

Tribute

## Tribute to the First Chancellor: A Life Well-Fulfilled

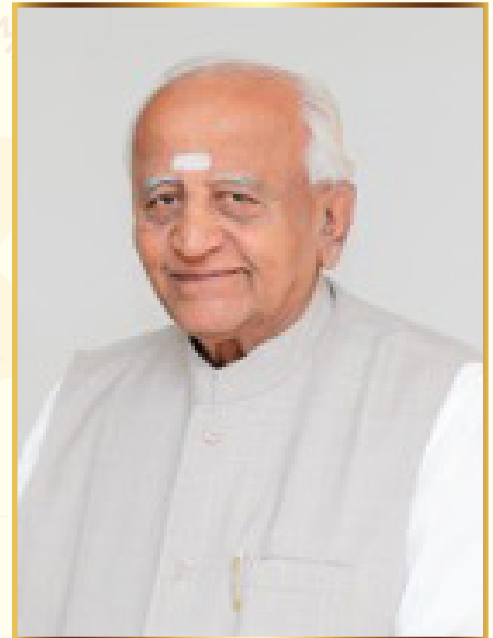
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*"To be instrumenting God's Will is the greatest of all human endeavours. Sri B N Narasimhamurthy, has instrumented the will of the divine ever since he was 21, and continues to do so as he turned 80 this year. His life is a saga of service to the students whom he mentored and guided all his life and continues to do so even now. Unencumbered by marital obligations, he remained dedicated to the cause of selfless service and is an inspiration to the younger generations. An engineer by training but a born philosopher, a prolific writer, a voracious reader with an elephantine memory by nature, I consider it a privilege to offer a few words of tribute to his life's works and legacy."*

—Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai



**Chancellor Sri B. N. Narasimhamurthy**

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Bestha Narasimah Narasimha (BNN) Murthy was born on 18th of August, 1945 to Narasimaiah and Gangarajamma Murthy in the small town of Chikkaballapur in Karnataka State in India. His father was brilliant in mathematics and had cultivated a deep interest in astrology, while serving as a revenue officer for the state government. His mother was a kind and compassionate homemaker who always held helping the needy as a very high ideal. Murthy Anna ("ah-na" meaning brother, as he came to be known) credits his father for the gift of his intelligence, as he developed a photographic memory, and was brilliant in all aspects of learning and teaching. He credits his mother for the gift of a tender heart focused on service and the welfare of those in need. At the age of six, Murthy Anna was introduced to Sanskrit which he studied early every morning for many years. The rote memorization this entailed is credited with

developing his truly remarkable eidetic memory. To this day, Murthy argues that any child can develop this type of memory if introduced to the discipline and practice involved in learning the structure and sounds of this language at an early age.

Murthy Anna's intellectual gifts were recognized in early life as he did exceptionally well in school, achieving a high rank and being able to go to the college of his choice. As was the custom in those days, his family decided a professional future for him, and he went to the undergraduate engineering school in Bangalore as it was relatively close to his family home. During this time, he encountered an important figure who became both a mentor and a teacher. This man regularly came to Bangalore and led the *'Thinkers' Forum'* monthly sessions for college youth. He was solely responsible for weaning the young Murthy from his Marxist leanings to those in line with the deeper Indian Culture. This visionary was Madiyal Narayana Bhat, who had founded a famous school at a village – Alike in a coastal district of Karnataka. In those days, this school imparted high quality education to rural children who otherwise might not have any access to education. The school also attracted students from all over the state who stayed on the campus in the hostels there. A powerful figure in the state both spiritually and socially, Narayana Bhat helped Murthy Anna to blend his soft heart with serving hands, while making the most of his talented mind. Murthy carried forth this combination of *"head, heart, and hands"* throughout his profession in the education sector, inspiring students of all ages.

Bhat introduced Murthy to his venerated Guru, the noted philanthropist Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. "Swami", as he was called, reinforced Murthy's commitment to selfless service and played a key role in his life and development in working with students. Murthy initially taught students at the Manipal Engineering College and then moved to the Alike Campus headed by Madiyal Narayana Bhat where he took on several roles from teaching to bookkeeping. Bhat put him in charge of developing the new Muddenahalli campus of this rural school system in 1971 and Murthy took on all aspects of that project, from fundraising, building construction, including the laying of bricks, campus design and eventually teaching and working with the students. However, Murthy was not to rest at this campus.

In 1983, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba hand-picked Murthy to act as Warden for the students at the Puttaparthi campus of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher learning. After a few years of serving under his Master, Murthy finally accepted a posting at the Whitefield campus of the same university, again as the Warden, since all students stayed on the campus in a hostel. He served continuously in this capacity for over two decades, deeply caring and mentoring the development of successive generations of students. Shortly before His passing in 2011, Sri Sathya Sai Baba asked Murthy if he would return to the Muddenahalli campus, and Murthy Anna readily agreed to this assignment. He was waiting for further directions, when Swami acutely became ill and then departed His Mortal Coil without giving any further direction. After some soul-searching, Murthy moved to Muddenahalli within a month of Baba's passing. There was no way that he could expect what his Master was up to at Muddenahalli. At this point, there were two schools and a junior college as part of the system developed by Narayana Bhat and a university campus as part of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher learning.

In joining the Muddenahalli school, Murthy Anna had come full circle — but he was still plagued by the loss of both his mentor and his Master — and what seemed like the end of his dreams for fulfilling a task entrusted to him by his mentor to train a large number of youth for selfless service. But, Providence had laid the groundwork for the fulfilment of Murthy Anna's inspirations in this arena as he was approached by a young former student in 2011. This young man, Madhusudan Naidu, had been the recipient of gold medals in both undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the university founded and headed by Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Murthy Anna had known Madhusudan previously as his Hostel Warden at the Whitefield campus. He remembered this young man very well, for his inquisitiveness and absolute dedication to the educational mission. Madhusudan asked Murthy Anna if he would take on the task of building a new campus that would ultimately become a new university in a new educational system at Gulbarga, an area which was not only rural but also very under-developed. Murthy accepted this challenge and thus began building the campus which eventually became the Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence in 2019. This university would later become the cornerstone for an entire system focused on creating helping hands, dedicated minds, and compassionate hearts for all.

But before this school became a university campus, there was still much to do. Not only did the school need to be built from the ground up which included everything from engineering, design, construction, and staffing; but also, a larger, more comprehensive educational approach would need to be developed as this was going to be a radically different school system. As it turned out, this idea of a new system of education, over the years, became a guiding light and focused on the re-establishment of an approach similar to that of the ancient Indian Gurukula system which had provided a complete education in all areas. Many considered this approach as foolhardy, especially given that the students were scoring high marks and getting top ranks in the state, with one of them becoming the top-ranked student in the entire state.

After much more thought and discussion, it was decided that to accomplish the goals of this most ancient of educational systems, the old approach rooted in the British educational system would need to be abandoned. Accordingly, in 2020, in the midst of the COVID crisis, the entire group of 28 campuses including the University shifted to the NIOS (National Institute of Open Education) approach. This approach now included theater, vocal and instrumental music of different genres, Vedic studies, and fine arts along with general courses in the sciences and humanities. Additionally, the first-ever completely free-of-cost medical school was established on the Muddenahalli Campus in 2023 to train doctors, nurses, and allied healthcare practitioners, while inspiring them to dedicate their lives and careers for serving the underserved, particularly those living in rural areas.

Under the steady guiding hand of Narasimha Murthy as well as the support and guidance of the Founder, who had evolved into Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai by then, much was accomplished. From the time of the building of the Gulburga school campus which has since become a fully-certified and accredited University campus termed as The Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence, the expansion of this educational mission has multiplied at an unprecedented pace! From the two original campuses, the school system rapidly expanded to include over 28 campuses, plus the medical school. Finally, well past 80 years of age, Murthy Anna decided to turn over the role of the Chancellor to his former student and the founder of this educational system, Sri Madhusudan Sai on May 31, 2025. From his time with Madiyal Narayana Bhat starting at 19 years of age to date, Murthy Anna's dedication and hard work have helped the new educational system become simply one of the best in the world; one that unites the timeless values of the ancient Gurukul system of Bharat with contemporary relevance, cutting-edge technology, and advanced courses, as well as one which places selfless service at the heart of higher education.

Narasimha Murthy is also a prolific writer having published seven books with an eighth one on the way. The current publications include volumes 5, 6, and 7 of the biography of Sri Sathya Sai Baba titled 'Sathyam Shivam Sundaram' as well as *Sri Sathya Sai Divya Kripashraya* (a collection of experiences with Sai Baba), *Santhana Dharma for Universal Welfare*, *Helpline on the Sathya Sai Path* (a collection of questions and answers on spirituality and service) and *Sri Sathya Sai Divya Anandam* (experiences with Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai). The book currently being written is a biography on the life of Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai.

Very few people in the modern times have made such an indelible impact on the minds and hearts of so many, leaving behind a legacy through their unquestionable dedication, untiring and sustained efforts, selfless and compassionate hearts, to make the world a better place! Our Murthy Anna is truly an inspiring and noble soul, living a life well-fulfilled — in the loving service of two Divine Masters!

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