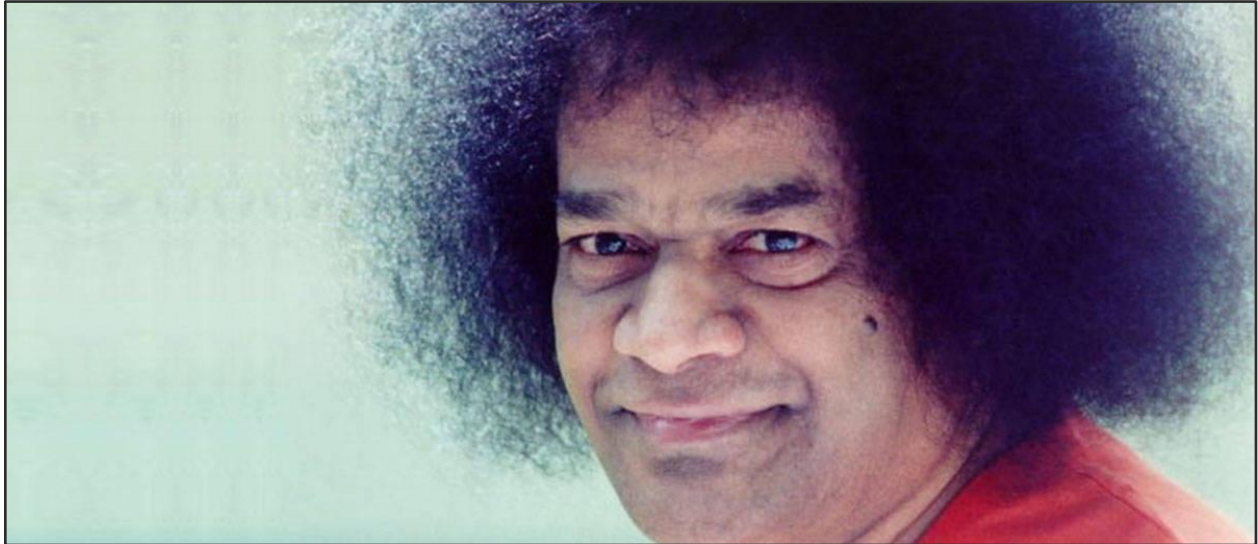

REGION 3 SAI INSPIRES CHALLENGE

A compilation of inspiring quotes by our Dear Lord that have touched Region 3 young adults helping them on their physical, mental and spiritual journeys.



"The future of the country depends on the skill and the sincerity of the youth. Therefore, the necessary enthusiasm and encouragement must be generated among the youth. All my hopes are based on the students, the youth. They are very dear to me." SSS IX (old edition), 34, 184

This has been a quote that has inspired me for a long time and given me motivation to be an active YA. Being a youth right now, I feel that we have so much energy and capabilities and we should use it to our fullest potential in carrying Swami's message forward.

One thing that Sister Aparna Murali mentioned on an eSatsang a few years ago was the acronym **GOT IT - Good Observation and Thinking (leads to) Inspiration and Transformation**. I am really looking forward to hearing what motivates all of you through this activity so we can help each other to lead an inspired life.

Sister Nisha, Atlanta, GA

"God's work will never fail. So, all the work that is done with Divine feelings will never meet with failure. If you fail in your endeavor, it means you do not have Divine feelings. You will always be successful if your feelings are pure and Divine." SSS, Volume 32, Part 1, Chapter 9.

We know that not a blade of grass moves without the will of God. Therefore, all work is God's work. I have recently had difficulty reasoning my way through jumping through hoops in this world of maya. This quote has given me strength by reminding me **everything is sadhana, everything is an offering, everything is divine work**. If I truly believe that, why would I ever give anything less than my best?

Sister Meghana, Greensboro, NC

"The act of service is not to be judged, according to the cost or publicity it entails; it may be only the offering of a cup of water in the depth of a jungle. But the need of the recipient, the mood of the person who offers—these decide whether the act is gold or lead. Fill every act of yours with love. Let no one suffer the slightest pain as a result of your thought, word or deed. Let this be your sadhana (spiritual discipline). It will surely help you to achieve the goal." SSS Volume 7 (1967)

Swami has made it clear that the quality of service is more important than the quantity. When we are rendering service, we should feel that we are serving God, this is why He says '**Service to Man is Service to God**'. Sometimes we may run into obstacles that stand in the way of selfless service, which is ego and attachment and the feeling of doer-ship and enjoyer-ship. In my day to day life, this quote reminds me that I can try to do simple random acts of kindness for people in my community regularly and I shouldn't be anticipating a thank you or anything in return from them in the future.

Brother Yadavan, Raleigh, NC



"In this context I shall recall what I told the students the other day. "Do not walk in front of Me. I may not follow you. Don't walk behind Me. I may not lead you. Walk beside Me and be My friend." If you attempt to walk in front of Me, you may be taking the wrong path. If you walk behind Me, you may possibly desert Me. Walk abreast of Me. Then there is no chance of your going astray or away from Me because I am with you. The inner meaning of this is: "You and I are one." Divinity is omnipresent. The Divinity is the Indweller in every being. That being the case, there is no need for you to go in front or walk behind. Take the Divine with you, wherever you go. This is the true mark of the Sadhaka." Discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on 11-10-1986

I love this quote and this whole discourse because it reminds me how Swami is all of our best friend. When we put Him on a pedestal, then we separate Him from us, but like a mother, **He is with and within every fiber of our being**. We just have to treat Him as our best friend and as part of us, and when we live our life with that mindset then we can truly embody the phrase "YOUR life is my message". This discourse is also a great read because it includes Swami's teachings that are very relevant to the current events we see in the world today - how to deal with injustice we see that happens all around us.

Brother Bharat, Atlanta, GA

"Everyone has to experience ups and downs in life, but they are like passing clouds. Difficulties are a part of life. None can escape them. Hence, one has to treat happiness and sorrow with equanimity. There is pleasure in pain and vice versa. One should not be elated by pleasure nor depressed by pain. We have to develop the spirit of equanimity in order to progress in life." Divine Discourse, November 23, 2005

I often feel like we get so caught up in emotions. I'm not sure if others feel this way, but when I'm upset, angry or frustrated, it consumes me and I can feel the weight and darkness that comes from them. This quote helps me **keep in mind the importance of treating negative and positive things in life equally**. It has helped me learn to treat everything like a passing cloud. Some are dark and scary while others look like they are made of cotton candy. It doesn't matter how bad or good the cloud looks from where you are. All you have to do is observe and know that it will pass.

Brother Hemanth, Atlanta, GA



A Spiritual Voyage through the UNIVERSE

"You and I are ONE!", Swami's divine voice thundered through the Sai Kulwant Hall and Prof. Anil Kumar emphatically declared without catching his breath - "Bhagawan says You and I are ONE!" I was sitting that day in the audience listening to the discourse and really wondered, how can Swami and I be ONE? And I am GOD?! Before I could analyze this further, the whole Kulwant hall clapped to Swami's divine statement. We all looked at each other with great joy, but I felt most did not really understand what He was trying to say. We all have heard this quote of Swami - "You and I are ONE". Enclosed within these 5 words is the most profound truth of all - I AM GOD. Even though I had heard and read this quote several times, it didn't really sink in. After all, my mind is used to gathering information through the sensory world. Becoming God was a very abstract and subtle concept and frankly when there are so many things to keep us entertained (including spiritual stuff), knowing this truth is not usually the number one priority.

Until, one fine day, a few years ago after the Mahasamadhi, God decided to wake me up to this little quote again. It was an ordinary day, perhaps a rough one for me. Few rain clouds in the sky scattered some occasional rain and I was wondering what's the purpose of my life and more importantly where is my place in this vast universe. It didn't feel like a magical day where a giant bearded man in a bike would magically transport me a magical school. Even if he did, it wouldn't really quench my inner thirst.

Little did I know that in few hours, I was going on a grand voyage. After a good meal, I dozed off and wanted a good night's sleep. Suddenly, I found my awareness floating somewhere in the outer atmosphere of Earth. It really startled me- how did I get up here?! Wasn't I just in my house a few moments ago? I could watch the whole earth, as if I was one of those satellites orbiting the earth. The view was breathtaking, and the silence of the space was stunning. I was floating in space without a spacesuit, a tremendous achievement, considering millions of dollars are spent designing those fancy space suits. But what was I doing here? Just to enjoy the view? Before I could think another thought, my body started to drift farther and farther away from

Earth. A feeling of fear enveloped me - "What if I never come back and got lost in space?" but then a calm feeling overcame me that said - "Just enjoy the ride."

I started to move away from Earth and I saw other celestial bodies in our solar system float away from me. I had hardly touched the speed of sound and my body now started to hurl across the space at great speed. Mach 1, mach 2, mach 3... but there was no sonic boom. I must have been way past the speed of sound when planets move past you in a jiffy. The fastest speed travelled by humans was during the historic reentry of Apollo 10 astronauts into Earth, clocking a mind boggling 24,791 miles per hour. I perhaps broke that record very easily as my body accelerated to such tremendous speed without undergoing great G forces on my body. There goes our galaxy and here comes one more past me. Something or someone was pulling me through space, I was waiting eagerly for the mystery to unveil.

The stars looked brilliant and I wanted grab one of them in my pocket, for the purpose of showing it to my friends when I was back home my trip to space. But alas! they moved past me at such tremendous speed that I could not figure out how many were around me. Brilliant celestial bodies of varied hues and colors and the light emanating from them was crystal clear and without any blemishes. The stillness of space was incredible; you could slip into the quietest meditation here.



Now the pace accelerated to such an extent that I knew I was way past the speed of light, as stars looked like streaks of straight light. I almost screamed as I was pulled into a tunnel, perhaps a place where the time and space fabric bent but definitely not a scary black hole. I had no time to analyze but just to witness the voyage. Boom! I opened my eyes and found myself on a different planet. It was not a deserted lonely planet and I needed no special breathing apparatus as the atmosphere and weather was earth like. I found myself on a busy street with buildings that had the elegance and beauty of ancient Greece. The people who walked these streets looked like human beings, but I couldn't really make out if they were indeed human. They certainly had interesting attire, and some wore long white gowns. I was relieved to know they certainly did not look like those creepy aliens from the movies. I had a feeling that this was not Earth. Can it be another Earth like planet on a faraway galaxy? Another realm? Or a parallel universe where I randomly got sucked into, never to return to Earth! Oh my god! thoughts raced my head and perhaps I never missed my planet so much. Before my monkey mind could go into a frenzied overdrive of random hypothetical thinking, I saw a large group of people sitting in an open amphitheater and listening to someone with rapt attention. The gathering seemed benevolent in nature as the general energy of the place reminded of Parthi. People seemed friendly to me, though none greeted me. Captain Kirk from Star Trek would have been impressed with my good fortune of landing on a spectacular earth like planet with friendly people. I wondered why nobody greeted this strange looking human being on their planet? I checked to see if I looked like them – nope good ole' strange looking human being. I then suddenly realized that I was invisible to them. But how? Maybe I was in my higher body on a different planet and they couldn't see me? Again, before I could really understand what was happening around me, I turned out to make the most profound discovery of my cosmic voyage. The entire assembly of people in the amphitheater were looking at one individual give a profound discourse. My heart leaped with great joy to find a familiar being wearing an orange clad robe with a majestic crown of hair, standing on a pedestal and thundering profound truth to the gathering. How could

that be?! Surely my eyes were cheating or perhaps I was really tired after the cosmic journey and needed some rest. I could not restrict the unbounded joy and moved closer. Yes! Yes! Yes! It's Swami! Swami is here! Oh my god! I am saved! May be Neil Armstrong wouldn't have felt such excitement as he stepped off the lunar vehicle to the fine powdery surface of the moon and gazed at the distance Earth floating in the space for the first time. It was definitely a giant leap for my consciousness.

But then I thought – "Swami! You are working here too! Giving discourse and raising their awareness... wow! the whole universe is your office. But what about me Swami?! Why did you bring me here... and who are all these people? Where Am I?" No sooner that Swami had heard my mental chat, He wrapped His discourse. That familiar orange robe and the scent of jasmine, I felt such sense of security. Everyone started to leave the gathering and as always no one noticed me. I didn't even need a cloak of invisibility! I was standing about 20-25 feet away from Swami's table and chair and He gave me that familiar glance that conveyed – 'Ah! Finally you've reached safely here.' Even in this realm or planet, I decided not to approach Swami until He beckoned me to come. Swami then gestured me to come near Him. I sprang towards Him like never before, seeking answers to a thousand questions in my head. But, He had only one answer for them all. He gazed deeply into my eyes with such great love and after what seemed like eternity, turned His face into a stern look. I almost turned into vibhuti as I looked into His fatherly presence. I forgot all about my voyage and why I was transported to this strange new place. He then slowly lifted His right index finger and pointed into my heart and gently touched it. With the fierceness of Lord Shiva, He uttered those 5 words which I had completely forgotten about – "You and I are ONE". This time it really HIT me like a thousand thunderbolts. I took a moment to take a breath and absorb the great energy He was radiating. Then, slowly that fierceness melted away into a love of a thousand mothers. I knew I could never forget this truth; He had planted this seed in my subconscious and watered it with His love. Only He knows when this tiny seed would sprout into a giant life-giving tree.

I thanked Him and before I could say any further, it was time to go. I knew it from His look – "You can always come back, it's always within you." I could only smile with gratitude in my heart.

I barely had time to prepare for my re-entry and I found myself yet again drifting back into space and returning to earth with great speed. I never felt such joy on seeing Earth. Boom! I opened my eyes and found myself sleeping in my little room. I woke up and felt great energy, a familiar feeling after you wake up from a Swami dream. The first thought that came to me – "Wow Swami had to take me on a cosmic voyage to make me understand of this fundamental truth. Swami and I are one, always".



For this Sai Inspires Challenge, for some strange reason I felt a very strong calling to write this down and share this precious experience with all of you. Perhaps I had forgotten again and Swami wanted me to remember this experience again. Every single activity we do, bhajans, seva, study circle, SSE, jam sessions, office work etc. are all here to help us realize this fundamental truth – "You and I are one. I am God."

Sometimes the painful experiences of life are here to awaken us to our inner divinity, our real home. The path to get there is gloriously inscribed on the Mahasamadhi – “Love all, Serve All, Help Ever, Hurt Never”. Through these many different types of sadhana, we are slowly peeling off the many layers to discover our inherent divinity. It’s up to us as to how long we wish to remain oblivious to this truth. One or many hundreds of lifetimes. But what I know for sure is that the universe has been designed in a way that each and every being has to return to ultimately return to God. That is something that we can never comprehend with our minds or words. It has to be experienced.

We are incredibly fortunate that the Avatar of this age, the Cosmic Lion, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is here to awaken us up from this deep slumber of separateness. The one SELF manifested in physical form to help us realize – “You and I are ONE”. We are LOVE, total love and all LOVE. Take a deep breath and feel how we can align our lives to this TRUTH. It’s time to go home, our real home.

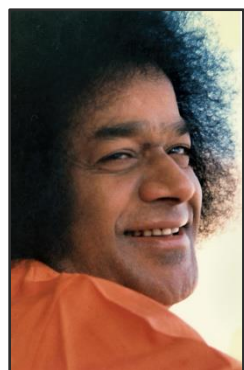
My fellow voyagers, your path is illumined with light of LOVE. March on without fear. From the GOD within me, to the GOD within you, much love. May all beings in the all worlds be happy. Peace.

Brother Sai Santosh, Atlanta, GA

"Cultivate a nearness with me in the heart and it will be rewarded. Then you too will acquire a fraction of that supreme love. This is a great chance. Be confident that you will all be liberated. Know that you are saved. Many hesitate to believe that things will improve, that life will be happy for all and full of joy, and that the golden age will recur. Let me assure you that this divine body (dharmaswarupa) has not come in vain. It will succeed in averting the crisis that has come upon humanity." Divine Discourse, November 23, 1968

Like many of you I continue to feel a little dejected and disgruntled about what is happening around the world and in our communities in recent. And at times I wonder whether the Golden Age is really on the horizon. It seems like we're going in an opposite direction to the peaceful, joyful world we all imagined it to be. But reading Swami's words here really assures me that Swami's will always prevails. **We just have to keep Him in our minds and in our hearts and that will lead to a Golden Age within ourselves!**

Brother Kushal, Huntsville, AL



"The end of education is character."

This quote speaks to me when I was going through school and after. I think it took me 8 or 9 years to get my Bachelor's because 1) I was working full time and 2) I changed my major 2 times. I always wondered what the true meaning of this quote was. I kept saying, well in the end of my education I will have a degree and whatever my major is becomes part of who I am. But this thought changed after I obtained my degree. I'm the first college graduate in my family, it was my mom's wish to see me graduate from college, I felt a sense of pride because every time I wanted to give up I thought about my mom, and I thought about girls and women worldwide who would do anything to be able to go to school let alone obtain a degree. I couldn't give up; I had to work harder for them. Now I finally understand the true meaning. Degree means nothing in this quote. What type of person did I become after 8-9yrs of school? **Has my education helped me become a better person? Has my degree allowed me to serve and help others?** Now I'm teaching English to children in China. And I can finally say YES I feel like I'm helping an serving, making a child smile...doing what Swami would want me to do!

Sister Sira, West Palm Beach, FL



"People today acquire many types of education in this world, but they lack the knowledge of humanness. They see diversity in unity but cannot see unity in diversity. Embodiments of love! It is very easy to see diversity in unity; anyone can do that. But it requires a lot of effort to recognize unity underlying the entire diversity that exists in this world.

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*There is no greatness in all that we do for our individual benefit; whatever we do should be beneficial to society and the community. Our welfare lies in the welfare of society, but, today, nobody thinks about society. Wherever we go, we find selfishness and self-interest rampant. That is why there are so many conflicts and differences in the world.*

*There are divisions even in one family. Due to the increase of differences among people, unity has been shattered. Therefore, strive for unity. You and your neighbor are one. There is difference only in your names, but Divinity immanent in both of you is the same. There is no mistake in calling people by different names when the divine principle of unity is firmly embedded in your heart. Perform your duty as a householder. But this is your worldly duty, and you must recognize your duty as a divine being (daiva dharma), which is universal. That is why I address you as "embodiments of divine Atma (Di- vyatma Swarupulara)." When a man wants to say that what he is saying is absolutely true, he would use the term 'Atma sakshi' meaning Atma is his witness. Therefore, we should conduct ourselves recognizing the principle of Atma." SSS Volume 41*

This discourse stood out to me because lately I've had a lot of changes and personal experiences that shook my judgment on the true meaning of unity. Swami speaks so lovingly and gently about unity and also touches on knowing your worldly duty and also **knowing your atmic duty**.

Brother Atesh, Ft.Lauderdale, FL

*"When all the participants in a bhajan sing in unison, what sacred vibrations are produced and what Divine energies are released! When these vibrations fill the world, what changes cannot they bring about! When one sings alone, the heart is merged in the song. But when many sing together, it acquires a Divine power."*

Happy Akhanda Bhajans Everyone! This prompted me to think about the origin of bhajans itself and why Swami, from all forms of music that exist not only within India, but around the world, chose bhajans as the highest form of devotional expression during His Avatarhood. What is so special about this type of music that no other style, genre or musical expression has? Diving into these thoughts I imagined it's origins in the time of the great Guru Nanak, father of the bhajan singing tradition, and how the key ingredient of this devotional art form is community involvement. **Bhajan is an act that should inspire people to participate, regardless of musical skill or ability.** This reminds me of any Qawwali performance, where on stage, you will see your main singers, your tabla and harmonium players, and a big group of people where it's main job is to accompany by clapping and following. They are the fuel and the source of energy of the musical offering. That's why it is so charged with energy and vibrations. Perhaps this influenced the Bhajan music genre due to its closeness to the region. I feel we should go back to this essence and make of every bhajan session an engrossing experience where everyone fully participates. From the person who leads to the person who sits all the way in the back. If they don't feel inspired to sing and clap their hearts out, we are not doing justice as "musicians" to the chosen mode of devotion chosen by our dear Master. Only then I feel bhajan singing will become an instrument of cleansing and a way to send the so needed vibrations to counteract so many natural disasters happening everywhere.

Brother Andres, Raleigh, NC



*"Welcome hardships to realize the Lord. Only you must have the staunch determination to use this chance to the full. You are near and those who are far are so only with reference to space, not with reference to my Prema. To realize the Lord, you must welcome hardships, trials, and sufferings. You must dwell on the Name and Form steadily and with faith." SSS Volume 5 (1965)*

This quote really stands out to me, because I feel that the challenges I have faced have helped me grow and change for the better. I love this quote, because it reminds me to always have faith that Swami has everything planned out for me, and there's always a reason for everything that happens. I'm thankful for whatever struggles I have faced, because I wouldn't have realized the importance of courage, determination, and faith! No matter how difficult the situation may seem, I believe it's important to remember that even if you think that Swami is far away from you and you feel that He isn't answering your prayers, **He is always there for you, silently helping you evolve along the way.**

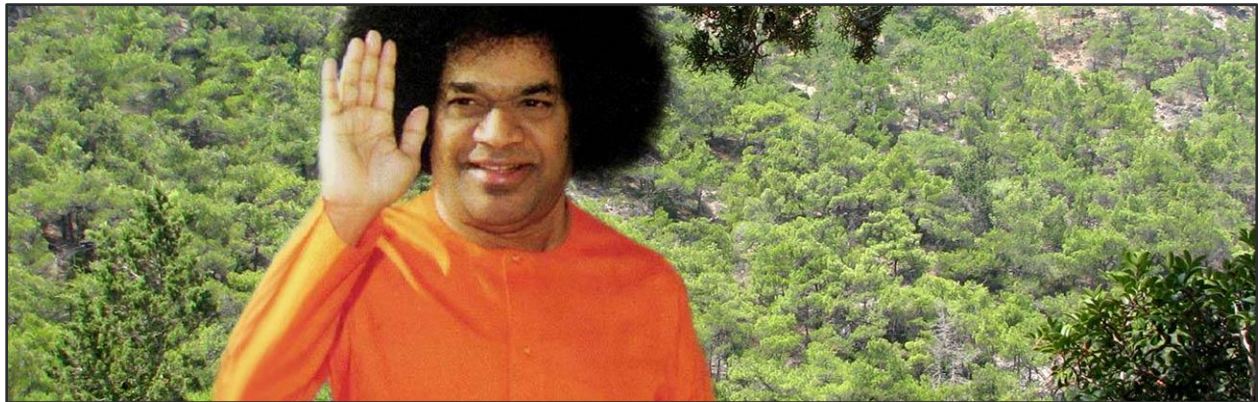
Sister Shivani, Atlanta, GA



*"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."*

I first encountered this quote on my brother's SSE notebook and I didn't think much of it until I started struggling with self-image. Every day, we come across a multitude of individuals with varying personalities and ideologies; however, there are certain people, be it their confidence or prowess in some materialistic skill, who make us feel inferior of ourselves, making us feel the need to impress them by changing ourselves. I verily experienced this recently and realized my foundation of morals began to diminish because of my growing desire to impress certain people. I knew my actions were wrong, but I felt defeated, out of place, and I began to pray to Swami to pull me out of the mess I got myself into. Around the same time, Dr. Shashank Shah came to Raleigh to give a talk. Expressing my doubts, he elaborated that the alteration of self-image should positively contribute to character development or the community, not to further deteriorate the world with unethical practices. This response took me back to this quote; I realized this experience was exactly what Swami meant by **"you draw experiences to yourself that will cleanse yourself of that which does not fit who you are"**. This quote constantly reminds me that I am Swami's child and that makes me unique from the world.

Sister Manasi, Raleigh, NC

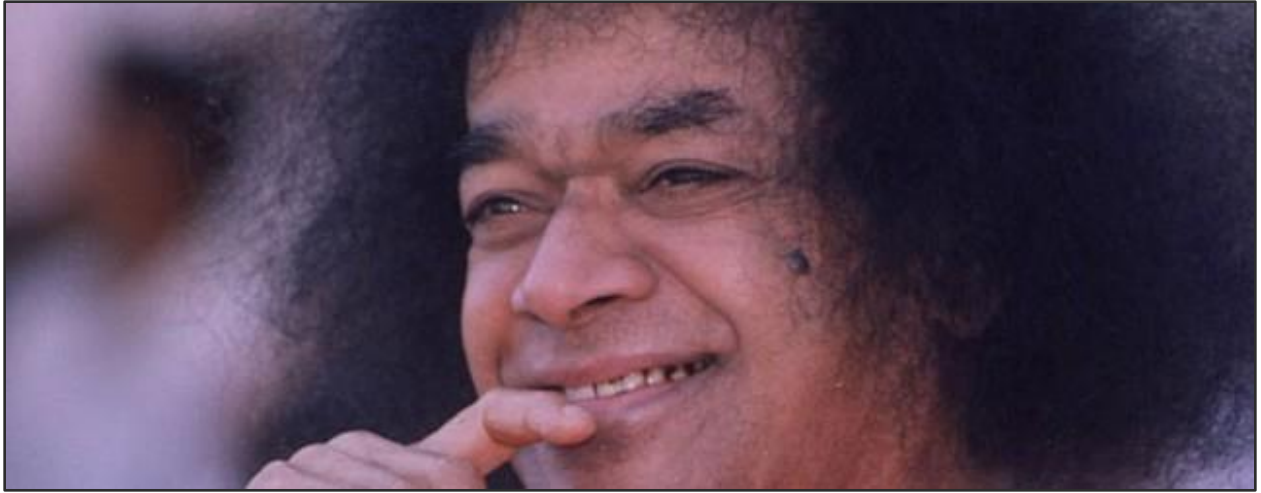


*"Do not get elated at the riches, status, authority, or the intelligence which you are bestowed with. Consider them as signs of His grace, opportunities of service, and symbols of responsibility given to you on trust, so that you may benefit others. Never seek to exult over others' faults; deal empathetically with others' shortcomings and mistakes. Always seek the good in them, hear only good tidings about them and never give ear to scandal. Detachment confers fearlessness and gives strength and courage, for, it is desire that weakens you and makes you cringe before those in authority and with influence. Detachment endows you with self-respect, the capacity to stand up to slander and calumny. Some weep at the slightest sign of defeat or disappointment. This is despicable behaviour. Why should you have fear or sorrow, with the Lord installed in the altar of your heart? He is in all beings, at all times. Do you not know He is there, guarding you and guiding you?" Divine Discourse, October 24, 1965*

I've chosen a thought for the day as my topic and in there Swami speaks about being blessed with all these beautiful things such as intellect, riches, status and authority. He says that all is His grace alone and it is bestowed on us for the service of humanity alone! To deal with others who fall short of their goal very empathetically and the most important thing He said that stood out to me was that **having God installed in your heart why should you have fear of anything, He is always guarding and guiding you!!**

To me this is very important in one's life, we should place God in our hearts and live life through those lens, be compassionate to people who don't see things like you do, think about a different way to explain it to them and lastly with God in your heart, would He not help you through life's challenges. In actuality, God has been doing so much for you and continues to do so. He will defiantly help you! For He always is.

Brother Richie, Ft. Lauderdale, FL



1. *"With the Name as the very breath of your life, you must engage in all life activities, with no fear of a fall. If you make good use of chanting the Lord's name, your life will be sanctified. Whatever work you undertake, do it as an offering to God, chanting His Name. Even while you are walking, think that it is God who is making you walk, since Divinity is present in a subtle form and every atom and cell in this Universe. Unable to recognize this truth, people think, 'I came by walk, I walk so many miles, etc.' Such work comes under the physical realm, not spiritual. Hence whatever you think, speak or do, do it befittingly, considering every work as God's command and God's work. With that attitude chant any divine name wholeheartedly and sanctify your life. Then every activity you undertake will be successful."* Divine Discourse, November 13, 2007

The first quote I love as it was a reminder for me to..SAI—>See Always Inside. This is what I have been working on more than anything. While focusing on God outside, in a picture or temple, in nature or in people, often I get distracted from the God within! And to and forgive yourself, **acceptance of yourself for all that you are is an important sadhana!**

The last six months have been challenging and interesting, on every possible aspect: personal, work, health; but I am happy and keep reminding myself that all that happens is for my good. In all that has come my way, reminding myself that this shall also pass, and I must focus on SAI who is within me, He is my breath, and all that happens as He wills. I must focus on the process and not the outcome.

2. *"Let us grow together, move and learn together, develop intelligence and attain noble goals together, without any conflict and let us live in friendship. This is the true meaning of equality. This equality gives peace. Without equality, there will only be an enmity, differences, and duality. Every day you say Shanti (peace) three times! Say it with a pure heart and say it softly. When there is an enmity in the heart, chanting Shanti mantra will be of no use! Chanting it harshly also nullifies the effect of the chant! Words are not important, the feelings within your heart are important. Hence, perform all spiritual practices with purity of heart. The path of love is the noblest. It may not be possible for you to do Japa (chanting of God's name). You may not be able to make the mind steady in meditation. You may not know the path of yoga. But you can develop love in your heart. The path of love is easy and it is a shortcut."* Divine Discourse, April 7, 1993

The second quote I love because I am grateful for every person who I interest with, I learn and grow from them. Not only Sai family, my patients, my staff.. **when you open your heart and interact with love, your heart also in return is filled with love.** Although the quote says love is a shortcut, it brings me back to the first quote to love for the sake is love and not for any outcome. Love for the joy of sharing, for the smile and laughter, to support and grow with each other. It is our innate nature.

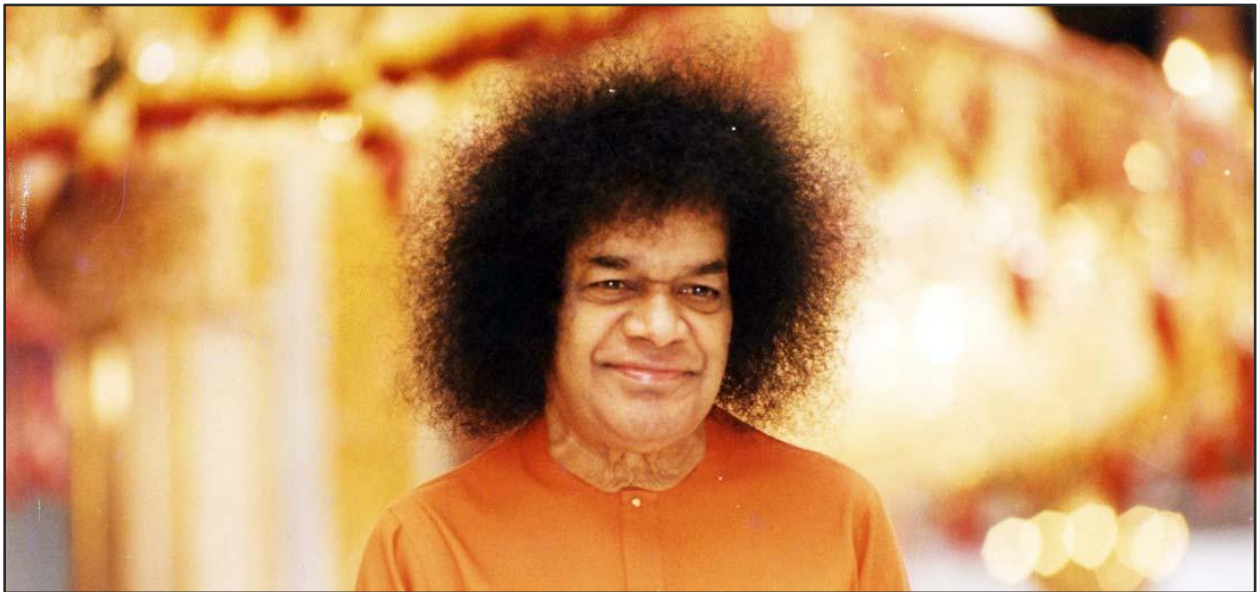
*"Expansion is my life."*

At the end of one Sai Retreat in Minnesota, we were all given bracelets that had "Expansion is my life" written on them and I wore mine for days together before I actually began asking myself: wait what does this mean? I asked my SSE teacher at the time and he said to me I had to experience it to know! At that time, I didn't know what uncle meant but I kept his words tucked in a corner of my mind...

As a high schooler, I held some very rigid beliefs about the world and people around me. Through many painful and many blissful experiences, I soon noticed my rigid beliefs being melted away... as I destroyed my own inner suffocating thoughts I noticed my love for others expanding, my concern for others expanding, my forgiveness towards others expanding, my compassion towards others expanding! Ah! I began to see what Swami may have meant when He said "Expansion is my life" ....

As Rumi said **"Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it."** I think that as we break our barriers we expand, the love within us expands, the Atma consciousness that we are all One expands! And therefore, indeed, expansion is my life.

Sister Kovita, Tampa, FL



*"When the sun rises and shines, not all the lotus buds in the lakes and ponds bloom. Only those that are ready to do, the rest have to bide their time, but all are destined to bloom. All have to fulfill that destiny. There is no need to despair."*

Reading this allowed me to realize that for each of us, **we have our own time and destiny to fulfill our duties and that we should not be comparing ourselves with others.** In my current professional journey, I have many a times been jealous of my colleagues as they have moved ahead in their careers and I feel left behind...and keep questioning what the future holds. I think we need to learn to be patient as one day, we will be that bloomed lotus sitting beautifully in the pond. Just need to keep reminding myself that.

Sister Kirshma, Atlanta, GA



*"It is clear that the leelas of God are inexplicable and infinite. It is ludicrous to seek the whereabouts of the Divine, who is omnipresent. Uttara was one who recognised the omnipresence of God. Recognising her supreme devotion Krishna was prepared to change His plans. People should realise that God responds only to deep and genuine devotion. Verbal supplications will not suffice. The devotee must acquire the yearning that will melt the heart of God. Even butter which is so soft melts only when heat is applied. Likewise, the warmth of Bhakti (love of the Lord) has to be applied to the butter of the human heart to make it melt. It was their intense devotion which made Krishna dwell in the hearts of Gopikas. They became intoxicated. Once, when Krishna disappeared from their midst, they started searching for him everywhere, among the trees and the bushes of Brindavan, oblivious to everything else. Their appeals to the creepers to tell them whether their Krishna was hiding amongst them might seem "hysterical". But it would be a good thing if such "hysterical" love of God filled people's hearts today. The world will be a calmer and better place.*

*Some people talk caustically to Sai devotees saying: "You have gone crazy over Sai Baba". This craziness is sublime madness. There are all kinds of lunatics in the mental hospital, many of whom pose difficult problems for the doctors. If some mad devotee sits in a corner chanting God's name, what a relief he would be to the doctors! If you develop this kind of sublime madness, you will be supremely fortunate indeed! Everyone should be crazy about God. Only then they will get rid of the mad craving for wealth and the things of the world. The craze for money is the cause of all the ills in the world. With the result that the desire for God declines.*

*Because of the craze for riches, all other evil qualities like pride, greed, envy and hatred have grown among mankind. Wealth is, indeed, needed, but it is the wealth of Divine Grace and the treasure of Divine Love. That alone is lasting. All other things are transient." Sathya Sai Speaks: Divine Madness, July 1st 2004*

My favorite topic has always been 'yearning for God.' Even as the thought crosses my mind, I feel overjoyed to be part of Sai's mission. It's our true yearnings in our previous births that we are all a tiny part of this great Sai mission.

I want to come to this birth, when we got to know Swami out of His sheer blessings, we all continue to yearn for His blessings in spite of all worldly attractions and peer pressure. When I was a school student of 12th grade, it was my turn to choose a college I want to be for undergraduate courses. I chose Anantapur as my college. All my friends and relatives were wondering, why would I choose a college in such a remote place in Andhra Pradesh, India. I knew the magnificent of the institution and privilege of being a student. I was determined that I would only be a Sathya Sai student. It was Swami who put that unwavering faith on Him in me.

I was not an extraordinary student, so I gave a very bad entrance exam. I had no hopes based on my examination. In spite of all that I was selected for the final interview. After being selected for the interview an underdog became overconfident. I did really bad in the interview, not to my satisfaction though. I had to wait almost 15 days to know my result after the interview.

The visit to Puttaparthi was my first visit there; I feared that would be my last visit. The two days I spent there was heavenly, the food was delicious, the air was serene. You feel cut off from worldly feelings. There is no hatred, anger, jealousy, or greed. I feel divinely when I am in Prashanthi Nilayam.

On my way back from the ashram to the Darmavaram station, I cried my heart out to Swami. I was yearning to be His student and nothing else. Studies was only a means to be there in His abode. To my surprise, I was selected after the interview and I spent my three beautiful years, only yearning for more of Swami's blessings. My last trip from Prashanthi Nilayam as a student I cried earnestly to Swami to keep me close to Him wherever I went in this big world. He had always kept me tied to Him. I feel great pleasure whenever I meet a Sai family. He never let me go. I want to yearn for His love until I finally merge in Him.

I feel so happy whenever I think about my admission into Swami's college and my three years there. Now I feel elated to share that love with you all. **Let our yearning for Swami never die. Let us all be our Sai Krishna's ever loving Gopikas.**

Sister Anu Priya, Ft. Lauderdale, FL



[This](#) is a video by Aravind Balasubramanya that inspires me. Below is a summary of the video:

*Swami was asking a student what happens to the food that remains from a wedding feast after all the guests, relatives, friends, bride and groom, workers, and even beggars outside the wedding hall have eaten to their satisfaction. Struggling for an answer, the student finally says, "Swami...at that point, the food is just thrown in the dustbin, and some crows and dogs may eat it."*

*Swami said: "When it comes to your love, Swami is like that crow and dog."*

*Aravind: "We offer our heart, our love to everything and everyone in the universe. And when everybody has let go of us, we turn to God and cry out to God, "Oh Swami, where are you? Swami, please come!" Sometimes we don't even do that. Sometimes we just get frustrated and depressed and throw away our lives into the dustbin."*

*So Swami said, "Like that crow and dog I come to the dustbin and scavenge and pick up your lives."*

This message of Swami inspired me because I think especially as youth, we are constantly seeking love and appreciation from those around us - whether it be from friends, parents, bosses, co-workers, interviewers/companies, or people we don't even know that well, like contacts on social media. And when our love is not returned by those people, when we don't feel appreciated or valued by those people, we just feel miserable. But Swami's love for us is the only kind of love that we should care for because it's unconditional, pure and permanent. So as Brother Aravind says in the video: **"How wonderful would it be if instead of making God our last resort, we can make Him our first resort... Instead of offering our lives to people, to friends, to relations, to money, to power, to position, to career, can we not offer it to God?"**

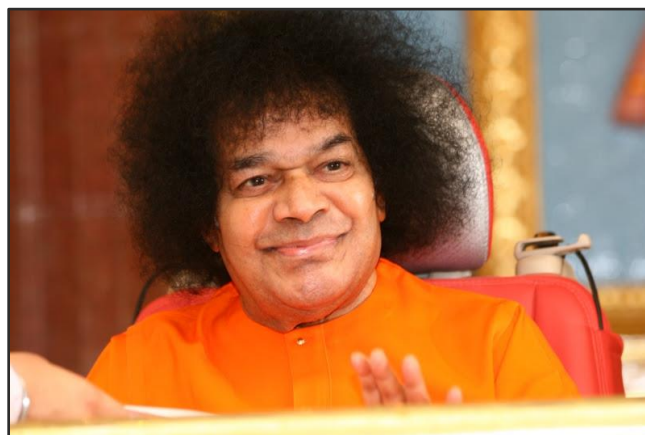
Sister Radhika, Atlanta, GA

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*Swami says "When you look up to God, please leave your logic outside the door of sanctum. Otherwise, you will only get bewilderment and befuddlement. Try using your heart instead!"*

This quote of Swami always reminds me that Swami has a unique way of making us feel His presence around us. **When things are getting out of our control and just a faithful prayer to Him makes things work in most unimaginable way.** As a SSE student, I was taught to completely trust Swami and have full faith in Him-without reasoning with Him. As I grew up, I have experienced many times His unseen hand helping me when I look up to Him. This keeps me motivated as I have Sai Maa with me always.

Sister Neha, Atlanta, GA



*"I separated myself from myself to love myself."*

From my childhood, I always was fascinated by the universe and the sci fi imagination that comes with it. Recently a turn of events in my life led me to realize I can no longer depend on the ever-changing external/superficial validation and attachments and instead it allowed me to realize the impermanent nature of the world. I started to see how the impermanence applied to the broader perspective in the universe. Stars and other cosmic phenomenon like black holes and possible life on other planets and even on our own seemingly came from nothing, became everything, then would be destroyed to nothing... I didn't know how it fit into religion until recently that I had learned that the name Shiva literally meant "that which is not" / "nothingness or emptiness." **When you realize that all of cosmos, from an atom to human to the biggest star in the world all came from nothing yet became everything simply because a Greater Consciousness/Divinity willed it, it really makes you see that there is only one reality - God - and that same Being manifested into different forms like ourselves.** Unity in diversity - simply the Divine that willed itself to become everything from nothing. We are not any different from the rays of the sun or from the water we wash our faces with in the morning. We are not even different from Lord Krishna, Lord Rama or Swami because they are that Divine will/supreme consciousness that came in human form to show us our true nature. It reminds me of the bhajan: "like the sunlight, like the moon bright, always always I'm with you. Like the ocean, like the river, always I'm flowing to you. Like the sky above, so is Divine love always always surrounding you. Like the Earth so fair, like the birds of the air, always I'm caring for you." -- because they are all different forms of the same divine. Hence why I feel Swami says "I separated myself from myself to love myself." To love is our birthright. In this way, I was able to realize that it doesn't matter what people do or what circumstances arise, seeing everything as simply a manifestation that came out of emptiness simply because of a Greater Divine will allow you to see that there is no reason or season to love different forms of the same Divine.

Sister Shruti, Tampa, FL

The following prayer is written on the wall near the entrance to the Western Canteen in Prasanthi Nilayam. It is not a prayer but, instead, instructions on how to surrender. It is attributed to Sathya Sai Baba, but the source is unknown—it has not been found in a discourse or the *Vahinis*.

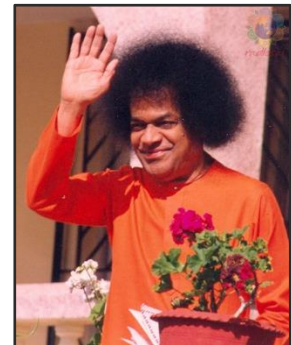
*Why get agitated? Let Me take care of all your business. I shall be the one who will think about them. I am waiting for nothing else than your surrender to Me, and then you do not have to worry anymore about anything. Say farewell to all fears and discouragement.*

*You demonstrate that you do not trust Me. On the contrary, you must rely blindly on Me.*

*To surrender means: To turn your thoughts away from troubles, to turn them away from difficulties that you encounter and from all your problems. Leave everything in My hands saying, "Lord, Thy will be done. Thou think of it." That is to say, "Lord, I thank you, for you have taken everything into your hands, and you will resolve this for my highest good."*

*Remember that thinking of the consequences of a thing is contrary to surrender. That is to say, when you worry that a situation has not had the desired outcome, you demonstrate that you do not believe in My love for you—you prove that you do not consider your life to be under My control and that nothing escapes Me.*

*Never think: How is this to end?... What is going to happen? If you give into this temptation, you demonstrate that you do not trust Me. Do you want Me to deal with it—yes or no? Then you must stop being anxious about it! I shall guide you only if you completely surrender to Me. And when I must lead you on a different path than the one that you expect, I carry you in My arms.*



*What seriously upsets you is your reasoning, your worrying, your obsession, and your will to provide for yourself at any price. I can do so many things when the being, in his material necessities as in his spiritual ones, turns to Me saying, "You think of it," and then closes his eyes and rests quietly. You will receive a lot, but only when your prayer relies fully upon Me. You pray to Me when in pain so that I intervene, but in the way you desire it. You do not rely on Me, but you want Me to adjust to your requests. Don't behave like sick ones who ask for a treatment from the doctor, all the time suggesting it to him. Do not do that, but rather, even in sad circumstances, say, "Lord I praise and thank You for this problem, for this necessity. I pray You to arrange things as You please for this terrestrial, temporal life. You know very well what is best for me."*

*Sometimes, you feel that disasters increase instead of diminish. Do not get agitated. Close your eyes and tell me with faith, "Thy will be done. You think of it." And when you speak thus, I accomplish a miracle when necessary. I think of it only when you trust me totally. I always think of you, but I can help you completely only when you rely fully on Me.*

I have a picture of Swami framed with the message above. This message along with the quote "**Bhagavan is the doer, Man is the instrument**" is something that I ponder on and remind myself at times that gives me confidence, helps me regain strength and keeps me motivated.

Sister Sudeepini, Jacksonville, FL

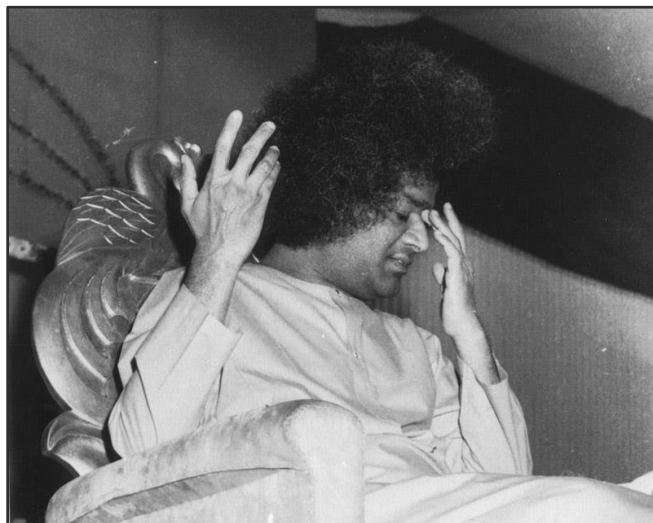
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### *"God is Love, Live in Love"*

There are many paths we can take on this Journey back to Sai. Some use Devotion, some Service, some Education and others a mixture. The underlying current of all these is Love. Swami tells us that the only thing that will ever matter at the end of our lives is how much Love we shared with all of creation. Love is the only thing that is constant. I have experienced that many times throughout my life, whenever I tap into that love from deep within my heart and act from that the result have always been positive. In times of despair or challenges it has reminded me that everything is His Love and everything is happening for the best.

The way I am able to experience the Universal Oneness is by remembering this quote whenever I can.

Brother Omesh, Ft. Lauderdale, FL



JAI SAI RAM!  
~ Region 3 Young Adults – 2018 ~