fostering of the Vedas and Vedic lore, when Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba blessed the performance of Ati Rudra Maha Yagna at Prasanthi Nilayam from 9th to 20th August, 2006. Bhagavan blessed the youth of Karnataka Sai Organization to organize this Maha Yagna under the coordination of Sri Vinay Kumar, Youth organizer of the Yagna and Sri D. Lakshmi Narayana ...

sathyasaiwithstudents.blogspot.com





Awaken the Jesus Within You!

Our dear Lord Sai took MahaSamadhi on April 24, 2011. It was an Easter Sunday, the holiest of days in the Christian calendar marking the resurrection of Christ and a season of renewed Hope and Faith.

On many an occasion, Swami urged, *“Try to be like Jesus. Jesus was a person whose only joy was in spreading Divine Love, offering Divine Love, receiving Divine Love and living on Divine Love.”* Swami has said that Jesus came *“as the embodiment of Love and Compassion and lived among men, holding forth the*

highest ideals of life”. Swami Himself lived and embodied these very ideals—Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema, and Ahimsa, the divine values that anchor the entire body of His Teachings.

Easter 2022 gives us yet another occasion to heed Swami’s call, *“Awaken the Jesus within you!”* Let us try anew to find that Divinity within us, by following the Divine Injunctions of Jesus and Sai.



Love God

Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.

Seek closeness to God

Come unto Me, all ye who are weary and laden, and I will give you rest.

Ask God

Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you.

Have Faith in God

Look at the birds of the air; your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Love All

Love your enemies.

Be alike to all

Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.



Love God without reserve.

Bring me the depths of your minds...no matter how ravaged by doubts or disappointments. I will not reject you.

Ask Me, when you need any help...Ask, as a child asks the father; feel that God is nearest and dearest...Knock, and the door shall be opened; search, and the treasure will be yours.

In the company of birds and bees that do not store food for another day, but are content to leave it to Providence to provide for them, it looks absurd that man alone should spend all his days calculating and accumulating.

Meet hatred with your innate Love.

Treat all as your own self. Do not have a double standard.



Awaken the Jesus Within You!

See all mankind as

Go ye therefore and teach all nations.

My mission is for all mankind...I have come to light the Lamp of Love in the hearts of all humanity.

Serve selflessly

When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee...but when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.

Do not serve for the sake of reward, attracting attention, or earning gratitude, or from a sense of pride...Serve because you are urged by Love .

Be humble

Whoever is the greatest should be the servant of the others.

Do not boast of your scholarship or your attainments. Be humble, eager to serve.

Do good

Not everyone who sayeth "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of the Father.

The secret of Liberation lies not in mystic formulas or rosaries, but in stepping out into action (Love and Service).

Hurt never

For as much as you do injury to any of these, you do it to Me.

Do not slander or injure anyone, for you are slandering Me who is in Him.

Do not find fault

Search not for the mote in your neighbor's eye but look for the beam in your own.

Instead of seeing faults in others, search for those in yourself.

Do not judge

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Do not judge others, for when another is judged, you are yourself condemned.

Forgive

But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Forgive those who have harmed you and criticized you...if someone hurls abuses on you, do not retaliate.

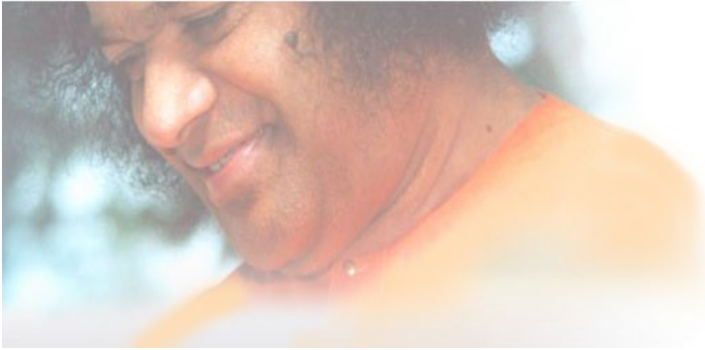
Be pure of heart

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

The pure heart is the best mirror for the reflection of Truth...As soon as [the heart] is pure, all Truth will flash upon it in a minute.



Aradhana: Words to Ponder



Swami's Mahavakya: "Manasa Bhajare -- Worship in the Mind!"

Excerpt from Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 1, Swami's Dasara discourse given at Prasanthi Nilayam on October 17, 1953

"Aradhana" is a Sanskrit word encompassing several shades of meaning ranging from prayer and offering to worship and adoration. Within this special "Aradhana" issue of *SaiLights*, this section brings together a variety of thought-provoking offerings that speak to how we might truly revere and worship Swami in line with His Divine expectations. The pages that follow include:

- ◆ Swami's Mahavakya and very first message to mankind on how to worship the Lord
- ◆ excerpts from the text of a talk by the late Sri V. Srinivasan, on how to rekindle Sai within us in the post MahaSamadhi period
- ◆ an article by Sri V. Rao Emany entitled "The Spirit and Significance of Aradhana Day"
- ◆ excerpts from a poem on the lessons to be learned from Sai Geeta, Swami's devoted elephant
- ◆ a poem simply entitled "Aradhana", offered as a prayer to Swami
- ◆ a summary of Zone 1 devotees' responses to the question, "Eleven Years Later: What has changed in how we worship Swami?"
- ◆ and finally, a devotee's ruminations on being in the presence of the MahaSamadhi.

"When I was at Uravakonda studying in the high school, you know I came away one day and threw off my books and declared that I have My work waiting for Me. The Telugu scholar described the incident of that evening to you all in his speech. Well, that day when I came out publicly as Sai Baba, that first song I taught the gathering in the garden to which I went from the Telugu pandit's house was "Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam / Dustara Bhava Sagara Taranam". I called on all those suffering in the endless round of birth and death to worship the Feet of the Guru (spiritual preceptor), the Guru who was announcing Himself, who had come again for taking upon Himself the burden of those who find refuge in Him. That was the very first Message of Mine to Humanity.

Manasa Bhajare – Worship in the mind! I do not need your flower garlands and fruits, things that you get for an *anna* or two; they are not genuinely yours. Give Me something that is yours, something that is clean and fragrant with the perfume of virtue and innocence and washed in the tears of repentance! Garlands and fruits you bring as items in the show, as an exhibition of your devotion; poorer devotees who cannot afford to bring them are humiliated and feel sorry that they are helpless; they cannot demonstrate their devotion in the grand way in which you are doing it. Install the Lord in your heart and offer Him the fruits of your actions and the flowers of your inner thoughts and feelings. That is the worship I like most, the devotion I appreciate most."



Aradhana: Words to Ponder



After the MahaSamadhi: Can we ever experience Him again?

Excerpts from a talk by the late Sri V. Srinivasan, former Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, at Prasanthi Nilayam on April 24, 2015. Mr. Srinivasan spent 47 years in Swami's service, playing an important leadership role in multiple Sai organizations including that of All India President of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization.



"How shall we experience, and see and feel, the Sai whom we knew for so many years? It is not an easy question to answer but this answer lies in what Swami was, what he represented, and what was His core quality, if Divinity has qualities. That quality was Compassion: Compassion, which embodies within it the highest form of selfless love, love for every single being in this creation. So, if we want sincerely, deeply, assiduously, to experience and feel and rejoice with the Sai whom we knew, it is necessary for us to cultivate this quality of Compassion. Compassion, once it is within us, removes all ego, removes all pride, removes all duality. Compassion unites us with our Sai. Compassion joins the *jivatma* with the *paramatma*."

"We cannot continue to lead our mundane lives. We have to make our lives super-charged, super-charged with Sai. And the single *mantra* is to cultivate this feeling of Compassion which will make humans divine. Whether you are a small child, whether you are an adult, whether

you are an elderly person, all have to make this beginning of cultivating this quality of Compassion. Only then will we be able to surmount these feelings of separation, these feelings of grief, and continue to experience the Sai whom we knew, whom we loved, whom we cherished, whom we worshipped, and whom we made our father, our mother, our brother, our sister, our friend, philosopher, and guide. So, dear brothers and sisters, let us make this beginning from this holy Aradhana Mahotsavam..."

"Why does God incarnate? To elevate man to the level of Supreme Consciousness, God has to incarnate as man. God has to speak to man in his own style and language. He has to teach mankind the methods that it can adopt and practice. Birds and beasts need no Divine incarnation to guide them for they have no inclination to stray away from their respective Dharmas. Man alone forgets the goal of life."

--Swami



Aradhana: Words to Ponder



The Spirit and Significance of Aradhana Day

V. Emany Rao, Sarva Dharma Center, NJ

Aradhana is a Sanskrit word which signifies the act of worshipping or offering prayers to God.

Eleven years ago today, on April 24th, 2011, our Swami decided to discard His mortal frame, having fulfilled the task for which He had incarnated on this planet. Although He is no longer with us in His physical form, He continues to guide and lead us on the correct path as our *Antharyami* (The In-dweller) and *Hridayavasi* (The Resident of our Heart).

Since our Master chose to end His physical form on this day, we observe it as the Aradhana Day, a day on which we offer our reverence and show our gratitude to Swami. On this sacred occasion, we should contemplate how fortunate we are and how grateful we should be that Swami had chosen us to be drawn into His fold. We have been given this great blessing, an opportunity to know the Avatar of the Age who came as the Teacher of Truth (*Sathya Bodhaka*) to guide humanity on the path of redemption. He taught us the oneness of all religions and reminded us of the brotherhood of man. He exhorted us to 'Love all and Serve all'.

We are lucky to have these gifts - Swami has truly blessed us. Many-a-time I ponder how we, His devotees, can show our reverence and gratitude to Swami. WHAT CAN WE GIVE TO THE ALMIGHTY THAT IS NOT HIS ALREADY? Swami would sing a beautiful poem sometimes and explain to us that there is nothing in this universe that we can offer to Him and that we are not capable of comprehending His divinity.

Swami says,

*For the One who pervades the entire universe,
Is it possible to contain Him in a temple?
For the One who shines with the effulgence of a billion Suns,
Is it possible for anyone to light a sacred lamp (Deepam) for Him?
For the One who is present in all the waters of the world,
Is it possible for anyone to give Him a ceremonial bath (Abhishekam),
For the one who has the entire cosmos in His belly,
Is it possible for anyone to feed Him (offer Naivedyam)
The world knows Him as Sai Baba,
Muslims adore Him as Allah,
Christians worship Him as Jesus,
Yet, people do not really understand the principle of Divinity,
Is it possible for anyone to comprehend the divinity of Sai?
The truth is being told by Sai Baba,
There is no greater truth than this.*

"V. Rao Emany's family have been devotees of Swami since early '60s. He was blessed with the opportunity to stay with Swami and serve Him for a number of years during the 1960s and 1970s. During that time, he had the opportunity to travel along with Swami on several trips and was involved in several construction projects in Prashanti Nilayam including the Sarvadharm Stupa and Easwarama High School. After his marriage in Puttapathi which was performed by Swami in 1976, he left for US to continue his education and has been residing in the US since then".

Aradhana: Words to Ponder



So, the question arises. How then can we show our reverence and gratitude to Swami? What does Swami seek from His devotees? Swami Himself has clearly explained, on numerous occasions, that all He seeks from us is transformation of the heart so that we become better human beings.

In a beautiful poem that He would sing often, He laid out what He expects and seeks from us:

*Sai Arthinchu Mee Nundi Sadgunamulu
Sarva Maanava Sodara Sakhya Buddhi
Swaartha Thyaagambu Parishuddha Sangha Seva
Meeru Saikichchedi Dhanamide Sathyamuganu.*

*Sai seeks from you noble qualities
He expects you to treat each other in a spirit of
brotherhood
And serve society with a pure heart, sacrificing self-
interest.
Truly, this is the wealth you should offer to Sai.*

Swami has explicitly stated that all He seeks from us is to develop noble qualities and lead a life dedicated to the service of others. He says that this is all the wealth we can give Him. He goes on to say that sacrifice, selfless service unto others and purity in our actions are unparalleled, and that these are the virtues one should always strive for.

Swami would say “If you lift the hand to serve, to help others, to console someone, to encourage another person, you are lifting it for God, for God is in every human being”. Seva, or service to others, is really a Sadhana, a spiritual exercise which will sanctify us. The true value of Seva is that it transforms us into better human beings. Innumerable times, in His divine discourses, He would remind us, “*Na Karmana, Na Prajaya, Dhanena, Tyage Naike Amruthatva Manasu*” which means “*Not by action, not by progeny or wealth,*

but only through sacrifice can one attain immortality”. Swami wanted us to grasp that only by being involved in selfless service can we rid ourselves of the habits that shackle us to earth and move on the path towards divinity.

Swami says that His philosophy is not one that emphasizes sitting in a corner meditating nor one which keeps one engrossed in rituals. It is one where every devotee of His is involved in service to humanity. He reminded us several times that the Sai organization needs people who are ready to serve and that all the members must develop the spirit of love and service. He would say that a person who indulges in empty rhetoric does not have a place in a Sai organization.

When Swami left His physical body, He entrusted His mission to all of us. I have watched His mission grow over the past sixty years and influence devotees all over the world to dedicate themselves to follow His teachings that inspire us to be involved in the service of our fellow brothers and sisters.

The best way we can show our reverence and gratitude to Swami is to carry forward His mission by ensuring that all the institutions He had set up are sustained and continue to flourish. This is the fundamental duty of every Sai devotee.

We also have a responsibility to spread His message of the oneness of all religions and the brotherhood of man. We all need to be unified to carry forward the Sai mission that Swami has entrusted to us.

This is all that Swami seeks from us and it is the best way we can offer Him our reverence and show Him our gratitude on this, the Aradhana Day.



Aradhana: Words to Ponder



Sai Gita – The True Devotee of God!

Excerpts from a poem by Julie Chaudhary (posted on the website of Sri Sathya Books and Publications Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam on May 22, 2010)

“Where Rama was, Hanuman was by His side,
Where Krishna was, the great devotee Kuchela was too,
Where Sai Baba was Sai Gita was there, expressing her devotion,
She has come for Me alone, she will get her due...”
This is how Bhagawan reflected upon Sai Gita and He did continue,
“If you remember and ruminate,
On the intense love she had for Me,
And develop the same sacred and noble thoughts,
I will myself take you close to My heart, I will set you free...”
She was a gift from the animal kingdom
To the Lord of the Universe in human form,
Her story unfolded to show,
Specially for Him was she born...
Her life, her focus, her core,
Her everything was Swami, Swami, Swami
And *this* is a lesson for the rest of humanity...
A lesson of an ideal relationship between Creator and Creation,
Of what to choose, and what to shun,
No other attraction,
And specially no distraction,
Complete absorption,
Reaching a pinnacle of devotion,
A bond so touching,
And a reciprocation so fulfilling...
What we humans couldn’t do,
This monumental example,
With matchless devotion as her clue,
This grand soul did bring glory to the animal kingdom,
And did us all stun...
For, she did win the heart of the Lord,
And, brought tears in the eyes of our Living God,
To wake us up,
A clarion call,
A supreme lesson for us all,
Her life, her love, her devotion,
A lesson for us all.



Aradhana: Words to Ponder



Aradhana

Manorama Gotur, South Bethesda Center, MD

On this day, dear Sathya Sai,
You left your earthly form;
Sadness filled our empty hearts;
How could this be borne?

To those who walked with, worshipped You
The world seemed all but ended;
Tears were shed, hearts were broken—
Never, it seemed, to be mended.

But Easter Day it was that You
Left our earthly milieu;
Your message was clear, this was no end
But start of something new:

You wanted us to know that though
Your Form we would not see,
We'd in our hearts Your presence feel
For all eternity.

Rather than we crane our necks
But glimpse of You to catch,
You wished that to Your Formless Self
We ourselves attach.

That is to say, to see You in
The sun, the moon, the stars,
In everything, in everyone,
Reflections of the Avatar.

For is't not Your Light that shines in all,
Your Spark that's everywhere?
Then, with Your Grace, let us boldly forth
Knowing Sai has gone nowhere.



Aradhana: Words to Ponder



Eleven Years Later: What Has Changed In How We Worship Swami?

A Summary of Zone 1 Devotees' Reflections



Eleven years have passed since Swami left His Earthly Form. How did His devotees deal with the momentous loss, which came a decade earlier than anticipated? How have we adapted, over time? What has changed, if anything, in the way we have worshipped Swami or pursued our spiritual goals?

These questions were posed to Zone 1 devotees. A sprinkling of responses, reflecting a variety of individual life stories and experiences, reveal several common themes, which are summarized below along with some concluding reflections by the *SaiLights* Team.



Darkness, then light. Many devotees write of feeling sad and lost, immediately after Swami's MahaSamadhi, but then gradually accepting and looking beyond the painful milestone. One devotee who had learnt to rely heavily on Swami after her husband passed away, writes of feeling "shattered" with a sense of being "all alone in the world". But soon enough, she writes, she regained calm by regularly reciting a poem of the late professor Kasturi that had meant a lot to her over the years. Another devotee writes about reading Swami's teachings after the MahaSamadhi and learning more about the Formless Sai, who is not limited in time and space. Some devotees expressed regret: regret that they had not visited Prasanthi Nilayam more often, imbibed His Divine Presence and more ardently embraced the

precious gift of being His contemporary, the opportunity of not one but several lifetimes.



Gratitude. For many, sadness was followed by profound gratitude to Swami. One devotee writes of feeling greatly blessed to be in His fold and to have been chosen to play a "little part in His grand mission". Another devotee writes of being grateful for "His immense love which spans all time and space". It is also true that the more the years that go by, the fewer are the number who have been His contemporaries, and the greater their awareness of the extraordinary blessing of seeing and hearing Him in person, walking the same ground He walked on, and having His Divine Eyes fall upon them.



Heart-to-heart connection. "I heard my inner voice, 'where else can the Lord be? He is in your heart, visible to your invisible eye!'" are the words of one Sai devotee, echoed in the response of another devotee who said that not much had changed for her as a result of Swami's leaving His form, as her connection with Him had always been heart-to-heart. A few devotees write of connecting with Swami through dreams, before and after the MahaSamadhi, which one might consider a different kind of one-to-one connection. Yet others point to a greater reliance on writing letters to Swami, or indeed, simply sitting quietly or singing in front of a photo, with love for God.



Connecting through Meditation. In a 1960s interview, telling a devotee family that in the future He would not be so accessible, Swami urged them to "*Meditate, as Swami is inside you*". The family writes that, "through the sadhana of meditation and namasmarana over the years, the inward spiritual connection made has continued even stronger" after His

Aradhana: Words to Ponder



Mahasamadhi. Another devotee writes thus: “this visualization, through my mind's eye is bringing forth the strength and power of Swami in my thoughts, words and deeds. Slowly, but steadily I am striving to apply this philosophy of Swami in my personal, professional and spiritual life.”



Feeling His presence. Several devotees wrote of feeling Swami's presence, albeit in very different ways. One devotee, who sought His guidance to travel to Prasanthi Nilayam, believed she received her answer when, in a dream, drops of *amrutam* fell from a photo of Swami in her altar. Another devotee tells of Swami's injunction to her, “Write 85 poems for Me”, and how in the next two months she was inspired to write all 85, and going beyond, compose many bhajans and other writings. Yet another devotee writes of feeling Swami's presence exactly at the time of the MahaSamadhi, adding that “He continues to remain near and dear, making His presence felt at various times so I know He continues to be there”.

A poetically inclined Sai devotee writes thus:

*“His guiding hands are felt in every devotee's life
His perennial love is building in every life of strife
His beautiful smile is divinizing every drop of tear
His silent whispers are ringing in every drooping ear”...*
(excerpt from a longer poem)



Seeing God in all. A growing understanding of God being present everywhere and in everyone was another common theme. One devotee writes that although his Sadhana experience has not changed since the MahaSamadhi, he has “a clearer perception because of Baba, His love, guidance, example, and constant

“He has slipped in slowly...”

“I was a...part-time ‘devotee’ before the MahaSamadhi, thinking of Bhagawan only occasionally. But in the years since, He has slipped in slowly, imperceptibly...into every inch, every atom of my being, and now I can feel Him at the core of my existence every waking moment, no matter where I am...”

exhortation, that all is God”. Echoing this thought, another devotee writes, “In fact, there is nothing else but Him—and I have to develop this feeling more and more!” A response reflecting mixed emotions to Swami's giving up His Avataric Form was as follows: “[I was] upset that I didn't have one last chance to physically see Him, but then ashamed of myself for not considering any pain and discomfort on His part; as time passed, I also realized that I needed to see Him in everyone and give them the same compassion and consideration that I had wanted to give Him in His last years.”



Studying Swami's teachings. Several devotees mention studying His teachings and obeying His word as a means of connecting with the formless Sai. One devotee writes that the more she missed Swami's Darshans, the more she turned to audios and videos and began to imbibe His teachings: “The [human values] and those habits and daily disciplines I follow make the Wi-Fi connection to Swami even stronger...and I believe that has created a surakshana chakra around me and protected me all along. I can feel Swami's hand blessing me in every area of my life.”



Practicing Swami's Teachings. The most resounding theme contained in devotees' responses was a deep commitment to “live life His way” and make our lives “reflect His message”. In the words of

Aradhana: Words to Ponder



one devotee: “I have understood that practice is very important, and not just reading. I stay active in my Center in all aspects: Devotion, Seva, and SSSE for a complete spiritual experience.” An emphasis on staying focused on God and “sanctifying” one’s time by following Swami’s teachings is also evident. In the words of another devotee: “every moment should be used for good, for God...practicing Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, and Prema, life after life...keeping our eyes, heart, prayers, hopes, everything, fixed on Baba.” Bringing love and light and kindness to a “world in great need” was another beautiful thought that was expressed.

“The secret is that He is there with you always, He always has been – we have just never taken our binoculars and tried to point them within.”

A Young Adult

Finally, the dismissive response of an older devotee to whom this section’s question was posed is worth sharing: “I do not like this question: Swami has not gone anywhere!!” Indeed, Swami Himself said as much, appearing in a dream to a devotee two days before leaving the physical body: “I have gone nowhere, I am everywhere, always with You!”



A few concluding thoughts (by the SaiLights team)

The individual responses from Sai devotees to the question of “What has changed?” are uplifting, to say the least. They suggest that, since the MahaSamadhi, the zeal to follow Swami and His Word has not diminished, it has gained momentum. Faith has not faltered, it has gathered strength. Also worth noting, the Covid virus, deadly as its effect has been, has had a positive externality in terms of increasingly bringing the Sai family

together, at local, regional, and global levels, with more and more permeation of Swami’s teachings, Vedic prayers, and bhajans all through the air waves, be it via Zoom or other media. We have needed Swami more than ever, and He has been there for us!

The tremendous contribution of Radio Sai in keeping Swami’s physical presence and body of teachings front and center in devotees’ lives cannot be overstated. We are not seeing less of Swami since the MahaSamadhi, indeed most of us are seeing Him far, far more than we did when He was physically present and more than we ever could have without such a medium. The programs, the videos, the archives, the talks and *Satsangs*—all go a very long way in supporting devotees’ eagerness, as expressed above, to study and follow Swami’s teachings. The onus is indeed entirely on us to recognize the great blessing of having known Swami and to better understand and put into practice His Divine teachings.

The SaiLights team gratefully acknowledges the responses given by :

Shilpa Chava, Vidya Ganesh, Padma Gotur,
Indira and Lee Hewlett, Marvin Higgins,
Rebecca Jain, Madhulika Jinsi, Suchismita Mahanty,
Manohar Menon, Jay Nelliott, Amit Palicha, Asha Palicha,
Samanthi Ramasubbu, Manohari Ratnarajah, and
Sharmila Sanka.



Aradhana: Words to Ponder



MahaSamadhi - A Symbol of Spirituality

Arun Ram, Tri-Valley Center, CA

A slight breeze, the anticipation of a glimpse.

An effortless glide, a small smiling glance.

A direct, intense, gaze.

The most precious of loving words.

A tsunami of unforgettable memories past and their resultant feelings of joy and euphoria envelops you.

Then a sense of loss, sadness, and tears that those wonderful memories are now all you have left to cherish - wonderful as they are, but a tiny drop compared to the limitless ocean of His Love you have experienced.

These are the powerful, resonant and conflicting emotions one can feel at the beacon of remembrance of our beloved Bhagavan, his MahaSamadhi.

Once these feelings rush through the mind, and one contemplates, the shining light of his teachings emerge more quickly with each visit - "Have equanimity and peace, harmony, in thought word and deed. It may seem that I am gone but I am always inside you, around you, behind you, and before you." Now, a fulfilling, blissful sense of calm and resolve find their final resting place in the mind.

Even in physical absence Swami finds an inimitable way to help guide you through the turbulence of emotions by leaving behind a symbol of His Divinity. We must all aspire to see the Supreme within, channel it, and be of service to others in order progress to the ultimate goal - to be one with Him.



Poems by SSSE Children

Mother Earth

Sanvi Vandanapu, SSSE, Loudoun Center, VA

Mother Earth is ours to enjoy
And gives us a lifetime of joy
But we all must be aware
That all its beauty is something to care
It is our responsibility
And we have the capability
To keep our world healthy
And turn it to wealthy
In love, brightness, and green
And everything in between
Regardless of whether you are at the age of five,
twelve, or eighteen
We must make sure that our world is clean
We must choose to reuse
Instead of misuse
We can create new
And have a breakthrough
From something old
And turn it into something that is now bold
Reusing doesn't have any rules
For it is equivalent to millions of jewels
Using something again that could create situations
that are unpleasant
Can save millions of things that are in the present
For example, paper bags and plastic



Swami—My Everything

Lalitha Ravipati, SSSE, Baltimore Center, MD

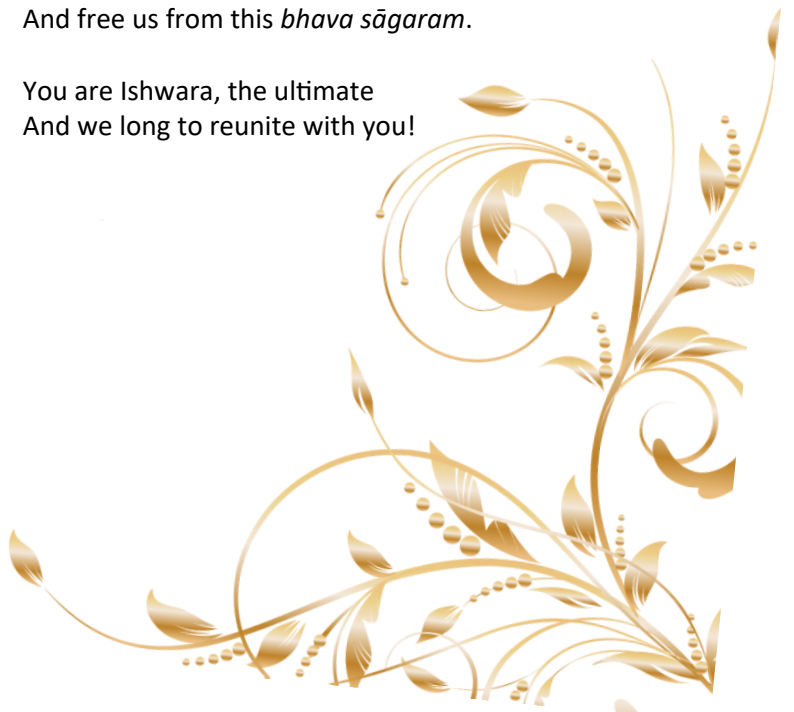
To my beloved Sai Ma

Your majestic aura can light a thousand lamps,
And can fill the entire universe with pure love.

Your glory transcends time and space.
How lucky we are to be so close to you!

Just having Your darshan can wash away our sins
And free us from this *bhava sāgaram*.

You are Ishwara, the ultimate
And we long to reunite with you!



Poems by SSSE Children

Only You, Swami

Saideep, SSSE, Baltimore Center, MD

Only You are watching over me
Only You are inside of me
Only You are taking care of me
Only You can forgive my faults
Only You love me
Sathya Sai Baba Sathya Sai Baba Sathya Sai Baba
Only You love us all, all around the world
Only You take care of us, all around the world
Only you are our one and only Lord
Could hurt something drastic
So we should be careful of the things we do
But it is up to you
So from here on out, we should never ever abuse
Our sweet Earth that is ours to use.

A Delightful Birthday Present

Sravika, SSSE, Baltimore Center, MD

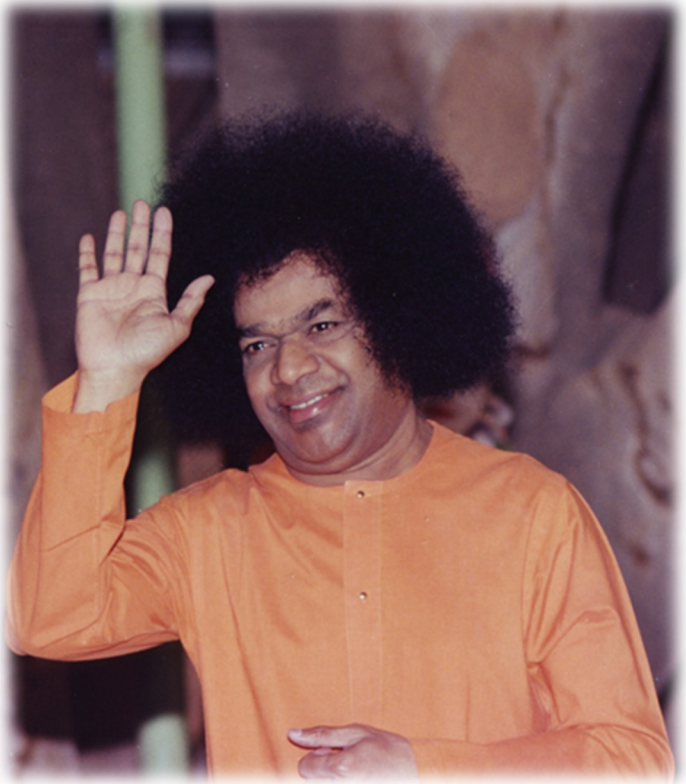
Swami loves everyone, no matter the circumstances
Putting us all in beautiful trances
One glance, one dance, one prance
Is all it takes to be put in a mesmerizing stance

That one person who is omnipresent
And will always be fluorescent
Can take forms in both a golden pheasant
And a delightful birthday present.

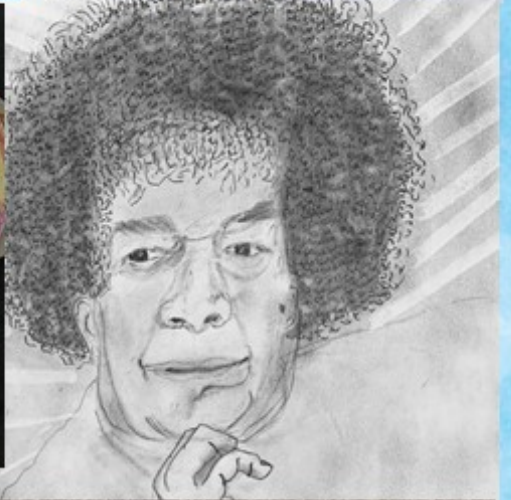
Living for God

Shravanthi Diwakar Vinu, SSSE, Loudoun Center, VA

Living for god, living with god, living in god
For that is divinity
This is what Swami had spent his life to teach
I put my hands together to bow down at Swami's feet
And wholeheartedly and happily I preach
Devote your life to your lord
For divinity will cut down all evil like a sword.



Art by SSSE Children



KEEP GOING

Sai Pearls - Poems from Devotees

Absence

Kasi Sridharan, Tampa Center, FL

"When the Sun sends its rays down to this beautiful planet,
We enjoy the energy that it brings at the outset.
When we look directly into the source of brightness,
It is the absence of light that we experience from the blindness.

When the man begins to construct his thoughts day by day,
He builds a barrier called mind that journeys into disarray.
If the mind places itself firmly in the present moment,
Its absence is felt and it becomes a divine proponent.

The love that radiates from every specie is contagious,
And when it is shared with the rest of the world, it becomes precious.
Every life goes on a journey until it reaches the destination,
And it is the absence of health that becomes the cause for termination.

Mystics choose a path that is different from the rest filled with passions,
And seek the path of surrender by renouncing their possessions.
After they realize their suffering is due to the absence of the divine,
They experience the path to realization is inside their shrine.

God resides in the depth of the silence,
The life sustains in the mind's resilience.
The cycle of birth & death continues forever,
Until one finds blissfulness flowing like a river".



O Holy Night! - A Shivaratri Quiz

The following is a Quiz based on Swami's Shivaratri Divine Discourses, replicated (with minor modifications) from the March 2008 issue of Radio Sai's Heart to Heart journal. The correct answers are provided at the end of the quiz, but readers are directed to https://archive.sssmediacentre.org/journals/Vol_06/01MAR08/quiz2.htm for the full text of the answers, in Swami's own words.

1. In Swami's 1959 Divine *Shivaratri* Discourse, Swami explains that when Lord Shiva consumed the *Haalahaala* poison that emanated from the Ocean of Milk, in response to the prayers of the Worlds, the heat of the fumes was nearly unbearable, even for Him. According to the scriptures, what relief measure was taken to cool Lord Shiva down?

- A. He had to swim in the Ocean.
- B. All the Gods united and blew strong winds.
- C. River Ganga was poured on His matted locks.
- D. Lord Shiva went into meditation for several years.

2. In His 1965 Divine *Shivaratri* Discourse, Swami reminds us: "Do not treat a holy day like Shivaratri as a holiday, set apart for picnics, cinema, card-games, revelry, rivalry and fun. The *rishis* (sages) fixed these days in the calendar for the contemplation of God and the service of God in man, for the removal of the weeds of vices and weakening habits." How does Swami want us to utilize the opportunity of this holy day?

- A. By reading stories of Lord Shiva.
- B. Going on pilgrimages.
- C. By being in isolation and on fast.
- D. By focusing on self-improvement.

3. We all know about the importance of observing a fast and keeping a night-long vigil on the Auspicious *Shivaratri* Day. But do we know the inner meaning and the significance of it? In His 1969 Divine *Shivaratri* Discourse, Swami uplifts our consciousness by enlightening us: "Relying on the merely literal meaning of the words, people wait a whole year for this particular holy day to

come, in order to miss a meal and call it a fast, to miss a night's sleep and call it a vigil!" What does Swami say is the true significance of observing a "fast"?

- A. Living with God.
- B. Control of our palate.
- C. Giving our body a rest.
- D. Speaking sweetly and softly.



4. Through the years, Swami has demonstrated the Shiva aspect of His Advent as Avatar by blessing us several times with Divine Manifestations of Lingams from His Auspicious Body, called as *Lingodhbhavam*. On one such 1971 Divine *Shivaratri* Discourse, Bhagavan clarifies: "People ask, 'Why does Swami produce the *Lingam* (Formless Form of God) from within Himself on this day?' What reason does Bhagavan reveal for such a formidable act of His?

- A. To worship Lord Shiva more devotedly.
- B. To remind us that Divinity is amidst us.
- C. To continue our fasting every year.
- D. To amaze us about His powers.

O Holy Night! - A Shivaratri Quiz

5. In His 1973 Divine *Shivaratri* Discourse, Swami highlights the significance of the various names ascribed to Lord Shiva: "Consider the significance of the Form that Shiva has assumed for human adoration: In His throat, He has the holocaust-producing poison, *Haalahaala* that can destroy all life in a trice. On His head, He has the sacred Ganga River, whose waters can cure all ills, here and hereafter. On His forehead, He has the eye of Fire. On His head, He has the cool comforting Moon. On His wrists, ankles, shoulders and neck He wears deadly cobras, which live in life-giving breath of air." **One among the many of Lord Shiva's Names is *Mrithyunjaya*. It means He who vanquishes...?**

- A. Ego
- B. Anger
- C. Greed
- D. Death

6. In His 1978 Divine *Shivaratri* Discourse, Swami reveals: "*Shivaratri* is a very auspicious day for all. It is the fourteenth day of the lunar fortnight, when the Moon is waning and the Sun is in the sign of Aquarius. The festival is, however, related to the Moon rather than the Sun. That is the reason why it is called *Shivaratri* (the night of Shiva). Unlike other nights, this particular night is the night of consecration, of dedication, of illumination." **Which part of the human body is intimately associated with the Moon?**

- A. Our Love-filled Heart.
- B. Our Powerful Mind.
- C. Our Innately Pure Soul.
- D. Our God-gifted physical Body.

7. In His 1978 Divine *Shivaratri* Discourse, once again, Swami says: "*Rudra* means, 'The one who makes man weep.' The eleven *rudras* are: the five senses of perception, the five senses of action, and the mind.

These, by leading him astray in pursuit of trivial and transitory pleasures, ruin him and make him weep. But the ____, if it is sought and relied upon, sheds its rays on the eleven and makes them meaningful partners in the progress of man towards self-realization." **What is Bhagavan teaching us to rely on here?**

- A. Righteousness
- B. Heart
- C. Goodness
- D. Aatma (Soul)

8. In His 1978 Divine Discourse, Swami says that on *Shivaratri* He pours *Vibhuthi* (holy ash) on the (Shirdi Sai) Idol, performing the *Abhisheka* (anointing) in order to communicate the potent inner meaning of *Vibhuti*. He says, "*Vibhuti* is the most precious object, in the truly spiritual sense. You know that Shiva burnt the God of Desire or *Kaama*, called *Manmatha* (for he agitates the mind and confounds the confusion already existing there), into a heap of ashes. Shiva adorned Himself with that ash, and thus He shone in His Glory, as the Conqueror of Desire. **When *Kaama* was destroyed, ____ reigned supreme.**" What was He referring to?

- A. Peace
- B. Unity
- C. Love
- D. Non-Violence



O Holy Night! - A Shivaratri Quiz

9. In a 1985 Divine *Shivaratri* Discourse, to foster purity and sacredness in us, Swami says: "This *Shivaratri* is a day when one tries to establish friendship between mind and God. *Shivaratri* makes one aware of the fact that the same Divinity is all-pervasive and is to be found everywhere. It is said that Shiva lives in Kailasa. But where is Kailasa?" What answer did Swami give us?

- A. In the Himalayas.
- B. In our own state of bliss.
- C. In service to mankind.
- D. In observing spiritual discipline.

10. Swami has taught us that, if during *Shivaratri* one meditates on God, one can achieve nearness to the Divine. The Supreme sacredness of *Shivaratri* consists in realizing oneness with the Divine through meditation on God. The world may change, but the *Shiva* principle is unchanging. The same union of *Shiva-Shakti* as the Universal Divine Mother and Father is represented by the Name and Form of 'Sai Baba.' On revealing the meaning of the worship of Shiva, according to Swami, what is the most sublime aspect of the night of '*Shivaratri*'?

- A. Lord Shiva's Auspiciousness.
- B. Lord Shiva's Uniqueness.
- C. Lord Shiva's Immortality.
- D. Lord Shiva's Transcendental Nature.

BONUS QUESTION

Fill in the blanks for the Shiva Gayatri Mantra:

Om Tatpurushaaya Vidmahe / _____ Dheemahi / Tanno _____ Prachodayaat / Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

On Shivaratri day you must try to establish friendship between your mind and God. Shivaratri is to remind you that the same Divinity is all-pervasive and is found everywhere. People believe Shiva lives in Kailasa. Where is Kailasa? Kailasa is your own joy and bliss. It signifies that Lord Shiva lives in the Kailasa of delight. If you develop joy and delight in your mind, then Shiva lives in you. How can you get this joy? It comes when you develop purity, steadiness and sacredness. Then your heart becomes filled with peace and bliss and is indeed Shiva's Kailasa! Shiva will live in the sanctum sanctorum of your heart, within the temple which is your body. There is no use in just thinking of Shivaratri once a year. Every minute, every day, every night, you should think of Divinity and sanctify your time, for the Time Principle truly speaking is Shiva.

(Divine Discourse, Feb 17, 1985)

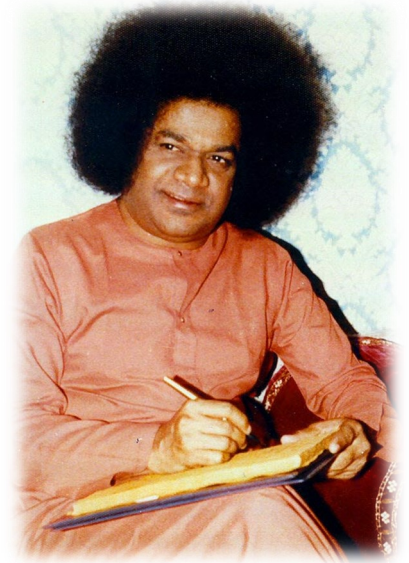
- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Life is a Game: Play it!

Unscramble the Vahinis Written by our Swami

ANNAJ AIHINV
RAPME VHNIAI
TARISHNPA HIANVI
NAUDSHAPI VIANIH
TUSAR IIVANH
AYVID NIIVHA
AYTSHA SIA VANHII
VAGBAAHHAT IAHNIV
HRATAAKMAA ASAR IAIVN
EEALL AAVKAYIL VIAINH
PNTSAROATRA HVIANI
HNYDAA IHNNAV
EAEHGT IHAVIN



Complete the Word Puzzle

His Abodes

Q	A	A	B	B	N	T	Y	O	Z	E	J	F	W	H	G	E
E	N	R	K	T	E	G	T	O	Q	I	G	Y	P	Z	H	T
I	D	A	D	Z	G	O	P	W	V	U	K	B	K	D	V	N
L	U	D	R	I	D	N	A	M	R	U	J	A	Y	W	H	Z
A	R	N	F	T	Q	R	H	U	S	Y	S	S	R	F	L	S
J	A	U	R	J	X	M	K	J	N	B	A	K	L	T	F	A
N	N	S	K	W	H	U	N	V	K	I	T	Q	L	F	G	L
A	G	J	R	G	L	G	H	B	S	R	H	W	L	A	K	I
T	A	B	K	A	E	R	G	R	Z	O	Y	X	G	P	Z	V
E	K	F	M	V	W	H	U	L	B	L	A	E	G	V	F	D
E	S	L	M	K	M	T	D	C	O	V	D	Z	A	T	X	N
G	H	D	Y	A	H	V	F	I	H	D	E	V	M	O	C	A
I	E	G	J	I	V	A	I	O	W	E	E	C	X	O	S	N
A	T	X	G	B	U	I	E	R	M	L	P	A	O	K	O	A
S	R	T	T	U	C	M	H	I	D	L	K	L	H	J	F	M
W	A	H	Y	N	N	T	K	S	F	U	R	L	B	Q	A	T

Shivam

Anandvilas

Trayee

Sundaram

Gurukulam

SaiGeetanjali

SaiSruthi

Pandurangakshetra

Sathyadeep

Yajurmandir

Asked....and Answered by Swami

Q. What is bad Karma?

A. It is called *Dush Karma*. All acts done without the fear of God or of falling into sin; all acts done while under the influence of the six enemies, *Kama* (desire), *Krodha* (anger), *Lobha* (greed), *Moha* (attachment), *Mada* (pride) and *Maathsarya* (envy); all acts that reveal the beast in man, that do not indicate that he is possessed of *Viveka* (discrimination), *Vichakshana* (keenness of intellect) and *Vairagya* (detachment); that are devoid of *Daya* (compassion), *Dharma*, *Sathya* (truth), *Santhi* (peace) and *Prema* (love) –these are *Dush Karmas*.

- From Prashnottara Vahini, Chapter IV

Q: Considering the Task that Swami has undertaken, it is strange that You are always in Bliss.

A: The boat glides over the flood; but, does not allow the flood to enter it. On Swami's shoulders alone rests an ever-increasing burden. The problems and sorrows of millions of people; the institutions and individuals who turn to Him for guidance; the interviews, the prayers, the petitions. On the mental level, unknown to you, I am with all who yearn for God, no matter where they actually are, over the entire world.

I am by the side of seekers, saints, yogis, rishis, everywhere, watching them, counselling them, fostering every sign of progress towards God and Self-realization. But, the Bliss in Me is constant, unchanging. Even outwardly, My Bliss can be noted as constant, even while I may appear angry, impatient, aloof or distant. The anger is put on, just to set right some situation; the aloofness is assumed, for the particular time and place. My Love is as constant as My Bliss.

- From The Prashanti Reporter, July 5, 2013
(from the notebook of Dr John Hislop as published in the Oct 1974 issue of Sanathana Sarathi)



Shivaratri Quiz Answers:

1 C 2 D 3 A 4 B 5 D 6 B 7 D 8 C 9 B 10 A

Bonus Question: Om Tatpurushaaya Vidmahe, Mahadevaaya Dheemahi / Tanno Rudra Prachodayaat.



Spiritual Good Practices for Sadhana



Spiritual GPS: How should we pray?

*Many have written, on how man must pray;
But the Lord Himself—what does He say?
How lucky we are to know from on high
What He wants of us: Thank you dear Sai!*

Swami Says

“You must ask God. To ask God is perfectly all right. It is your duty to ask God. Words must be said and, the thoughts must correspond to the words. It is true enough that the Divinity knows all. But He requires that true words be said. The mother may know that, to maintain life, the child requires food. But milk is given only when the child asks for it.”

“Feel that you are a hundred percent dependent on God; He will look after you and save you from harm and injury. When you go to bed, offer thankful homage to Him for guiding and guarding you throughout the day. Activity must be dedicated to God, the highest good. Then it will provide health of body and mind.”

“Pray until God relents; do not turn away sadly if God does not shower Grace when you expect it.”

“You should not pray for one thing and practice another. The words you utter, the deeds you do, the prayers you utter, must all be along the same path.”

“Your duty is to pray for the welfare of the world and to work for it as far as it lies in your power.”

And finally, **A Prayer Written By Swami** for some devotees:

O Lord take my love and let it flow in fullness of devotion to Thee
O Lord take my hands and let them work incessantly for Thee
O Lord take my soul and let it be merged in one with Thee
O Lord take my mind and thoughts and let them be in tune with Thee
O Lord take my everything and let me be an instrument to work for Thee.



SSSGC Zone 1 Media App



With Swami's grace, we are delighted to share the SSSGC Zone 1 App on

amazon fireTV



Just search for 'Sri Sathya Sai' in the apps section, download the free app, and enjoy the Divine Vibes



Watch your favourite offerings from SSSGC Zone 1 programs on your High Definition TV connected to an Amazon Fire TV device.

We humbly offer this at Bhagawan's feet and pray for His continued grace to carry HIS universal message.

Please do share your valuable thoughts and feedback to admin@sssgc-usa.org

Sai Ram: Media Team

Media Links

SRI SATHYA SAI GLOBAL COUNCIL

Zone 1 - USA, Canada, West Indies

Please do visit the SSSGC, Zone 1 official websites for the latest announcements and relevant registration and informational documents and videos:

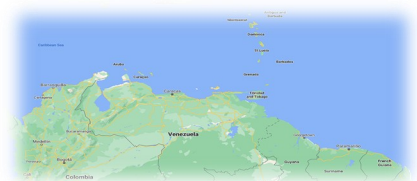
Zone 1



USA



Canada



West Indies

Subscribe



Telegram



Facebook



Mailing List



YouTube



Samastha Lokah Sukhino Bhavanthu
May all the beings of all the Worlds be Happy!
