



Saadhana

*My
Spiritual Journey*

Foreword



Dedicated at the Lotus feet of my Satguru Sri Sathya Sai

The embodiment of God, the Avataar, appears as any other human being, equipped with body, senses, mind etc. The vast difference is in thoughts, feelings, emotions and actions. His love, wisdom, awesome power over the material elements and human circumstances, his teachings and help to the suffering humanity, and an inevitable attraction felt by hundreds and thousands of people spread over almost every country of the world are the reasons why Sri Sathya Sai Baba is held in the extraordinary veneration of Poorna Avataar, and worshipped.

In the ordinary human beings also the Divine exists as the core and can manifest, but it requires transforming the deeper instincts and impulses into utmost purity. The Spiritual Disciplines, the Saadhana, in the form of Pooja, or meditation on God, or service to others, are not only our obligatory duty, the dharma, but also the ways to bring that transformation in us.

I hope you children continue your spiritual journey till you witness your own transformation into a Higher Self. Don't stop till you reach that goal.

Whenever you get little leisure do not waste it in sense gratification through worldly activities, but utilize it for connecting to God. Have faith in God, the Giver of All, the only Treasure you need; He will fill you with contentment.

Dolly Baile "Shivangini"

My spiritual journey is important because

“Worldly Education and Spiritual Education are like two wings of a bird, the bird can soar high only when both wings are strong.”

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“Attending religious classes is the beginning of Education but for completion one must study it deeply, reflect on the contents, absorb the meaning so that one can practice what one has learned.”

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“ I can't get off the train before I reach my destination”

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The purpose of my spiritual journey is
“to provide me with an education that while cultivating my intelligence, will purify my impulses and emotions and equip me with the physical and mental disciplines needed to draw on the springs of calmness and joy in my own heart. By Saadhana (spiritual disciplines like prayers, worship, meditation, study of holy books, chanting mantras etc.) as well as by contacts with sages, saints and spiritual heroes and heroines I will be able to foster my higher nature(the real me). This will place me on the path of self-confidence, control of mind, control of desires, ability to choose right from wrong, ability to serve others in need with an attitude of love and thus derive self-satisfaction and happiness from within. When I grow up my spiritual foundation will allow me to build a happy home, a prosperous community and contribute towards the peace of my nation. I want to become a source of joy, peace and happiness for my family, friends, relatives, and others in the community and society.”

To reach spiritual goal I must do the following

- I must practice the virtues/values of Truth, Dharma, Peace, Love, and Non-Violence.
- I must work on self-improvement and slowly get rid of any tendency of anger, jealousy, envy, hatred, wrong desires, and arrogance.
- I must get into the habit of praying to God before beginning any work (big or small, important or unimportant).
- I must spend, daily, at least 15 minutes reading the Holy Scriptures.
- I must join in the Poojas.
- I must take every opportunity to serve any one who is needy or stressed. I must do this in the spirit of love and without any expectation of rewards.
- I must choose my friends carefully so that I can stay away from evil. May God keep me away from the bad and give me the company of good.

How do I relate to God when I can't even see Him?

God is not a far away tyrant or a taskmaster, He is present in every inch of space including the space in our own bodies. We can feel His presence in our life when we become pure, when we serve his children with love (since he lives in every heart). In fact if we have a true love for Him, we can even see Him. But that requires doing lot of Prayers, Poojas, Meditations. It is like saying we can see a microbe with the help of a microscope, same way to see Divine we need divine eyes which we get by first becoming deserving.

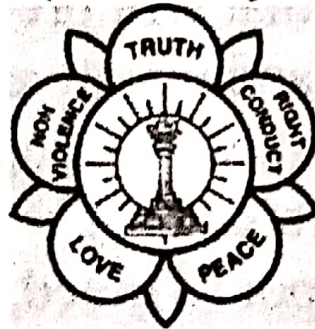
Remember in Bhagvad Gita Arjuna was able to see the cosmic form of Lord Krishna. Through constant remembrance of God we can get real closeness with God. Aren't our best friends those who we hang out most with. When we develop the desire to hang out more and more with God, then He becomes our nearest and dearest friend.

Think of it this way, fortunately you have a fire place in the house which can keep you warm and comfortable in the cold winter nights. But, if you are too lazy to start the fire or if you don't go close enough to get the heat from the fireplace, either way you will not get the warmth that you need. Same way God is available to each one of us, we need to start the fire by Saadhana and then do it long enough to get the heat.

Have the desire to think of Him, talk to Him. Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas of Hindu religion and holy scriptures of other religions teach us exactly how to properly address God. Few daily prayers are included in this booklet. Let us make Him our nearest and dearest, this friend will never forsake you.

Where do I begin my Saadhana?

Begin your saadhana with self improvement. The bad qualities are many like the hundred Kaurava brothers of Bhagvad Gita and the good qualities of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prem and Ahimsa are the five good Pandva brothers. So practice the Human Values that you have learned in the class (refer to your brochure) .



“Love in thought is Truth,
Love in action is Right Conduct,
Love in understanding is Peace,
Love in feeling is Nonviolence.”

Saadhana must be done in a disciplined systematic manner in an atmosphere of virtue. Just the way fans in summer cool the atmosphere and make your living comfortable, the fans of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema are necessary to reduce the heat of Ignorance, Falsehood, Injustice and Indiscipline. Then only you can continue your spiritual journey comfortably. These five values are the hallmarks of a purified heart, a heart where God enshrines and manifests.

How do I get rid of my lower tendencies?

The clay becomes soft when water is added, but when it evaporates, it is rendered as hard as formerly; the mind becomes soft when it hears or reads religious teachings, but when we move away the effect is lost. So daily disciplines are a must.

Get into the habit of offering all thoughts words and actions to God that will prevent lot of loose talks, bad thoughts and negative actions.

Food affects the quality of thoughts. Eat saatvic food and pray before you eat.

Egoism is the seed pot of greed, envy, anger, malice, conceit and a host of other down-dragging tendencies. Ego thrives on the 'I'ness and 'My' ness. Too much affection leads to attachment, attachment leads to expectations and desires, expectations and desires when insufficiently met cause jealousy and envy, when not met they cause anger and hatred.

Enshrine love in your heart, make it universal, not limited to I and My (things or people). Your love should be free from selfish desires.

Live by the motto: "Love All, Serve All"

"Help Ever, Hurt Never"

Through love and service, mind is cleared of Ego and the God is reflected therein.

*Is it sufficient to follow Human Values or
do I also need to pray?*

A college degree makes one eligible for a job but to get a job one needs to go through a job hunting process which includes looking for job vacancies, submitting applications, getting interviews, finally getting selected etc. Similarly virtues and purity makes one eligible for God's grace but to get the grace we need to follow some Spiritual Saadhanas like Prayers, Poojas, Meditations, Singing Bhajans, Reading Holy books, doing Selfless Service .

Does God respond to prayers?

It is said that Lord accepts a heart without words. But He will not accept words and prayers that do not come from the heart. God responds and His response can be: Yes, No or May Be. We are not always given what we ask, but we get what we need and deserve. On these lines I came across this poem:

I asked for strength, and God gave me difficulties to make me strong
I asked for wisdom and God gave me problems to solve.
I asked for prosperity and God gave me brain and brawn to work.
I asked for courage and God gave me danger to overcome.
I asked for love and God gave me troubled people to help.
I asked for favors and God gave me opportunities.
I received nothing I wanted, I received everything I needed.

Are there ways to make my prayers effective?

- I know that the sound of Mantras (the sacred formulas) have the power of transforming the impulses and tendencies. If I understand the meaning, I will realize the full benefit of the mantra.
- My thoughts, resolutions, hopes and desires expressed in prayers must arise from firm faith.
- Visiting temples without thoughts of God and breaking coconuts before idols without purity of the heart are spiritually useless.
- My concentration during all forms of saadhana needs to be intense. I should not allow other distractions and wandering mind to rob me of the potential benefit.
- I should do systematic saadhana, follow the path laid out by my spiritual teacher. Understand what and how to do something before starting. I should pay attention to accuracy.
- I should not keep calculating the number of hours I spent in various kinds of saadhana. But make sure that whatever effort I make it is genuine and my appeal to God is emanating from unselfish love.

What should be my daily prayers?

Every religion offers a wide selection of prayers. The number of prayers in Hindu religion alone can be mind boggling. To make it simple and easy, at this stage and age of your life, following few are recommended as starters. Based on your progress you can get more or different prayers added to your saadhana

At Dawn and Dusk repeat the following mantra, 3 or 9 times.

“Aum, Bhoor Bhuvaha Suvaha
Thath Savitur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi
Dhiyo Yo-Naha, Prachodayaath”

[Rig Veda: III Mandaala, 60th Sutra, 10th Mantra]
This mantra is called Gaayatri Mantra. It is a powerful mantra from Rig Veda. This mantra was revealed to sage Vishwamitra by the Divine.

The word Gaayatri means that which protects. So the power of this mantra protects our life forces, speech and the intellect.

Meaning of the mantra:

I meditate on that effulgent divine reality who has created this physical, astral and heavenly spheres of existence ...who is excellent to be worshipped ...who in the form of sun removes the darkness of the universe. May He enlighten my intellect.

Prayer before eating food

“Brahmarpanam Brahmahavir
Brahmagno Brahmanahutham
Brahmaiva Thena Ganthavyam
Brahmakarma Samaadhinaha”.

[Bhagvad Gita: IV.24]

Meaning of the mantra:

Everything is an offering to God (or call it Divine);

Provisions used for food are Divine;

The fire which cooks the food is Divine;

The process of cooking is Divine;

The person who consumes the food is Divine;

The food enables us to work and the work is also Divine.

“Aham Vaishvanaro Bhutva

Praaninaam Dehamashritah

Praanapaan samayuktah

Pachaami annam chaturvidham”

[Bhagvad Gita: XV, 14]

Meaning of the Mantra:

Becoming the fire in the bodies of living creatures and mingling with inhalation and exhalation, I (the Lord) digest the food four ways.

When in a hurry, or in the company of talkative friends where no one prays before eating, or you feel embarrassed to pray in front of others, at those occasions do either one of the following brief prayers:

“God please purify and sanctify this food”

Or “Sri Krishna Arpanam Astu”

Prayer while going to school

“Hey Saraswati Devi Para Devi
Veena Pusthak Dhaarini
Shveyth Hanse Samaasina
Vidhyaam Budhim cha Yachathu”

Meaning of Mantra:

The Goddess of knowledge, the heavenly goddess, through the medium of sound energy, books, and the power of discrimination please bless me with good education and intelligence.

*Prayers before taking tests or exams or
starting any worthwhile task*

“Om, Sri Vakrathund Maha Kaay
Koti Surya Samaprabha
Nirvighanam Kurumey Deva
Sarv Kaaryeshu Sarvada”

Meaning of the mantra:

O Lord Ganesh, who is with a bent trunk and a huge body, and whose luster is equal to that of ten million Suns, please remove all obstacles from the work I am undertaking and help me complete it successfully.

Bedtime prayer and meditation

Young children and teenagers should do a combination of brief prayer and brief meditation at bedtime.

There are three stages in meditation: concentration, contemplation and samaadhi. At bedtime I need to focus only on the concentration stage of meditation.

What is concentration in meditation: say if I want to read newspaper my hands hold the paper, my eyes look at the printed contents, my mind tries to grasp the contents and my intellect tries to understand and digest the essence of the news. Thus for concentration in worldly activities I have to gear all my senses into action. In meditation I have to put my senses out of action, meaning transcend the senses. I have to forget about seeing, holding, thinking etc. So the best way to achieve that kind of concentration is to find a quiet spot, sit down in the lotus posture (we have learned this in the class), close my eyes, breath deeply and slowly recite God's name of my choice. For Hindu children "Om Sri Ram" or "Om Sri Sai Ram" are good choices. I need to recite the above mantra at least 21 times, this will unwind , bring concentration and give me peace. I should conclude my meditation with following :

" Asato Ma Sadgamaya
Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya
Mrityorma Amritam Gamaya
Aum Shantihi Shantihi Shantihi"

Meaning of mantra:

Lead me from untruth to Truth, from darkness to Light, from death to immortality. Let there be peace at physical mental and soul level.

Reading holy books for 15 minutes each day is doable but exactly what should I read?

- I can choose religious magazines or holy books pertaining to my own religion. For Hinduism to begin with I can look into
 - Monthly magazines like “Hinduism Today” or “Sanathan Saarathi” or “Little flowers at your feet (for youth groups)” etc.
 - I can read life stories of saints and sages describing their spiritual efforts & achievements.
 - Moral tales from epic Ramayan and Maha-bhaarath are good. For young children comics are available.
 - For developing love for God I should read Srimad Bhagvatam.
 - Vedas, Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and Bhagavad Gita are great books but they need much bigger commitment than 15 minutes a day and also at my age I may not be able to understand them without help.
- I cannot finish reading much in 15 minutes but everyday I should read 15 minutes from the same book till finished.

I don't understand what goes on in Poojas.

Most Pooja rituals have following 16 steps. Get the general feel for their real meaning then you will be able to participate, enjoy, make your parents happy and receive both parents and God's blessings.

1. Invite the God- **Aavahana** - invoke the God
2. Offer a seat-**Aasana**- offer your heart as seat.
3. Washing the feet-**Paadya**--your devotion on the feet of God
4. Washing the hands-**Arghya**-putting yourself in the hands of God
5. Water for drinking-**Aachamaniyam**-desire to be one with God
6. Ceremonial bathing (with 5 nectar like items milk, honey, curds, clarified butter, and sugar)-**Abhishekam** - offering oneself to God with character and qualities which are pure and sweet
7. Sacred thread- **Janevu**-to be filled with pure thoughts
8. New and beautiful cloths-**Vastra**-donning oneself with divine wisdom
9. Applying sandalwood paste and kumkum - **Vilepana**-fragrance of noble qualities.
10. Offering flowers- **Pushpa**- offering pure and fragrant heart.
11. Burning incense - **Dhupam** - burning sins by the fire of wisdom
12. Lighting the wick light lamp-**Dipam**-oneself becoming the beacon light and moving upwards.
13. Offering of food-**Naivedyam** - merger with God
14. Clockwise circumambulation of God-**Pradakshina**-making soul the center of all actions.
15. Offering flowers and sanctified rice grains-**Mantrapushpa**-for world peace.
16. Offering resting place/bed/swing-**Shayya**- prayer to Him for making your heart His abode.

What else do I need to do on this journey?

- I learned in the Bhagvad Gita class that for every age and stage of life we have prescribed set of principles/ obligatory duties called Dharma. We have individual dharma, dharma towards our families and dharma towards the society we live in. At my stage I must follow the dharma of a student, dharma of a son or daughter (as applicable), dharma of a good neighbor and a citizen (refer to righteousness section of your Human values brochure from last year).
- I must always have calm thoughts. Disciplined mind gives real strength and happiness. Although it is not easy to gain perfect control over mind, but I will continue to strive till I reach there.
- Even if calamity befalls, I should not loose heart, I must stay pure, calm and full of courage. No weeping for the past and no faltering in the performance of the task at hand. Gladly and courageously I must deal with the ups and downs of life. I should try to overcome difficulties or avoid them in an atmosphere of peace. Haste and worry will confuse my intelligence.
- I must know that only efforts are in my hands the results are in the hands of God. Good actions result in good consequences and bad actions result in bad consequences. Sometimes good actions don't generate desired results in those situations I must have enough faith in the wisdom of God that with calm resignation I can say there must be a reason that He did not give the result I wanted.

How important is it that my friends and I have similar values?

A cup of water when poured into ten glasses of milk it acquires the value that people attach to milk. If on the other hand one-cup milk is poured into ten cups of water it loses the value it had and is condemned as useless. So the company I join must have higher ideals of virtue and truth.

I can become good or bad by the company I keep. If I get into sacred company I will also acquire sacred qualities. The friendship and conversation of the undesirable appear sweet in the early stages but the effect is only pollution of mind and heart. When a smoker joins the company of a non-smoker there is very likelihood of his giving up that bad habit but when a non-smoker falls into a den of smokers he is certain to become a victim soon. Such is the subtle influence of the company one keeps.

I must take all the trouble and have all the patience needed to seek good company (the sathsang) and remain therein. Human birth is precious I must not waste in wrongdoing. Only in human birth I have the opportunity to live in full glory and dignity as a true human and further elevate myself to the inner divinity.

Seva (Selfless Service)

I must seek every chance to help others with an unselfish attitude of love, compassion and sacrifice.

seva begins at home:

I can be helpful to my parents in the house work. I can help my younger brothers and sisters with their home work or help stop them from getting into wrong habits, or guide them if they need it, help cheer them up if they are sad. Never loose an opportunity to use my skills and enthusiasm for the alleviation of sorrow, pain and distress.

service to society

I must necessarily have three essential qualities of discipline, devotion and duty. It is only when I have these three qualities, that I will become useful to society.

Whatever I do as service, to whomsoever I offer the act, I must believe that it reaches the God in that person. An opportunity to be of some service to fellow-men comes to us as a gift from God.

Note: Read the handout that Shivangini gave you on November 23rd, 2002 titled "Thus Spake Bhagwan on Seva, 108 Precious Gems on Seva"

Signs of progress in my journey

- There will be unity in my thoughts, words and deeds.
- I will act humble, simple, morally good.
- Others will regard me as person with integrity and excellent character.
- I will be able to practice my own religion while respecting others religion.
- I will not be criticizing and back biting, even when I am unable to respect.
- I will understand and support the unity of all religions.
- I will show full respect in my speech and mannerism to my parents, teachers and elders. I know that they all are not perfect but they are more knowledgeable /superior/senior/ or distinguished than me. They deserve my love and respect.
- I will be frugal in use of my time, energy, money and knowledge.
- I will radiate courage, joy and hope in my habits, manners and behaviors.
- I will be willing to sacrifice for the greater good.
- I will be willing to compromise my ambitions rather than my higher ideals.
- I will fulfill my obligatory duties with love, righteousness, and without expectations of rewards

*Inspiration for my journey - the teachings
of Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

*Transform the society from false to real values. High
level of thinking on the basis of humility, morality,
compassion and detachment should become our ideal
instead of the high standard of living.*

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*To rouse the latent divinity we must put a ceiling on our
desires and conquer the greed for pleasures and luxury.*

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*Education must impart elevating ideals and kindle the
lamp of wisdom. Character is the most precious gift of
education.*

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*Politics without principle,
education without character,
science without humanity,
and commerce without morality
are not only useless but positively dangerous.*

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Unity in Diversity

*“There is only one religion, the religion of Love.
There is only one language, the language of Heart.
There is only one caste, the caste of Humanity.
There is only one God, and He is omnipresent.”*

*Inspiration for my journey - the teachings
of Sri Sathya Sai Baba (contd.)*

*Love and dedication,
Dedication and knowledge,
Knowledge and Meditation,
Meditation and Practice,
Practice and success
Are inseparable.....*

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*Start your day with love,
Fill your day with love,
End your day with love,
That is the way to God.*

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Love All Serve All.

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Help Ever, Hurt Never.

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*Life is a challenge meet it.
Life is a game, play it.
Life is love enjoy it.
Life is a dream realize it*

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*Pleasant Untruth and Unpleasant Truth, both must be
avoided.*

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*Ego lives by getting and forgetting,
Love lives by giving and forgiving.*

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*Inspiration for my journey - the teachings
of Sri Sathya Sai Baba (contd.)*

Love in thought is Truth,
Love in action is Right Conduct,
Love in understanding is Peace,
Love in feeling is Nonviolence.

-----O-----

Put the new generation on the path of truth,
righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence.
Through the motto ---work is worship, and duty
is God---realize the new social order of purity,
unity and divinity.

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Let the different faiths exist, let them flourish, let
the glory of God be sung in all the languages in a
variety of tunes. Respect the difference between
the faiths and recognize them as valid so far as
they do no extinguish the flame of unity.

-----O-----

“There is only one religion, the religion of Love.
There is only one language, the language of
Heart.

There is only one caste, the caste of Humanity.
There is only one God, and He is omnipresent.”

-----O-----

*Inspiration for my journey - the teachings
of Sri Sathya Sai Baba (contd.)*

Use your body and senses to perform actions
which help others in their physical, mental and
spiritual well being.

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Individual is a part of the society, it draws a lot
from the society, pay your proper dues by giving
yourself back to the society in the spirit of love,
co-operation and service.

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Don't waste your precious human life in living
just for 'me' and 'mine'.

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At the end of everyday ask yourself ---How
many little or big opportunities God sent my way
to make someone happy? Was I able to manifest
my divinity through my love and right action?

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The Nine-Point Code of Conduct of Sri Sai

1. Daily meditation and prayer.
2. Group devotional singing or prayer with family members once a week.
3. Participation in Sai Spiritual Education by children of the family.
4. Participation in community service work.
5. Regular attendance of Bhajan and Sathsang.
6. Regular study of Holy Scriptures.
7. The use of soft, loving speech with everyone.
8. Not speaking ill of others, especially in their absence.
9. Practice placing a ceiling on desires. Strive to eliminate the tendency to waste time, money, food and energy and utilize the savings for service to humanity.

The Ten Guiding Principles of Sai Bhagwan

1. Love and Serve your Country. Do not be critical of others' countries.
2. Honor and respect all religions as pathways to God.
3. Love all humanity as part of your family.
4. Keep home and surroundings clean.
5. Help the needy with food, clothing and shelter. Help them become self reliant when possible.
6. Be examples of honesty. Do not participate in any corruption such as bribery.
7. Curb jealousy, hatred and envy.
8. Develop self-reliance. Your own work you must do yourself.
9. Observe your country's laws and be exemplary citizens.
10. Adore God, abhor sin.

Can you Name the religion that corresponds with each of these symbols?



(500+ BCE)



(500 BCE)



(420 BCE)



(440 CE)



(30+CE)



(622 CE)



(1500 CE)



(1866 CE)



(4000+BCE)



(2000 BCE)



(1000 BCE)



(535 BCE)



My take away message

First I need to tend my parents with love, reverence and gratitude.

Second, *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara*, I should speak the truth and act virtuously.

Third, whenever I have a few moments to spare, I should repeat the name of the Lord, with the form in my mind.

Fourth, I should never indulge in talking ill of others and should not try to discover fault in others.

Fifth, I should not cause pain to others in any form.

Finally

“Be steady in Saadhana, and never hesitate once you have decided on it. When the bus is moving on, the dust will be floating behind as a cloud; it is only when it stops with a jerk that the dust will envelop the faces of the passengers. So keep moving, keep steadily engaged in Saadhana. Then, the cloudy dust of this world will not cover your face.”

Om Sri Sai Ram!

At your feet Dear Lord we
pray,
Bless us with your Love
this day.