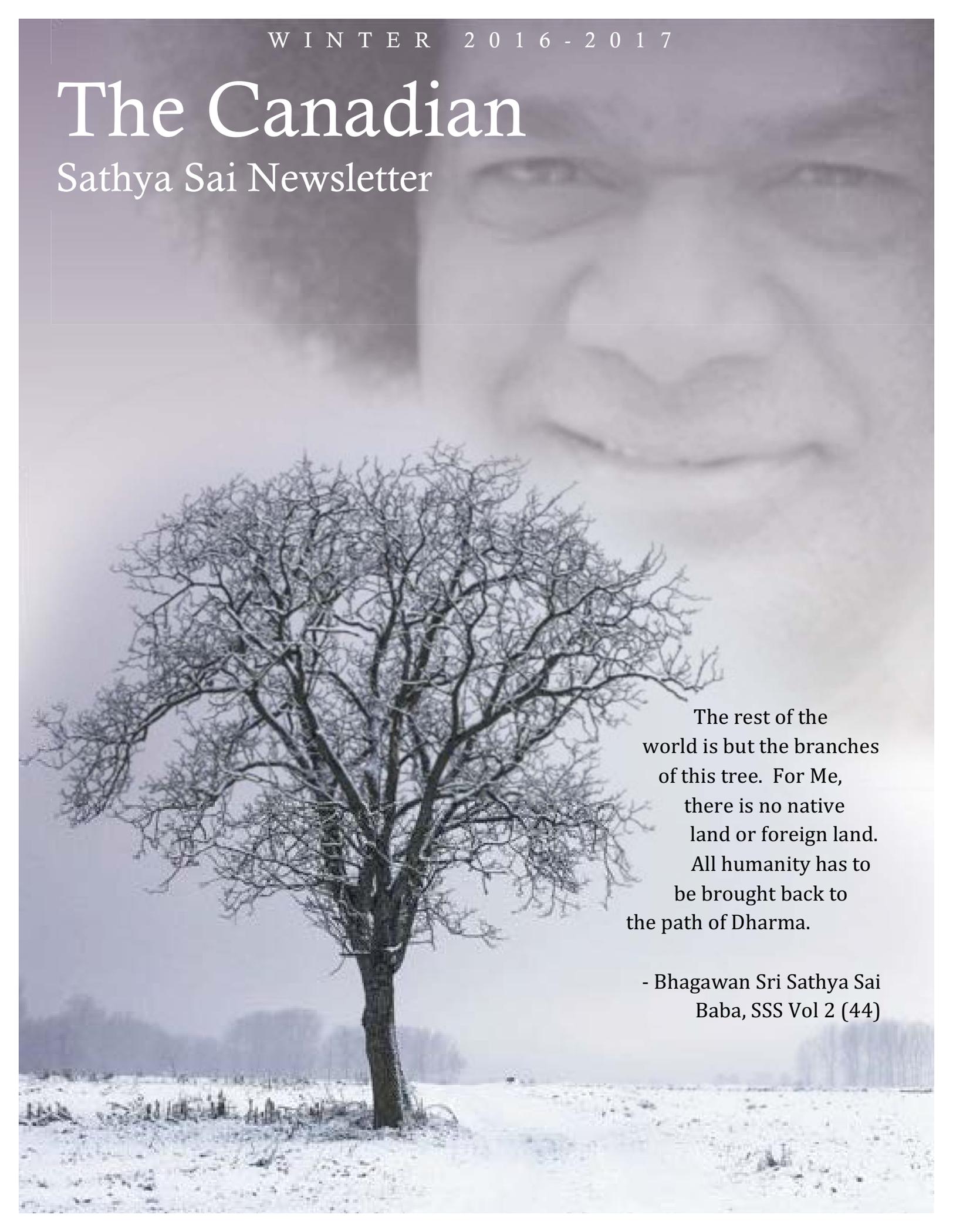


W I N T E R 2 0 1 6 - 2 0 1 7

The Canadian

Sathya Sai Newsletter



The rest of the
world is but the branches
of this tree. For Me,
there is no native
land or foreign land.
All humanity has to
be brought back to
the path of Dharma.

- Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai
Baba, SSS Vol 2 (44)

The Canadian

Sathya Sai Newsletter

Sathya Sai
International
Organization (SSIO)
Canada
www.sathyasai.ca

The Sathya Sai
International
Organization (SSIO)
Canada is part of a
worldwide spiritual
movement to awaken in
all people the
awareness of their
inherent divinity and to
encourage the practice
of the universal
principles of Truth,
Right Action, Peace,
Love and Non-Violence
through personal
example and selfless
service.

Editor
Prof. Siva Nadarajah
Montreal, Canada

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World of Beauty

This journey by far has not been one of ease and simplicity.

We have yet to find ourselves reconnected to the abundance of Mother Nature.

The sun has seen more divisions and walls being built at every rise and set, despite how interconnected and interdependent we have become as humanity.

The air has felt more words of anger, misunderstanding, and disrespect fill its lungs at every breath it takes to provide us with our essence.

The earth trembles more and more with fear at our carelessness as we attempt to harvest the treasures it has fostered and grown for many lifetimes in its womb before our existence.

The oceans are clouded with our muddied thoughts as we swim deep into our bottomless desire to fulfill our wants more than our needs.

Somewhere deep within us exists the fountain of appreciation and awe at the creation that has brought us here to this very moment.

Covered by the trivial matters that consume our minds from the moment we awaken to when we sleep, it's no surprise that most of our ideas of an escape is somewhere where we have allowed Mother Nature to simply be free.

We have grown into a world of man made phenomena and allowed our own creation be the source of our worries and downfalls.

But let us not forget that without the dedication, perseverance, and the consistency that the universe provides us at every single moment, we would not be able to earn and achieve the feats we can today.

There is much to be thankful for, and it is in our capacity to find every moment to do so

Let it be a simple "thank you" to the world every morning or even a smile to any passerby, for it is time for us to reconnect to our roots.

Like the ever-growing tree that grounds and provides stability, nourishing us with our essentials.

Yet reaches into the sky through its branches to strive to be one with the Sun that shines above it

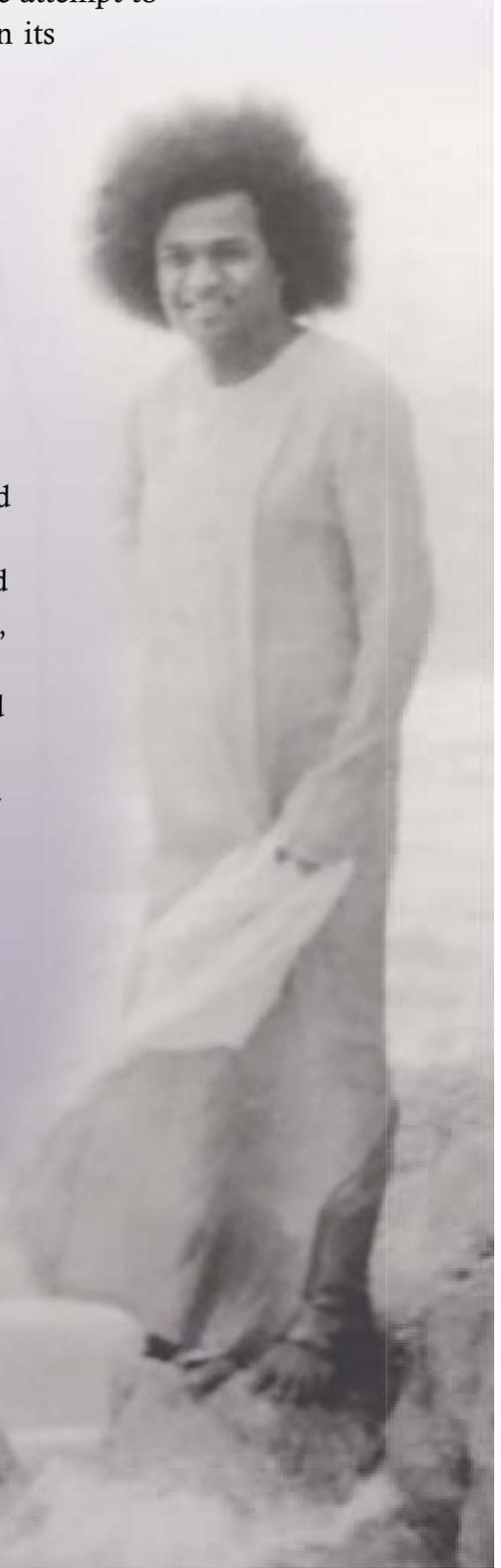
We, as humanity, take such blessings for granted far too often, for the universe pulses through the strength of the tree, its fruits supported by the foundation of the trunk, just as how our growth is supported by God.

Let us reconnect to the essence that holds us together.

As everything is where it is meant to be at every moment.

This creation is perfect, and we are all part of its beauty.

*Vinoj Suthakaran, Sathya Sai Baba Centre of
Scarborough, Ontario Region 2*



SAI'S MESSAGE

“Install God on the Altar of Your Heart and Meditate On Him”

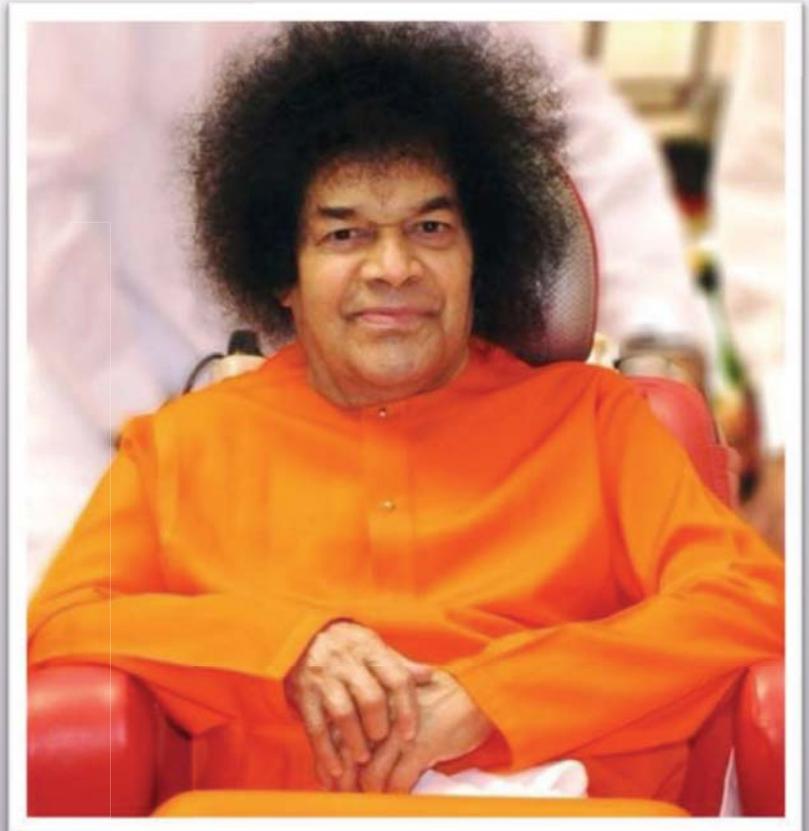
*Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 42,
Chap. 5, Prasanthi Nilayam,
23 February, 2009*

Bharat is the motherland of many noble souls who earned great name and fame in all the continents of the world. This is the land of valorous people who vanquished the foreign rulers in the battlefield and attained independence. This is the land that excelled in music, literature, and other fine arts. Having been born in this great land of Bharat, oh boys and girls, it is your sacred duty to protect its rich cultural heritage! (Telugu poem)

Embodiments of Love!

We are spending nights daily ever since we are born, but not all those nights can be termed as *Sivarathri*. People meditate upon, sing about, and listen to the glory of the divine name and experience the divinity of Lord Siva. Since the whole night is spent in meditation and singing the glory of the divine name of Lord Siva, this night is called *Sivarathri*. Not only this night, whenever you spend the entire night meditating upon the divine name, that night is also *Sivarathri*.

Lord Siva is not a separate *Avatar*. In fact, *Hari* and *Hara* (Lord *Vishnu* and Lord *Siva*) are



beyond one's contemplation. They are beyond the physical body. Many people contemplate upon them as Avatars with a physical body and worship them in a particular form. They develop a deep urge to visualise them in a particular form. But who is it that ascribed those forms to Divinity? Surely, they did not incarnate in those forms. Some painters, like Ravi Varma, painted them in a particular form as per their imagination based upon certain descriptions in the *Sastras* and *Puranas*. That is all!



In fact, *Vishnu* and *Siva* are not limited to a physical frame. They are beyond description. They are formless and attributeless. *Nirgunam, niranjanam, sanathana nikanam, nitya, suddha, buddha, mukta, nirmala, swarpinam* (God is attributeless, unsullied, final abode, eternal, pure, enlightened, free, and embodiment of sacredness).

Devotees are accustomed to contemplate upon and worship these forms also since millennia. They wish to visualise God in those forms. God is beyond description and is not limited to a particular form. No painter, however great

they may be, can ever paint the picture of God. How can a painter paint the form of God, who is formless?

However, God assumes different forms as per the wishes of devotees. Whoever wishes to visualise God in whatever form of their liking, God manifests in that form. It is for that particular moment only. It is not permanent. All forms attributed to God are only temporary. Divinity is beyond name and form.

Once Goddess *Lakshmi* came to Parvathi and wondered

Oh! Gowri! You are very young and Sambasiva is old; He has matted locks and wears a tiger skin; He rides a bull and is constantly on the move; He is adorned with snakes; How did you court Him? Don't you know all this? He has no house of His own and sleeps in the burial ground. (Telugu song)

Parvathi was deeply disturbed by these remarks and approached Lord *Siva* and asked, "You don't have a house of your own. You don't belong to a particular caste or lineage. Further, you are "*arthanariswara*" (androgynous). How then can you call yourself God?"

Lord *Siva* replied that God is beyond names, caste, and lineage. He then turned to *Lakshmi* and asked, "Oh! Mother *Lakshmi*! Are you aware of your own husband's antecedents? He is constantly on the move to protect His devotees and has no time for food and sleep. If at all He settles down to take food, some devotee like *Draupadi* prays meanwhile, 'Oh! Lord *Krishna*! I am in great trouble. Please save

me.' Immediately, He rushes to rescue her, leaving His food. Thus, He is constantly on the move to protect His devotees like *Narada* or *Prahlada*. How then did you court such a Lord who has no time even for food and rest?"

Siva then clarified that God has no name and form; He is changeless; He has neither birth nor death; neither beginning nor end; He is eternal and *Atmaswarupa* (embodiment of Atma). He also emphasised that it is man's illusion to ascribe a name and form to God. The formless God manifests with a particular form and name as per the wishes of the devotees, to fulfil their aspirations.

God is formless and attributeless. It is the devotees who attribute some names, forms, and attributes to God and feel satisfied. All names and forms are *anithya* and *asathya* (evanescent and false). The only eternal and true form of God is *Atma*. Everything in the world may change; but the *Atma* will never undergo a change. The entire universe is contained in the *Atma*. This is also called divine consciousness or *Aham* or *Brahman*. People misunderstand this eternal truth, ascribing several names and forms to it.

When the formless God assumes a form, it is natural for human beings to meditate and worship that form. People derive great satisfaction and experience bliss by doing so. It is alright as long as that form remains. Once that divine form ceases to exist, what will you do? The happiness and bliss derived from the worship of a particular form of God are born out of your illusion only. The physical vestures last for a particular period and then cease to exist. Divinity takes different forms later.



For example, you are now attached to this physical body. You worship this body and derive great satisfaction and bliss thereby. But, after sometime, this body may disappear like the earlier *Avatar*. Then you should not feel sad. When the divine *Atma* embodied in this physical body reaches its eternal Abode, it is a matter of joy, not sorrow.

In Tretha Yuga the *Rama Avatar* came. He went into exile in the forest and destroyed several demons, including the great rakshasa (demon) king, *Ravana*. Finally, having fulfilled His *Avataric* mission, He went into the *Sarayu* river and disappeared. The same is the case with Lord *Krishna* in the *Dwapara* Yuga, who left His mortal coil after having been hit by the

arrow of a hunter in the forest. Thus, the physical vestures are always temporary and untrue.

Hence, never consider the physical body as permanent. Bodies appear according to the time and circumstances. Once the prescribed time is over, they just disappear. Even the experiences gained by the physical body vanish.

Considering the physical bodies as true, if you wish to have the darshan of Lord *Krishna* of *Dwapara Yuga* now, how is it possible? As long as He walked in that body, He appeared in *Mathura*, *Brindavan*, *Gokul*, *Dwaraka*, etc., and made people happy with His darshan, *sparshan*, and *sambhasan* (sight, contact, speech).

Take the example of an electric bulb. Each bulb has separate wattage, which remains for a

incarnated as several *Avatars*. Be attached not to the physical form of a particular *Avatar* but to Divinity as the formless, attributeless, *Parabrahma*, which manifested as different *Avatar* in different ages.

You were born as a baby and grew up as a child, youth, and elderly person. All these different stages in life are only for a limited period, but you the individual are there in all the different stages. *Avatars* come, fulfil their mission, and disappear. You must therefore meditate upon Divinity, which is true and eternal.

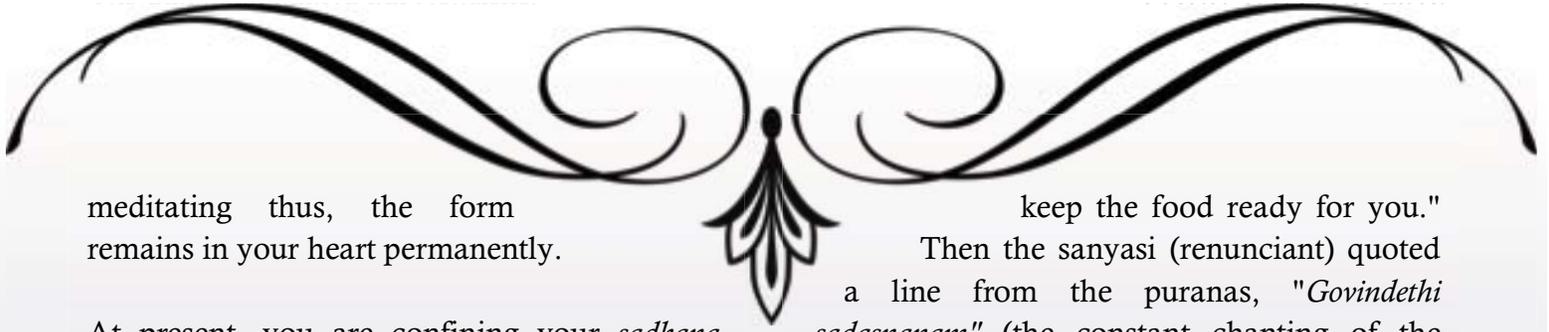
There are three aspects in *sadhana* (spiritual practice): concentration, contemplation, and meditation. At the moment, you are fixing your gaze on this form; that is concentration. When this form moves away after sometime, you still look at this form with your mental eye; that is contemplation. As a result of this

The body is made up of five elements and is bound to perish sooner or later, but the indweller has neither birth nor death. The indweller has no attachment whatsoever and is the eternal witness. Truly speaking, the indweller who is in the form of Atma, is verily God Himself.

(Telugu poem)

limited period of time. *Avatars* are like these electric bulbs. Over a period, God has

exercised, this form gets imprinted in your heart permanently. That is meditation. As you go on



meditating thus, the form remains in your heart permanently.

At present, you are confining your *sadhana* only to concentration and contemplation. These two stages are only transitory. It is true that the first step in your *sadhana* is concentration. Concentration has to be transformed into contemplation and later into meditation. In this final stage of meditation, you will continue to visualise the form of God even if you close your eyes. The ancient rishis adopted this form of meditation. That is why God manifested before them whenever they wished, talked to them, and fulfilled their desires.

The nirakara, nirguna *Parabrahma* (formless, attributeless Supreme Self) is changeless and eternal. It represents the ultimate reality. It is known by different names like *Rama*, *Krishna*, and *Sai*. Do not make any distinction between the names, for *Parabrahma* is beyond names and forms. Install that ultimate reality on the altar of your sacred heart and constantly meditate upon it.

Some people tend to misinterpret the sastras and puranas (scriptures and ancient texts) to suit their convenience and selfish ends. A small story: Once an impostor posing as a renunciant stood before a house and begged for food saying, "*Bhavathi bhiksham dehi!*" (I am hungry, kindly give me food!).

The housewife heard his plea and came out. She told him, "Sir! Please go to the river and have a bath and come back. Meanwhile, I will

keep the food ready for you."

Then the sanyasi (renunciant) quoted a line from the puranas, "*Govindethi sadasnanam*" (the constant chanting of the name of *Govinda* is as good as taking a bath).

The housewife immediately realised that the person standing in front of their door begging for food was not a true renunciant and replied, "Dear Son! *Govindethi sada bhojanam*" (the constant chanting of the name of *Govinda* is as good as a meal). You may go.

It is said that the face is the index of mind. It reflects our inner thoughts and feelings. If the so-called renunciant in this story really believed in the glory of the divine name, he should have taken a bath before asking for food. He was a lazy person. He wanted food to satisfy his hunger but was reluctant to have a bath before the meal. Never believe in such impostors.

Some people sit silently, closing their eyes. They say they are doing meditation. That is not meditation. They may be sitting silently, but their mind may be wandering, thinking about all and sundry. Only a mind that is unwavering and firmly fixed on the higher reality can be called meditation. Meditation is the next stage to contemplation.

A small example: you may have scored first class marks in the half yearly examination, but you will not be eligible to get a degree. Only after passing the final examination will you be eligible to receive a degree. Contemplation and meditation are comparable to the half yearly and final examinations. Thus, spirituality



represents a higher stage in life.

Today, people are engrossed in the pursuit of physical and worldly objects, forgetting moral and spiritual goals. How then can they attain spiritual progress? If one wishes to have a spiritual experience, one has to acquire the necessary strength to face the final examination.

To say that this is my body, my house, my property, etc. represents the physical aspect. When you say, "this is my body," it means "my" is separate. That is, you are separate from your body. Similarly, when you say "my mind", "my *buddhi* (intellect)", "my *chitta* (subconscious mind)", etc. it means they are all separate from you. Hence, your true nature is "I", which is separate from all that you call as "my body, my mind, my *buddhi*", etc.

You have to sacrifice all your *karmas* (i.e. the fruits of your actions). That means, you have to perform your *karmas* (actions) with an attitude of *Sarva karma Bhagavad preethyartham* (all actions to be performed in a spirit of surrender to God). Then only will you become immortal.

If you wish to attain the true and eternal state, you must realise the *Atma Tathwa* (*Atmic Principle*).

Only the Upanishads delineate on the *Atma Tathwa* extensively, not the epics like *Bhagavatha* and *Ramayana*. The same *Atma Tathwa*, that is, the supreme reality, incarnates from age to age to restored *dharma* whenever it is on the decline, as stated in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

*Yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata,
Abhyutthanamadharmasya tadatmanam
srujamyaham. (Sanskrit verse)*

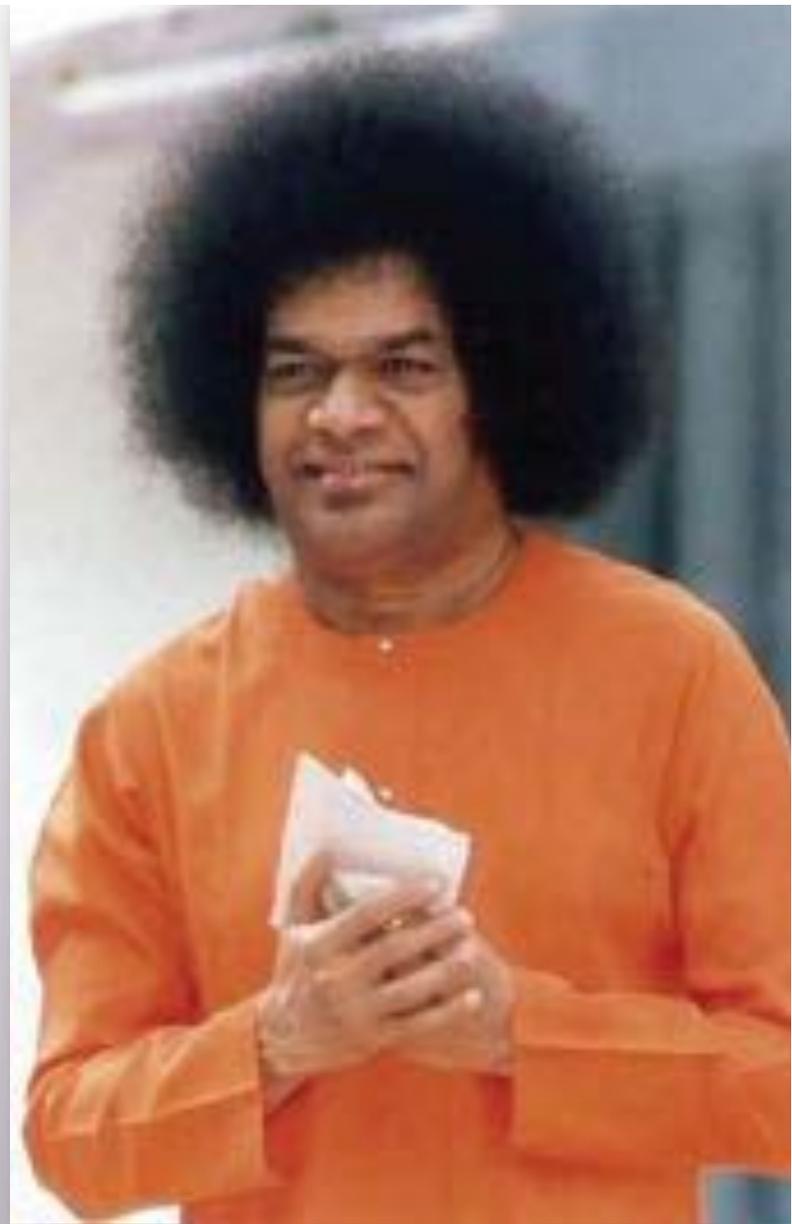
(Oh Arjuna! Whenever there is a decline in *dharma* and rise in *adharma*, I incarnate from age to age for the establishment of *dharma*. Install God on the altar of your sacred heart and meditate on Him constantly. In spite of sorrow, difficulties, and calamities that you may encounter, hold on to Him firmly. They trouble your body, not you; for, you are separate from your body. The body is like a box in which the mind, intellect, *chitta* (subconscious mind), *indriyas* (senses), and

anthakarana (inner psycho-somatic fourfold instruments of mind, intellect, memory, and ego) are packed. We cultivate qualities like anger, jealousy, envy, and pride due to our contact with the outside world. Only when we get rid of these qualities do we enjoy peace. Therefore, we have to start our *sadhana* with *sathya* (truth) and *dharma* (righteousness).

When truth and righteousness go together, *santhi* (peace) will reign. Peace brings love. Where there is peace, there hatred cannot be. When we develop hatred against someone, it means the spring of love is dried up in our heart. When there is love in our heart, we do not get angry, even if someone accuses us.

Normally, we do not care for anyone when we are angry. Many people speak ill of Me, accuse Me, and even heckle Me, but I am not disturbed. I am always happy and blissful. That is real love. Where there is anger, hatred, and jealousy, it means that there is no love. Hence, always follow the motto of "Love All, Serve All!" The basis for following this principle is *sathya* and *dharma* (truth and righteousness). Always speak truth and follow righteousness.

As against this principle, people are now lecturing so much about *dharma* without themselves treading the path of *dharma*. *Dharma* cannot survive in such circumstances. It is said, "*Sathyannasti paro dharmah*" (there cannot be a greater *dharma* than speaking truth). *Sathya* and *dharma* are like the two hands, two legs, and two lips in a human body. It is only when the two lips work together that a human being can speak. Similarly, it is only when *sathya* and *dharma* go together that peace reigns. Where there is no



dharma, there love cannot be. Thus, *sathya* and *dharma* are the basis for all other values like *santhi* (peace), *prema* (love), and *ahimsa* (nonviolence).

(*Bhagawan* sang the bhajan, "*Prema mudita manase kaho ...*" and continued His discourse.)

Embodiments of Love!

Always meditate on the divine name ---not just contemplation, but meditation. That meditation should be with love for God. Without love, your meditation will not achieve

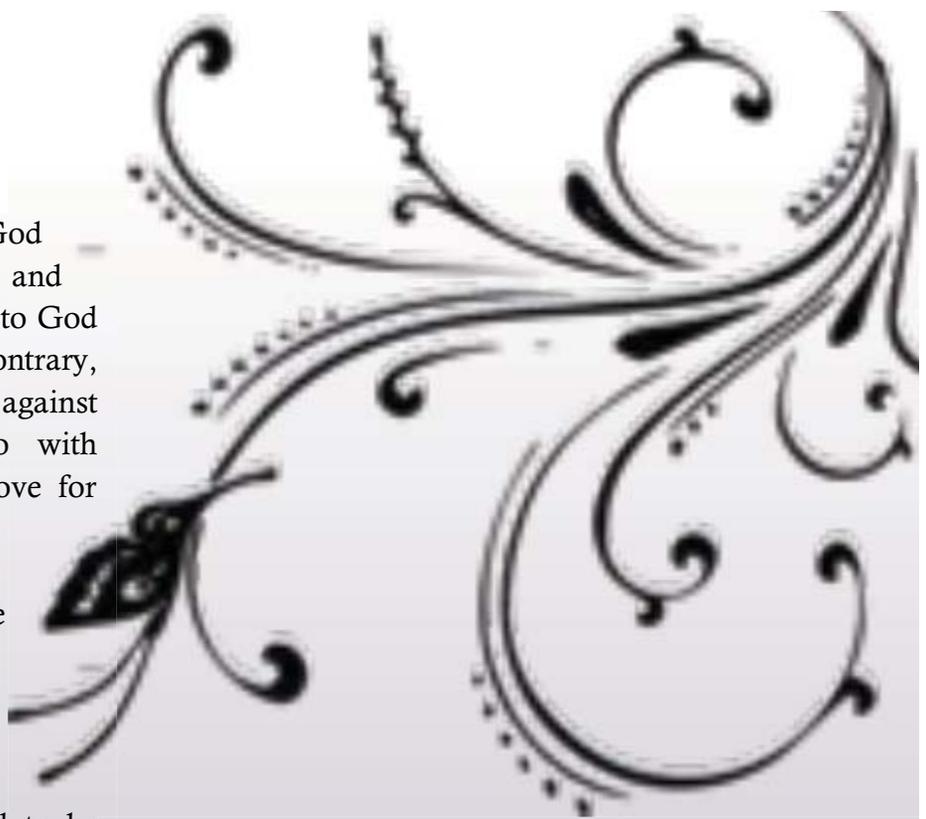
the desired result. Your love for God should be continuous through day and night. It is possible that when you pray to God to fulfil some desire and things go contrary, you may get angry and develop hatred against Him. But that has nothing to do with spirituality. Your innate nature and love for God should never undergo a change.

Continue to attach yourself to the divine name. That is real meditation. When you are in deep meditation, nothing in the external world should be visible to you even if you open your eyes. Another aspect about which you need to be careful is your speech. Too much talk is very bad. Do not indulge in excessive talk. Try to mend your nature. Observe silence as far as possible and be quiet. Talk as much as is needed. Just answer to the point. If you talk more, you will be branded as a chatterbox. Too much talk is not good, even from the health point of view. This is very important, especially in the case of children.

You have to keep your mind steady right from the young age. What is important is not studying textbooks but steadying your mind. Textbooks you can always study ---in the classroom, in the hostel, etc.

Are you all happy? (All the students in one voice replied that they are happy.)

(*Bhagawan* concluded His discourse with the words, "Be always happy, happy, happy!")

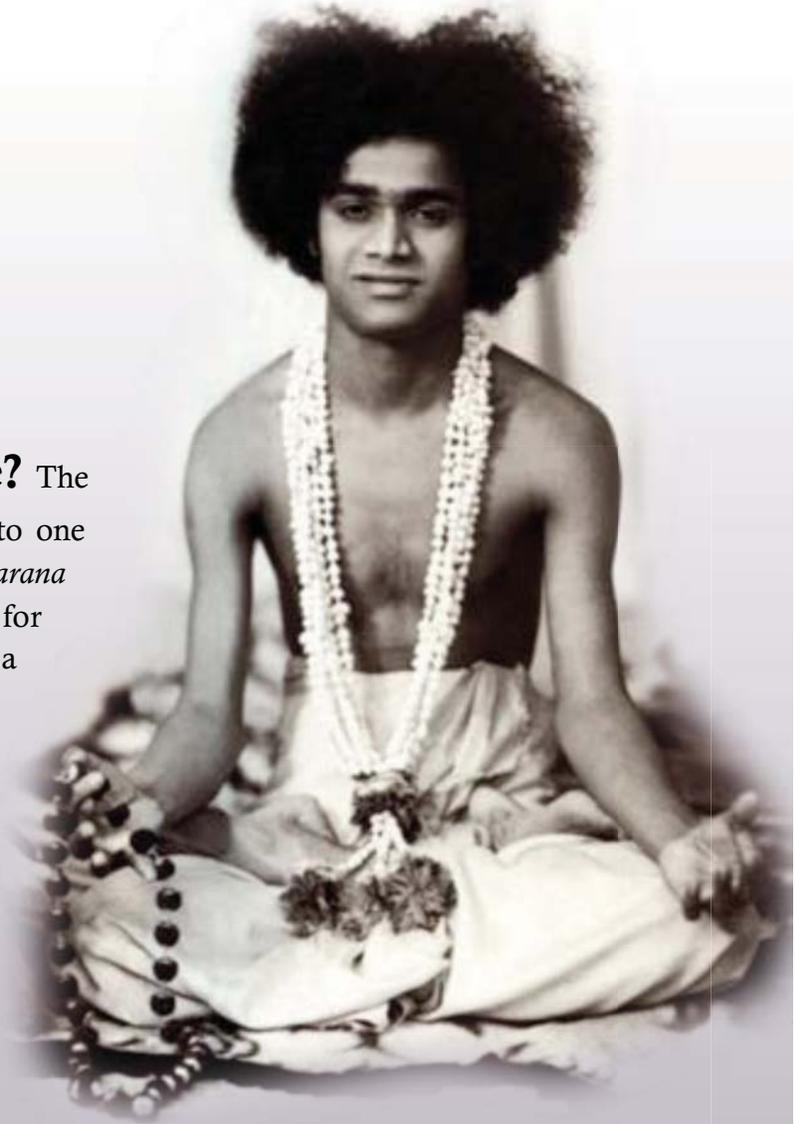


“Swami on Meditation”

*Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 22,
Chap. 21, Prasanthi Nilayam,
29 June, 1989*

How is meditation to be done?

The first step is *Dharana*. Twelve *Dharanas* amount to one *Dhyana*. Twelve *Dhyanas* equal one *Samadhi*. *Dharana* is steady concentrated viewing of any object for twelve seconds. You have to look at any object, a flame, a picture or an idol for twelve seconds only with total concentration, without winking the eyelids. This is *Dharana*. Practicing *Dharana* is a preparation for *Dhyana*. The duration of *Dhyana* is twelve *Dharanas*. This means *Dhyana* should last $12 \times 12 = 144$ seconds, that is, two minutes and twenty four seconds. *Dhyana* does not call for sitting in "meditation" for hours. Proper *Dhyana* need not last more than 2 minutes 24 seconds. It is only after *Dharana* has been practiced well that one can do *Dhyana* (meditation) well.



Twelve *Dhyanas* equal one *Samadhi*. This means 144×12 seconds, that is, 28 minutes and 48 seconds--very much less than an hour. If *Samadhi* is prolonged, it may prove fatal. These are the disciplines the yogis practiced. These disciplines are not explained in any of the sastras. If you want to proceed correctly in the practice of these disciplines, you have to begin with *Dharana*. Start practicing *Dharana* for 12 seconds a day from now on. This is very important for students. In the past, yogis like *Aurobindo* and *Ramana Maharishi* practiced these disciplines. *Ramana Maharishi* used to go up to the terrace and concentrate on a particular star for twelve seconds. In that state, the mind also was still and steady.

By continuing this practice of *Dharana*, you develop the capacity to perform *Dhyana* for 2 min. 24 seconds. Continuing the practice of *Dhyana* in this way, you develop the capacity to be in a state of *Samadhi* for 28 minutes and 48 seconds.

SAI FAMILY NEWS

“How to be a Successful Parent – Parental Fears and Dilemmas

CISSE Dynamic Value Parenting Team

How to be a successful parent is a dilemma faced by many parents. When we ask parents what their fears of parenting are these days, most of them say they are fearful of drugs, violence, decline in moral values, disrespect of parents and others, lack of civil behaviour, and bullying – just to name a few. As children grow, the problems also grow. What parents want of their children and what children want of their parents seem to be at odds. How to handle the increasing demands of their children and handle their own stresses in life are the crucial questions being asked by concerned parents. Thankfully Dr. Pal Dhall and Dr. Tehseen Dhall of Australia produced life enriching parenting workshops called “Human Values, the Heart of Dynamic Parenting.”

Parenting workshops have been successfully conducted in Canada since 2000 by the Education Wing of the Sai Organization. Since 2011, this function is being performed by the Canadian Institute of Sathya Sai Education (CISSE).

On Saturday 16th January, 2016 twenty-one parents graduated from the recent batch of parenting workshops at Sathya Sai School, Toronto. During the graduation ceremony



parents role-played their parenting styles before and after these workshops. The accompanying pictures show some of the role plays the parents enacted.

The following comments from parents in this graduating class are an indication of the success and value of these workshops in bringing about positive change in families: :

“...Together, we learned to be better parents, better spouses, and we also saw how we could leverage these teachings in our workplace. Every human interaction is an opportunity for building confidence, happiness, and a growth mindset. Together, we aligned our perspective, reinforcing our shared values and deciding to try very hard to live in the moment by being present with our kids and to commit

to developing strong, intelligent, sensible, confident and moral human beings.”

“My family is now better connected and very closely bonded. We are more open and vocal with the children about our daily lives; the children understand and see the value in a hard day’s work

and what is involved on a day to day basis to run a family. We are much more connected spiritually and the children have made immense strides to make goals for themselves and our family to be much more connected to us and God. You have opened up our eyes, ears and heart to. Our mind is at peace...”



“Cyber Bullying”

Canadian Institute of Sathya Sai Education (CISSE)

Technology in the world of teenagers today is a fundamental way of life. It has the ability to help children learn, create, share, and connect. However, there is also a darker side to technology that can harm as well. Cyber bullying in particular, is one threat to children across the country that is being battled in significant numbers. Acknowledging this cyber bullying pandemic, CISSE identified a need: to help parents support their children in dealing with cyber bullying situations both proactively and reactively, and to educate them on ways to better communicate with their children to build a safer online experience.

CISSE's inaugural Cyber Bullying Workshop was delivered on Dec 3, 2016 with 30 parents in attendance at the Sathya Sai School of Canada. The workshop carried parents through five modules: 1) social media and cyber bullying education, 2) cyber bullying triggers and psychological factors, 3) identifying non-verbal signs that your child is being cyber bullied or is the bully. Followed, by an in-depth talk by an expert speaker (doctor, psychiatrist) on the subject, sharing valuable insights and analysis with the group of attendees 4) learning effective communication strategies to build trust, and 5) reviewing proactive and reactive measures to combat cyber bullying and educating parents on the legislation and policies around cyber bullying. A toolkit including important information, FAQs and resources for future references was also distributed to all participants.



To children, online life is real life. We've joined together to help parents explore and understand online life as kids know it. Let's keep kids safe online. Those in attendance were encouraged to become ambassadors, spreading this awareness and their new-found knowledge. Ultimately, the hope is that fewer kids experience the scarring effects of cyber bullying because parents will be able to take a more proactive stance and empathetic approach to helping their children stay safe online.

The seminar was a huge success. Here is what some of the participants have said:

“The Cyberbullying seminar was an excellent event. I am glad that I registered and attended it. It was an eye opener in some ways, and in other areas it reinforced what I was already aware of. Most importantly it was a ‘one stop shop’ for all relevant information related to this extremely important topic that impacts our kids and young adults... the future of tomorrow. For me personally, it made me stop and think. Life is so busy that sometimes we miss out on the signals we get from our kids;



even though we think we know everything about them. All panellists were amazing. The biggest take away for me was from Dr. Kamna Handa's section and the interaction with her. The concept of NORMALIZING a situation/event before proceeding with any suggestion - I have indeed put that into practice right away, consciously. The second learning was in the section on Communication strategies. I would definitely register for any more of such sessions if made available."

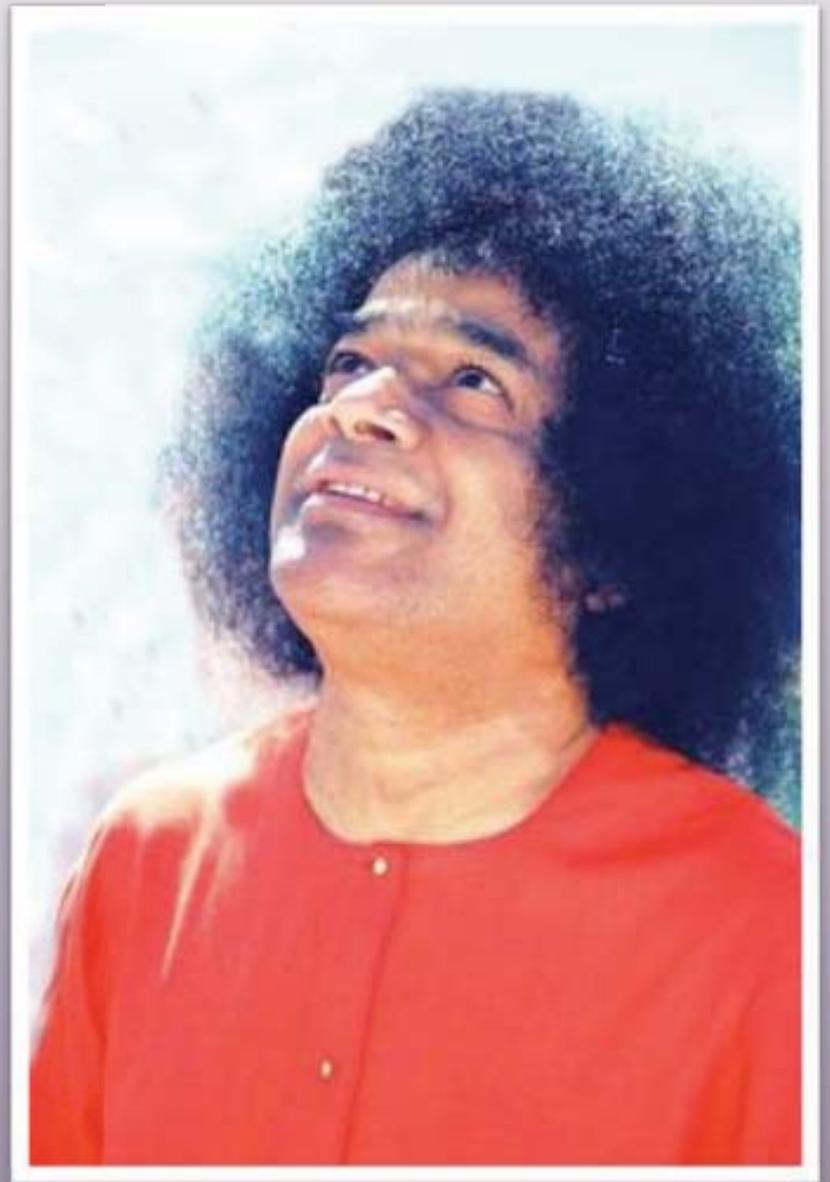
"I would definitely recommend something on these lines for the students of SSS as well. I am not sure to what extent it is being taught in the curriculum right now. The kids are the one to actually face it. They have to be made aware of it – to take charge, to stand up and to be responsible. A parent educating their kids on cyber bullying is not the same as the information being passed to the kids by a third party of authority. (Most kids would think that their parents are just being over concerned)"

"I recommend it for even parents of grade 4 and 5. As kids these days have gadgets at a

young age. And the younger they are the more vulnerable they are as well."

"Thank you for the opportunity that CISSE gave the parents to attend this eye-opening workshop on Cyber Bullying. It's a burning issue for the families with teenagers and we learnt things that are possible to implement in real life and was not just theory to read and discard. Dr. Kamna Handa's cases and her suggestions really helped me as parent to understand from the child's point of view. The video showed during the communications strategy session was also an eye opener because as a parent I do react emotionally first, even though I think it's for the protection of the child. But it does backfire sometimes. I feel the workshop should be out there for all parents and if possible mandatory for teenager parents who use social media extensively. This certainly will help the parents empathize with their kids. It will help parents build positive relationship with their children. A Big Thank You to the team, and school for organizing this seminar."

“We parents are really grateful and thankful to entire team of talented volunteers who were so thoughtful in enlightening us with lots of information. The event was well organized, planned and executed. We parents were so glued to the seats and did not feel like leaving even after the event was done. Having Dr. Kamna Handa, a child psychiatrist, on board was simply great. Salute her efforts for flying down all the way from States just for this event. Job well done!!”



“Carol Singing”

Devotees of Ontario Region 1

In December 2015, members of the Region 1 Sai family, young and old alike joined together to share love and bring Christmas cheer to seniors who live in a long term care facility, many of whom do not have the company of their own families at this time of year. For over 25 years, this simple service has been an annual holiday tradition for the seniors at Norwood Nursing Home in downtown Toronto, which many of the long-time residents look forward to year after year during the holiday season.

On Saturday, December 19th, the 2015 event was in full swing with volunteers decked out in holiday colours and warm smiles singing Christmas carols for the residents for 2 hours, 1 hour per floor of the home. The carols were a mix of old tunes and new, with the seniors joyfully singing along to classics such as Silent Night and Mary's Boy Child, then ceremoniously breaking out in smiles as Jingle Bells and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer rang through the halls.

To bring an additional token of love during the 'season of giving' and to leave a memento of our time with them, sweaters and other small gifts were specially collected and wrapped by York Centre members and distributed by our very own Santa on Christmas Eve for each and every person! This was uniquely special for residents without families, who were delighted to wake up on Christmas morning to see a gift under their tree.



The whole service brought smiles and laughter to the faces of residents, but also left an imprint of Sai's love on the hearts of the volunteers who participated in this activity. It was an exercise of Sai Baba's message of selfless service and an experience of individual spiritual growth. In particular, youth felt this activity a fitting end to a year's worth of monthly service projects as part of Zone 1's SAI90 youth offering for Swami's 90th birthday, which consisted of 9 initiatives over 9 months encompassing Service, Adoration, and Inspiration under the theme of "*Love is the Source. Love is the Path. Love is the Goal.*"

“Toronto Area Interfaith Council (TAIC)”

Sai Council of Canada

On 27th July, 2016, SSIO Canada was invited by the Mayor of Toronto to participate in the Toronto Area Interfaith Council (TAIC). TAIC is an organization of faith groups, dedicated to affirming the importance of ethics,



spirituality, and faith in daily life and for the promotion of understanding, harmony, respect, and acceptance among the faith communities of Toronto.



Through beautiful video presentations, the growth and contributions of the city’s major places of worship left the participants with hope and a renewed sense of purpose to continue to work in unity to

build a strong spiritual community. In his speech, the Mayor commended the wonderful work of the council and stressed the importance of ‘Unity in Diversity. A notable outcome of this experience was an invitation for SSIO Canada to work alongside TAIC and the Toronto City Council to host the next Parliament of the World’s Religions in October 2018.



“Saskatoon Interfaith Program”

Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Saskatoon

To commemorate Bhagawan’s 91st birthday, the **Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Saskatoon, Canada organized a Multi-Faith Forum**. The occasion was initiated by the First Nations community who performed a beautiful traditional dance. This was followed by speeches from the members of the Christian, Islam, Baha’i Faith, Buddhist, First Nations, and Hindu communities. Each representative spoke on Bhagawan’s central theme of Love and Service, emphasizing their importance within their respective religions. Multifaith forums leave participants with a strong commitment to community building as love and service are firmly crystalized in their hearts.



“Junior Achievement”

Ontario Regions 1 and 2

On **February 18th** 40 members of our Sai family partnered with Junior Achievement (JA) Canada to deliver the Stronger Together Diversity in Action program to over 810 students across the Greater Toronto Area.

Since 1955 JA Canada has been inspiring and preparing youth to succeed by providing opportunities to learn financial literacy, entrepreneurship and work readiness skills with engaging programs and the help of dedicated volunteers. Over the course of the day, volunteers led students as they explored the concept of diversity from a variety of perspectives, including:

- Career ambition and the necessary pre-requisites to be successful.
- In thought through situational role-play, putting oneself in the other person’s shoes, as well as conflict resolution.
- From the perspective of diversity in

physical ability and its relationship to the design of products and systems.

- Diversity of popular culture, cuisine and geography.

Throughout the day students worked in groups to allow for further cross-pollination of ideas and to create an engaging environment. Although most of our volunteers had limited teaching experience prior to this program, each and every one of them excelled in their own individual ways as they waded into the unknown and took on the challenge.

Our future world will be one of even more love, respect and inclusivity and less man-made barriers than exists in the world we live in today. This was undoubtedly evident after spending a day discussing Diversity in Action awareness and inclusion with 11 and 12 year old Grade 6 students. We were incredibly fortunate to spend the day with these bright young minds who passionately explored the subject. Vibrant opinions emerged while they





brainstormed through various real-life scenarios, engaging in healthy discussion and giving them a firsthand opportunity to experience different views in their breakout groups as each child shared, listened, understood and valued their friends' views.

During discussions and activities on gender equality, disability accessibility, ethnicities etc. every participant was eager to contribute. They loved learning from and interacting with the youth through the program. The children shared the importance of respect and equal treatment for every person irrespective of differences. They recognized that we are all the same yet uniquely special, and that anyone can aspire and achieve whatever they set their hearts and minds to. Their passion, along with their open loving caring hearts will continue to be an inspiration, and shape a beautiful tomorrow.



“Operation Friendship”

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Edmonton



On February 18, 2017 ten members of the Edmonton Sri Sathya Sai Centre came together to serve 120 meals to inner city senior citizens. Volunteers made sandwiches and soup and provided the seniors with milk and dessert as well. This service takes place every second Saturday of each month and on special occasions such as Bhagawan’s birthday. The Edmonton Sai Centre has been offering this service activity consistently and lovingly for over 30 years and has been conducting this activity through the Operation Friendship Seniors Society (OFSS) for well over 20 years.

Sai volunteers take all the food supplies required to the OFSS and make the sandwiches and soup on location after which they serve the seniors themselves. Upon completion of preparing meals, *Brahmaarpanam* is chanted

before serving the meals to the seniors.

The volunteers prepare these meals with such joy and love. The service they provide brings out the best in them and the community. One of the greatest feelings in serving these is seniors is the appreciation that they show the Sai volunteers. Many of them thank the volunteers and carry on with their day. That itself brings bliss to the volunteers.

Reflections by Volunteers

Those that have been engaging in Operation Friendship all share the view that it is important to help in whatever way we can. Operation Friendship is one way in which the Edmonton Sathya Sai Centre offers help to better the community. Below are comments

from Sai volunteers.

“I know what it is like to be less fortunate and it’s important to give back. I strongly believe that ‘hands that help are holier than lips that pray.’ ” - *Kamla Pillay*

“Service is satisfaction, seeing a smile on those receiving service is satisfaction.”

- *Chellamma Nareshwar*

“I do Seva for Sai. ‘ Service to man is service to God.’ ” - *Shiva Ganesh Lingam*



“Siloam Mission”

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Winnipeg

Siloam Mission is a Christian humanitarian organization that provides opportunities and services for those affected by homelessness.

Siloam Mission’s Sponsor the Meal program allows local businesses to partner with them in providing meals to Winnipeg’s less fortunate every day.

SSSB Centre of Winnipeg is a partner in this program and implements cooking and serving duties once every month. Around two hundred and fifty people attend each time when we serve lunch.

In May 2014 SSSB Winnipeg was recognized by Siloam mission for ‘Most meals donated by a Volunteer group and a Plaque was presented to the center as “Partner of Hope”.

Our service at Siloam Mission consists of cooking and serving lunch once a month to approximately 300-400 people at 300 Princess Street, Winnipeg. It usually involves three volunteers to cook the food (Macaroni, Beans and Mixed Vegetables) in the morning of the service day from 9 A.M to 11 A.M and then 10 volunteers for serving food and cleaning, between 12 noon and 2 P.M.

Since August 2010 to Present, the Center members have been doing service at Siloam Mission, which alleviates the hardships of the poor and homeless, assists in transitioning them into self-sufficient and generous lifestyles and advocates nationwide on their behalf.



“Ottawa Sai Centre Seniors Program”

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Ottawa

Ottawa Sai devotees volunteer with seniors in the community at a senior’s home called The Garden Terrace. The program started in 2009 for volunteers to visit seniors on one-to-one basis and progressed to devotional group singing.

The program started when one of the devotees was inspired to volunteer based on her experience with her friend’s husband who had Alzheimer’s and was a resident at the Senior’s home. He couldn’t talk but whenever she asked him if he wanted her to pray, he always nodded yes. The devotee would chant three OMS and chant the



Gayatri Mantra nine times. Visiting this resident on a regular basis inspired her to become a more active volunteer at the home. She started visiting two other seniors, one who was very cheerful and the other one who was always grumpy. The grumpy one never wanted



to do any activity or leave her bed. She acted the same way with the staff. So instead of trying to make conversation, the devotee chose to sit silently by her bed, chant the Gayatri Mantra and leave. After a couple of visits, there was a complete change in the senior. From then on, whenever she would see the devotee, she would jump out of bed and join her for a walk! She would chat non-stop and referred to all the residents in the home as her family. There was a miraculous change in her.

Other devotees from the Ottawa Sai Centre

senior overheard the beautiful sounds of the bhajans and came into the room and joined them. The Polish friend was so touched by the love and prayers for her husband. This led the devotees to start singing English bhajans for the home.

The Youth and Sathya Sai Education Students also joined in this service. There was even one SSE student who came all the way from a city in the U.S. for this service. The seniors at the home always looked forward to the devotional music session (singing and bhajans) and they



became interested in joining this one-to-one service. However there was a delay from the home to schedule orientation for them. Meanwhile, they were asked to join in the chanting of the Gayatri Mantra by the devotee's friend. She was Polish but found that the chanting was beneficial. Three of the devotees came to do the chanting and after the chanting sang some English bhajans. Another

provided lots of positive feedback. One devotee's child referred to the home as "the other Sai Centre". At Christmas time the Education Human Values children in Ottawa join in for the carol singing, and a few parents of the kids also volunteer with the seniors on a regular basis.

Initially the enrichment coordinator at Garden

Terrace had requested if one of the devotees could come and talk about spirituality. None of the devotees were prepared to do that. Swami had his own plan... singing!

There are residents of all faiths at Garden Terrace. Therefore, at the start of the Service, the introduction is made to say that the Sai organization is not confined to any particular religion. It is universal in nature, emphasizing the underlying Unity of all religions with the fundamental message of Peace and Love.

In addition to Garden Terrace, the Ottawa Sai

devotees volunteer at another Senior's home called the Glebe Centre. On Christmas day, the volunteers sing Christmas carols to the seniors. It is amazing to witness the effect that the carol singing has on them – even those who cannot speak come alive as they listen to the songs from their childhoods. There are some that cry tears of joy. This yearly tradition brings much joy to the seniors and the participants!

Devotional singing has the power to convey an important message: that even in solitude, you are never alone.



“SSE Christmas Activity”

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Saskatoon

Christmas this Year was celebrated on Dec 11 2016 for the SSE children. Special guest Sister Priyanka came to help the children for making beautiful Christmas cards and other art work.

This is to generate a feeling of the festivity season in the children and an opportunity to celebrate with other SSE children and the Gurus which promotes to positive bonding.

Children enjoyed making variety of Christmas crafts and ornaments. They sang Christmas carols, received gifts from Santa and had snacks to finish the party



“SSE Classes for Special Needs Children”

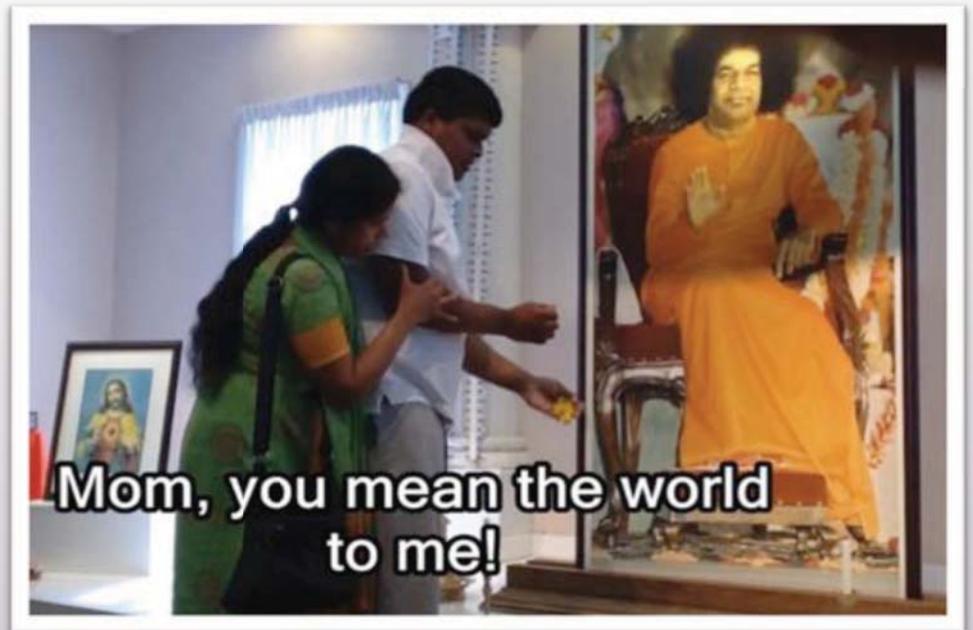
Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Ottawa

In November 2015, the SSE Coordinators had decided to start classes for special needs children. They approached me and asked if I would be a Guru. I spontaneously agreed though I had no prior experience in teaching children with special needs. In the past, I had been an assistant Guru for Group 4 boys for few years.

How did this program start?

Two years ago, I found out that a devotee was not bringing her child to the bhajans due to some restrictions. The child's grandmother said that her daughter will not bring the child because she does not want to disturb others. I went home and talked to my husband and he suggested that we could set up an Altar downstairs. So we started to do that. When the child came to the Bhajans downstairs, I learnt that the child had limited speech but loved music and therefore he sings bhajans by humming.

The first SSE class was on Nov. 1, 2015. We started with 2 classes per month. Each class was for an hour. After 2 months we started having classes every Sunday. As of Sept. 2016 the classes progressed to every Sunday with the same time schedule as the rest of the SSE Classes, i.e. for an hour and half. At present, four students have registered and are all on the Autism Spectrum. Two additional Gurus were involved in this program to ensure that there



are always two Gurus in the class. We have the parents sitting in the class as well. The class structure is the same as the regular class and we end the class with Bhajans and Gayatri Chanting.

We have been very fortunate to have the Ottawa Youth participate in the bhajan sessions every second Sunday of the month.





Their musical instruments have had a beautiful impact on the children. Throughout the past year, we have learned much from our experience and we would like to share some key points to ensure a successful program for the children:

- **Go at a slower pace.**
- **Give them more space.** i.e. sometimes adjustments are made according to a student's need. If the student is finding it hard to listen to the story, a gap with small stretch or song with action like "start the day with Love".....is done to calm the student.
- **Introduce more Visual aids.**

Autism Spectrum Disorder is different for each

child on the spectrum. The children in the class are of different ages: 10, 13, and 17. This has not proved to be a problem as this is not an academic class but a Spiritual Class and we are all in the same boat in our journey to find the God within.

I have had very positive feedback from the parents. The comment from the parent of a 17 year old child was that she wished that this program had been in place since her child was 5 years old. Our heart goes out to the parents who face so many challenges in their daily life. They have a hectic schedule and numerous appointments such as speech therapy, medical appointments, special classes etc. Some parents are also deprived from sleep if the child has sleeping problems. Our prayers to Swami that we can manage to run the classes without the parents sitting in the class. Not only that, but if we can come to a stage by doing more activities with the children e.g. planning activities such as outings, sports, games, etc. These activities can give a break to the parents who face so many challenges every day! Luckily we have had a lot of devotees who have come forward and expressed their love and offered their assistance. With Bhagawan's grace we hope to progress to the next level. On the last Sunday of this month we are having the Group 4 girls come and perform a role play for the children to watch, while the Group 4 boys will plan some activity on the last Sunday of the following month.



Are we going to have challenges? Yes – and how are we going to face them? We are going to face them with intense faith in Swami, who is the founder of this Program. I am confident that He will be our constant Guide.

“SSE Swami’s Birthday Celebration at St-Hubert Sai Centre”

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of St-Hubert

With Swami's grace and loving support the SSE Children of the St. Hubert Sai Centre performed a play to celebrate His 90th Birthday, November 26, 2017. The theme for the play was "The Four Fs: Follow the Master, Fight to the End, Finish the Game and Face the Devil." Each "F" framed a separate Act. The Acts varied in time period and cultures. The first one saw boys from different religious faiths gathered around a table to celebrate Christmas. They discussed their different religions and ultimately concluded that in each following their master they are, in fact, praying to same God. The second act referred to the Ramayana, in which Rama and Lakshmana together faced many demons on their quest to find Sita. The third Act offered a chance for students to learn and think about contemporary issues such as the Syrian Refugee Crisis. Students portrayed the story of an Olympic athlete, Yusra Mardini, who swam for over three hours in the Aegean Sea tugging a boat full of refugees to safety. One year later she competed on the Olympic Refugee team in Rio. Certainly the students saw a real life example of a teen "finishing the game." Perhaps the cutest scene featured the sweet faces of the youngest children costumed as lions, zebras, birds and turtles learning the lesson of "finish the game." Led by their devoted Gurus and helpful



parents, the children practiced five weeks in advance. The children expressed their devotion and love to Bhagavan at each practice and were thrilled when the day of the performance arrived when they shared their efforts to an appreciative audience.

“SSE Christmas Service at a Seniors Home”

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of St-Hubert

The SSE children also happily joined a service effort for Christmas. While we discussed ideas of a play, the students and Gurus also wanted to contribute through a service activity to spread the joy of the season. A suggestion of singing carols at a senior's home was met with great enthusiasm.

Under the guidance of our Bhajan Coordinator, Aunty Mercy, the children practiced several Christmas carols in both French and English. Several members of the Centre and the Youth also joined the project. This delighted the students, and it was with great spirit that they all shared their seasonal music at the home for the elderly. A few



students read the Christmas story from the Bible as well as the children-friendly poem *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*. They had to think on their feet because those listening wanted more and more songs! The children certainly left with a warm glow in their hearts for helping to spread the Christmas feeling of love.



SAI YOUTH

“Habitat For Humanity”

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Toronto-York

On Saturday August 27th, 2016, 20 Sai Young Adults from the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Toronto-York participated in a build day with *Habitat For*

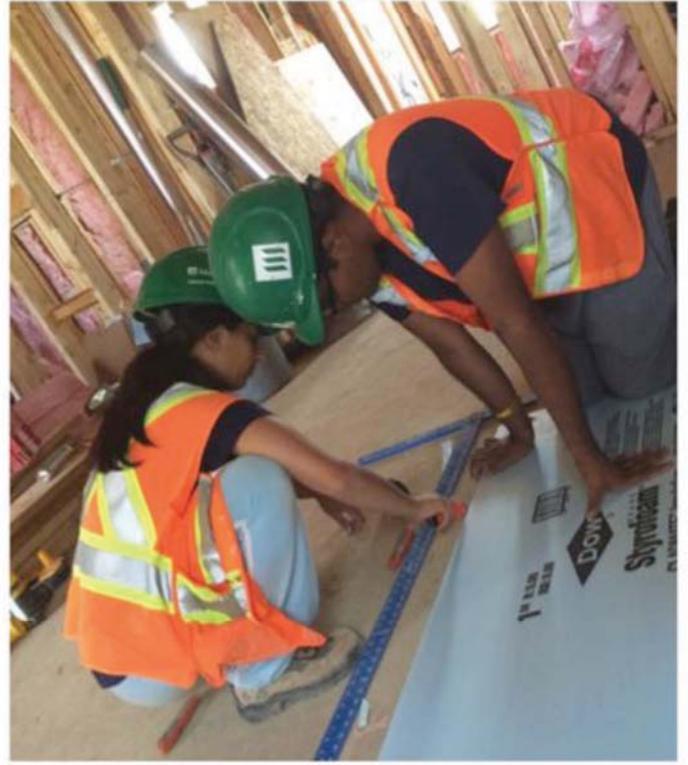


Humanity: Greater Toronto Area's Birchmount construction site to create a home for a family in desperate need through the *Adopt a Day* Program. Habitat for Humanity is an internationally known organization which collaborates with volunteers and community partners in cities across the world in building affordable housing for low income families and promoting home ownership as a means to break through the cycle of poverty.



The young adults worked together in teams under the direction of Habitat For Humanity's professional volunteers and construction experts in completing their construction tasks planned out for the day. The day began with safety training and a review of construction site etiquettes. Young adults then split into teams, clearing debris from the construction site, installing guards and railings for newly installed steps, and then installing a vapour barrier in the roof, among other tasks. In the afternoon everyone worked together to

insulate the entire house, measuring and cutting insulation and installing it across both levels as well as the attic space. The activity embodied Sai's message about service and serving others selflessly with no desire for reward or recognition. At the end of the day, Sai Young Adults expressed how grateful and blessed they felt to be able to volunteer for this initiative and their interest in returning soon to help again.



The family chosen to receive this Habitat home gratefully received their keys on Monday November 7th and joyfully moved in ready for a fresh start before the holiday season. The single mother of four children first applied for a Habitat home so that her children would get a better chance at life, to break out of the cycle of poverty. Having grown up in social housing and raising her children in the same environment, the family was all too familiar with the sights and sounds of violence and the stigma associated with living in such an environment. With their new home, the family now embraces a new hope for the future, living

in a happy, safe, and nurturing environment, safe to play outside and go to school. Upon entering, the family gathered in their new home to pray to thank God for all the blessings he has showered upon them. They joined 18 other families across the Greater Toronto Area who all celebrated new beginnings this season thanks to dedicated volunteers and Habitat For Humanity.

“Meals on Wheels”

Ontario Region 1 and 2 Youth

The hot meals service activity was the final national project youth service project for 2016. For this project, we joined Meals on Wheels hosted by Mississauga - Central on Sunday, December 18th. We created 91 hot meal packages



containing pasta, salad, baked potatoes, juice and a dessert item. In this event, young adults signed up to prepare certain items and brought it to Mississauga centre for 9AM for packaging. After the packages were created, young adults handed out in downtown Toronto. In this event, about 8 young adults participated.



“National Environmental Day”

Canadian Sai Youth

On Saturday August 13th, Canadian Sai Young Adults across the country participated in a National Environmental Day by conducting various activities in service to Mother Nature. Young Adults led the activities in all regions, with the support of adults and children.

In Ontario Region 1, Young Adults participated in a tree planting service and a water quality testing program at Kings Park, organized by the City of Mississauga and hosted by Evergreen, a social enterprise inspiring action towards greener cities. In two hours, 25 Sai Young Adults, children and parents helped remove 1 cubic meter of invasive species in an area of almost 500 square meters. The volunteers also sampled and tested Etobicoke Creek for water quality, which is crucial in order to protect the Etobicoke Creek Watershed from increased



urbanization. The efforts helped increase the local biodiversity in the community and provided valuable wildlife habitat.

In Winnipeg, Manitoba, young adult volunteers came together to clean up the neighbourhood outside the Winnipeg Sai Centre on August 13th, 2016. 7 young adults and parents cleaned outside the Sai Centre, the Sathya Sai Park, and the street block that the Sai Centre is located upon. The park was swept and litter picked up. The Environmental Day initiatives were tied to the *Walk For Values* "Go



Green" initiative, in line with Serve The Planet 2016.

In Ontario Region 2, 17 Sai Young Adults participated in Canada's Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up on Saturday July 16th at the Rouge River, Morningside Tributary in Toronto, ON. The SSIO-Canada partnered with this federal organization in order to help and preserve our Mother Earth by taking action against shoreline litter through cleanups, and thereby protect Canada's freshwater supply, which is the largest in the world. In two hours, volunteers cleaned 2 kilometers of shoreline space, filling



several large bags with garbage.

Based on the success of this regional initiative, there are now national plans to expand the Shoreline Cleanup in 2017 to clean 150 kilometers of Canadian shorelines across the country, in line with Canada's 150 Anniversary of Confederation. SSIO Canada has since partnered with Canada150 and its affiliates such as Faith150 in order to expand Public Outreach and further establish the SSIO as a community leader in the Canadian landscape.



“National Textbook Drive”

Canadian Sai Youth

In the months of August and September, 2016, Canadian Sai Young Adults conducted a National Textbook Drive in all regions as a "Back to School" service for students in need. This service project expanded beyond the Young Adults and included Sathya Sai devotees from Sathya Sai Centres across the country, with parents and friends bringing in old and gently used books for



donation at their local Centre.

In Ontario Regions 1 and 2, over 400 textbooks were collected and donated to an organization called *Textbooks For Change*, a social venture that provides affordable, educational materials to students both locally and abroad. Every year *Textbooks For Change* sends thousands of books to African Universities in sponsored crates. The remaining books are catalogued and stored at the *Textbooks For Change* warehouse in London, Ontario, which are then sold online and shipped across the country. 50% of the proceeds from these sales are allocated to fund mentorship programs and microfinance loans for entrepreneurs across the developing world who could otherwise not afford such help. All 400+ books collected in Ontario were post-secondary, university and college level textbooks spanning numerous professional disciplines, all less than 10 years old and in usable condition.

Sathya Sai Centres in Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Saskatoon collected 50, 80, and 100 books respectively, and donated them to local charities. Winnipeg's collected books were delivered to Fire Stations across Winnipeg and will be donated to The Children's Hospital Foundation of Manitoba, a non-profit organization run by volunteers and sponsors, where the funds from the sale of the books will support child health care in the Province. In British Columbia, 37 books and novels were collected for the Children's Hospital in Vancouver. This initiative helped Sai Young Adults create awareness among people, especially kids, about the education needs of children and students by donating books and providing this gift of knowledge, as guided by Sai principles.

This National service project was inspired by the success of Sai Young Adults in Ontario Region 1, who in June 2015 conducted a Regional Textbook Drive as part of their SAI90 monthly service projects. What began as a small project with the goal to collect 90 textbooks in honor of Swami's 90th Birthday, the youth of Region 1 went above and beyond and collected a total of 383 textbooks for donation in just 2 weeks! Months later, *Textbooks For Change* shared pictures on Facebook where Sai Young Adults were able to directly see their donations arrive in Africa and into the hands of grateful students there. This success inspired all regions to take up this initiative in unison in 2016.



“Serve The Planet - Love For Animals”

Canadian Sai Youth

“There is only one royal road for the spiritual journey – LOVE, love, love for ALL beings as manifestations of the SAME DIVINITY that is the very core of oneself” – Sathya Sai Baba

For the Serve The Planet 2016 campaign, Canadian Sai Young Adults campaigned on social media using the hashtags #LoveAllAnimals and #ServeThePlanet to spread their love for all animals across their social networks. More than 100 Canadian young adults in all Regions from coast to coast took part in this initiative.

They each shared their favourite quotes, pictures and messages of love and awareness of animal rights reaching thousands of people across their extended social media networks. The activity continued throughout the month of October, leading up to Serve The Planet Day on October 20th, 2016.

Since Serve The Planet is a public outreach initiative, young adults hoped that by taking the

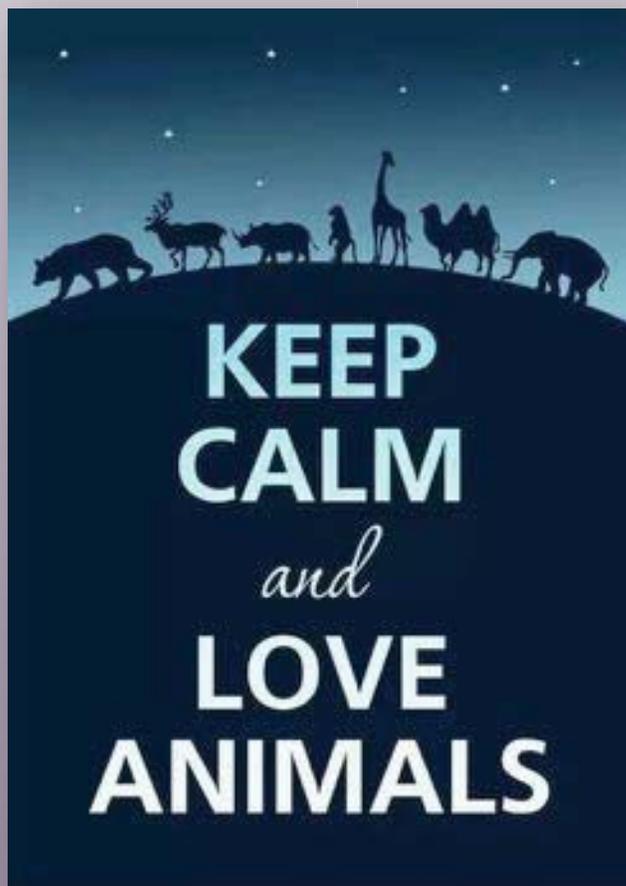


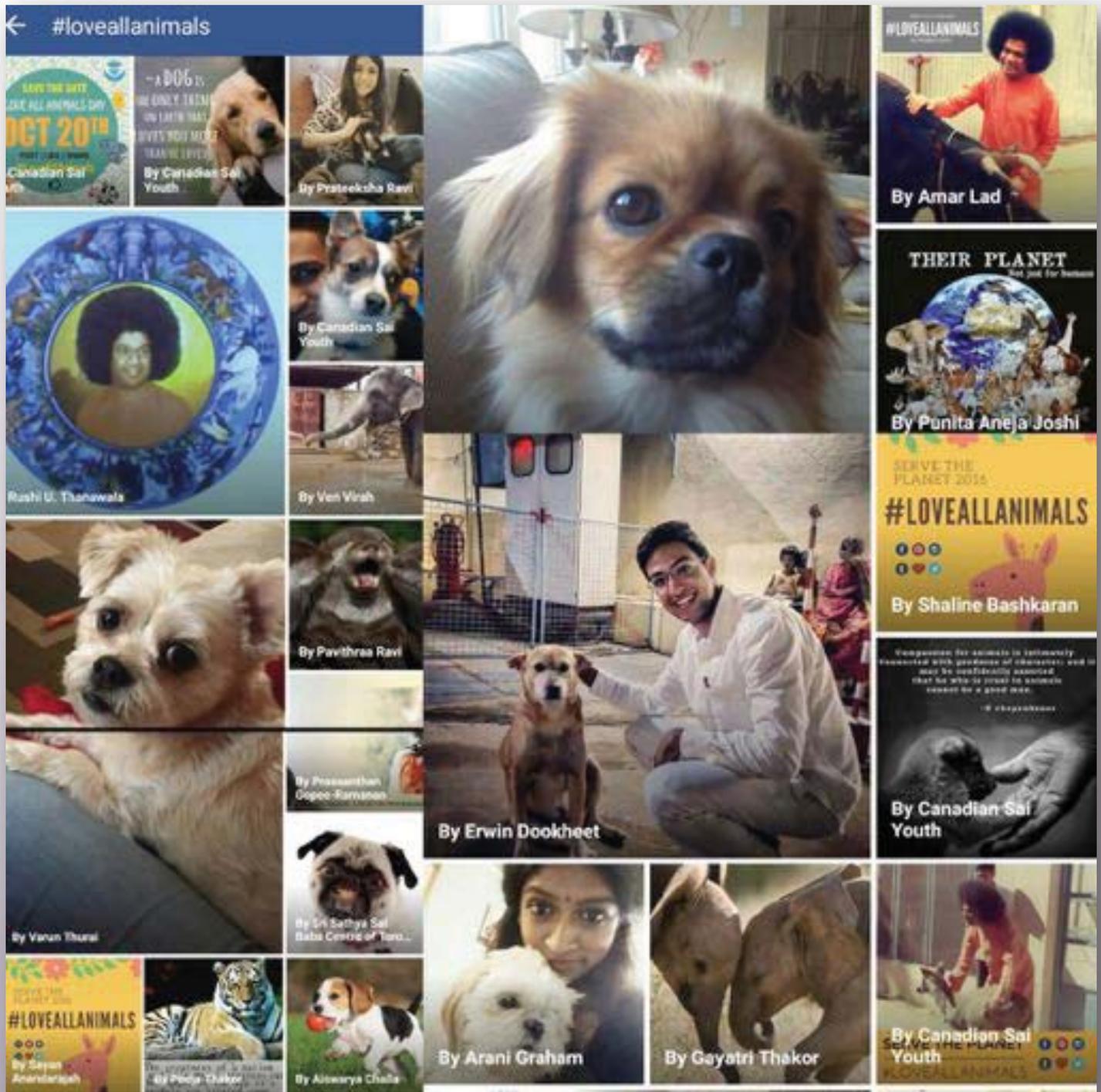
message online, they could engage their friends and members of the public to participate in this global service project of spreading Love For

Animals. Members of the local community joined in on October 20th and shared, posted and reposted pictures with the hashtag #LoveAllAnimals.

One non-Sai devotee who saw Love All Animals campaign also posted a picture of his dog with this message

"#loveallanimals day and I love my Milou".





Post themes centered around combating animal cruelty, loving pets, and promoting vegetarianism. The following are a few of the quotes and notes shared by Canadian Sai Youths:

*"Hey Everyone! Today is Love all Animals Day!!
Post a photo of your favourite animal and use the*

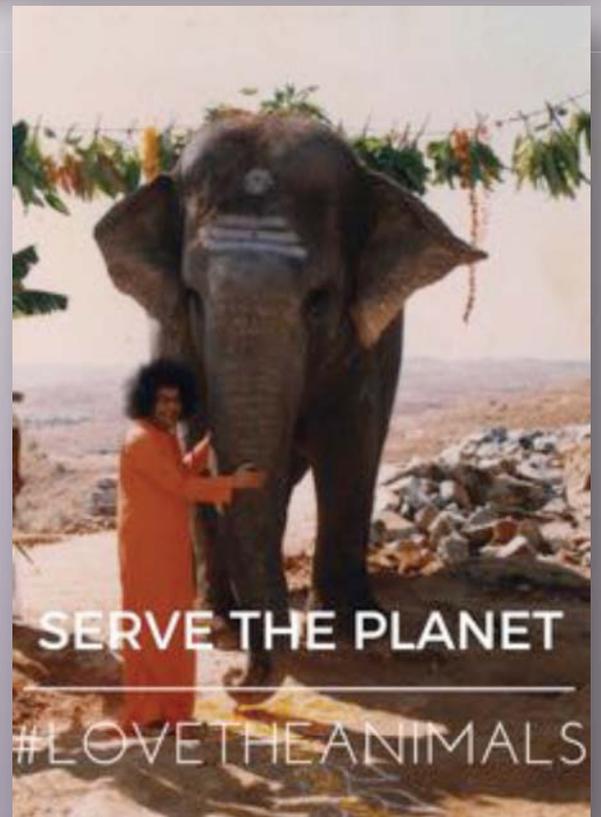
*#loveallanimals hashtag to spread the message!!
"The greatness of a nation & its moral progress can
be judged by the way its animals are treated" -
Mahatma Gandhi*

*"An animal's eyes have the power to speak a great
language." - Martin Buber*



*Acronym on Animals: #LoveAllAnimals
Astounding creatures of strength that, give off
positive energy
Never losing hope, always climbing their own rope of
life
Instruments of nature, and can be considered
human-like
Manifesting a sense of oneness i.e Mother bear and
her cub
Achieving the goals of their life by being a part of
nature and divinity
Laying one of the paths to happiness i.e Dog, cat,
rabbit etc.
Special and unique not weak but trying to reach
their peak by being a part of our lives.*

*"Unconditional. #loveallanimals. Thanks for being
you Simba." (Canadian Sai Youth in referring to his
dog)*





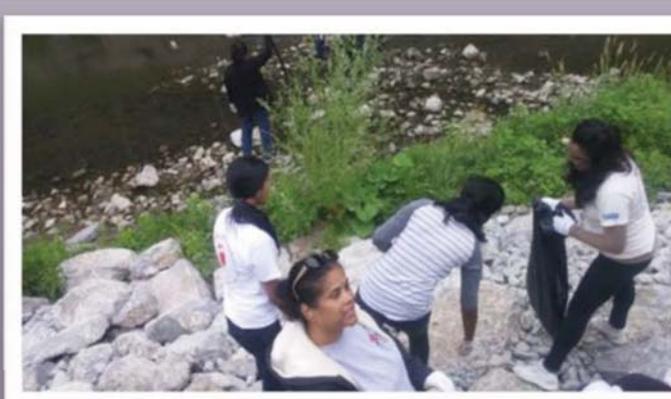
“Shoreline Cleanup”

Ontario Regions 1 and 2

In the summer of 2016, SSIO Canada partnered with the nonprofit organization “Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup” to restore a stretch of the Rouge river. The initiative emerged as a national program in 2002 from the aspirations of a group of employees and volunteers in 1994 from the Vancouver aquarium who took on the ambitious project to cleanup their local beach at Stanley park. The program has provided all Canadians the opportunity to make a difference in their local communities. The objective is to preserve the fragile ecosystems across the nation’s shoreline by removing the litter that has accumulated over the years.

At 9 am on July 16th, 15 Sai youth and 8 adults from Ontario Regions 1 and 2, came together to clean up the pollution found across the shoreline and in the Rouge River. In total, 6 bags of garbage and 4 bags of recycling were collected while covering a distance spanning approximately 2 kilometers across the shoreline. As members of the Sai community, it was heartwarming to see the amount of positive impact after just 2 hours of clean up. The garbage scattered around shorelines and in our waterbodies severely compromise both our health and the health of the environment. Our

contribution that morning provided us with the hope that continued initiatives such as this, spearheaded by every individual, can significantly reduce pollution across the world. The nonprofit organization provided the following feedback and shared their gratitude to SSIO Canada for their participation in the event. Over the past ten years, the organization has seen over a three-fold increase in the number of volunteers and litter that has been



collected. This demonstrates the growing interest among citizens to ensure that we protect and preserve the delicate environment we live in. As Bhagawan once said, "You have it in your power to make your days on Earth a path of flowers, instead of a path of thorns. - Sathya Sai Baba, Baba the Breath of Sai, pg. 153."

".....*We've put together this special year-end Site Coordinator Update just for you. See what you and fellow coordinators accomplished together this year, and read exciting sneak peeks for 2017!*

Sudhakar, at one point this year you decided you wanted to make a difference on your shoreline.

Maybe you wanted to support healthier waterways for wildlife, beautify your beach or park, engage your community, or perhaps you just dislike the sight of litter. For all those wonderful reasons, we're so glad you did! As a Site Coordinator, you're part of a growing team of volunteers across Canada. We're still adding up the data but so far you have:

- *empowered 75,000+ participants*
- *helped organize 2,300 cleanups*
- *filled 17,000+ bags of trash and recycling!*

I can't wait to connect with you in the New Year. Happy holidays!

- Tanya, Volunteer Engagement Coordinator"



Guidelines for Contributions

The objective of this Newsletter is to encourage Sai devotees and their families to understand Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's teachings and His emphasis on transformation. Through your participation, we can share in the process of putting His teachings into practice and realize not only our inner divinity, but the divinity in our fellow beings and the Oneness of all.

Thus, we become Swami's instruments in living the message of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence where ever we are. Articles may include, personal experiences, reports on Sai retreats, workshops, special events such as guest speakers, book reviews, service activities, children's stories and most importantly, stories of transformation. Devotees skilled in art work, photography and graphic design may also contribute. Cartoons are an excellent way of delivering Swami's message visually.

General guidelines: Please communicate by e-mail your own story ideas, or thoughts about what would make this Digital newsletter more interesting for you and all our Sai Brothers and Sisters everywhere. Articles should not exceed 2-1/2 typewritten pages or 900 words. Please include your name, age (for children), gender, email address, phone # and references for all quotes. An MS Word file, emailed to the editor, is preferred. Send relevant high-resolution pictures in jpeg format. EDITOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO SELECT & EDIT THE MATERIAL FOR PUBLICATION.

**Deadline for the Next
Issue August 15, 2017**

