



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)

Press Release

11 January 2020

Prasanthi Nilayam, Andhra Pradesh, India

Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions hold their Annual Sports & Cultural Meet

The Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions held the main event of the Annual Sports & Cultural Meet on 11 January 2020 at Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium, Prasanthi Nilayam, Andhra Pradesh, India.

The event is a culmination of various sports, cultural and fine arts competitions held at all campuses of the University and other Sai educational institutions throughout the academic year. The Sri Sathya Sai educational institutions include all the four campuses of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Sri Sathya Sai Primary and Higher Secondary School, Smt. Eswaramma High School and Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (SSSIHMS) College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences.

It showcases an array of physical and cultural presentations by over 3000 students of the institutions spread across two sessions, morning and evening. Preparations, which began a month in advance, involved hundreds of practice hours by all students and teachers at each institution.

Process over outcome

The Annual Sports & Cultural Meet brings to the fore several qualities of human excellence in students. With only a few weeks to perfect their presentations, and with academics and other daily pursuits, students have to make every minute of preparation count. Very quickly, students need to have clarity of their outcomes, work in teams with unity (often with colleagues they have never worked with before), surmount the mental and physical obstacles that may seem impossible, and so on.

All this is accomplished on a shoestring budget that leaves the teams to make their final props and other event items with available and existing resources at the hostel. It not only helps them be thrifty, but forces them to think out of the box and bring in an element of creativity that challenges their current model of the world and pushes their comfort zones.

This process is one of several ways through which the conscious experiment of man-making and character building at Sai educational institutions truly succeeds. It prepares SSSIHL students to navigate the toughest of situations without sacrificing their values. At the same time, it helps build strong inner qualities such as a sense of unity and teamwork, determination, discipline and hard work.

The cherry on the cake, however, is the immense love students have for Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, their Divine Master. For Sai students, the entire gamut of the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet boils down to this singular focus. Bhagawan Baba—with His divine vision—reciprocates this and makes sure that these pure feelings of Love are translated into the pursuit of excellence in every facet of the students' evolution.

As He often said, The End of Culture is Perfection.

The Morning Session

The morning session of the 2020 Annual Sports & Cultural Meet commenced at 8 a.m. with Bhagawan Baba's car entering the Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium with a beautiful photograph of Him was escorted by motorcycle escorts, and welcomed by the women's brass band of the Anantapur Campus of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) and a flag salute by all the House and Institute Captains of the University, schools and allied institutions.

This was followed by an escort by the Slow March Squad, a special contingent that was led by the men's brass band of the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, SSSIHL.

Following the ceremonial welcome to Bhagawan that concluded by the Veda chanting group of students, the Chancellor, SSSIHL along with senior members of the Sai educational institutions, and students representing each Sai educational institution offered salutations to Bhagawan. A grand, giant float mounted on wheels depicting the spirit of the Annual Sports & Cultural Meet with Bhagawan Baba flanked by angels was offered by the students to Him.

The March Past that followed included each of the three thousand Sai students marching in unison towards the dais at Shanti Vedika where Bhagawan Baba sits, offering their salutations to their Revered Founder Chancellor.

This was followed by the hoisting of the University flag, which truly represents unity, and the promise to uphold the honour and glory of Sri Sathya Sai's mission. Students then took the Sports Meet oath. This was followed by the unveiling of this year's mascot – the Celestial Lion. As the mascot flew into the main torch next to the Gods of Hill View, it marked the commencement of the 2020 Annual Sports & Cultural Meet. Students of all the Sai educational institutions—gathered on the ground—then gave a collective bow to Bhagawan Baba celebrating the 95th year of the advent of the Divine Master

The brass band of SSSIHL, Anantapur Campus then played a piece, with the Institute Band members joining in unison, as they marched past Shanti Vedika, saluting their Divine Master. They were followed by the Institute brass band playing the theme tune of the Star Wars movies. This signaled the commencement of the day's presentations.

The Presentations

This year, the students of SSSIHL Men's Campuses – Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan and Muddenahalli and Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School (Boys) put together a combined performance of fifteen items.

The first presentation was Big Bang, a melodious drum roll that presented various rhythmic sounds in an ostentatious fashion, highlighting the big bang. The next item, The Mechanized world saw a group of dancers portray the stages of evolution from beginning to the present world we live in, via a modern dance form called 'Hip-hop, free-style'.

Roller skating stunts were next on display, as the Inliners presented various stunts and acrobatics. It was based on the theme of Balance, which is essential for sustenance of life and individual growth. Skates too stand on same principle of balance. Only when all the wheels of life are in perfect balance can a man lead his life happily.

No Sai educational institutions Sports Meet is complete without the signature item of motorbike stunt riding. Beautifully captured by the drone videos employed by the Radio Sai team, the students of Muddenahalli campus seamlessly executed a number of stunts, from jumping over a line of students on the ground to criss-crosses to a slew of fire jumps, much to the delight of the thousands gathered on the stands.

Hipsters, the next item, paid tribute to the Street dance forms that were born out of an innate desire for self-expression in an effort to express the underlying emotion that the artist is experiencing at that moment in time. They presented six variants of the vernacular dance forms, a concoction that included break dancing, hip-hop, house, bone-breaking, lines & angles, and light-feet.

The Kalari Commandos then performed Kalaripayattu, an ancient physical, cultural and military art form of Kerala aimed at giving its practitioners perfect control over flexibility, stamina and body balance. The exposition involved combat sequences with sticks, mace, sword, urumi, daggers and hand movements, this art form enables the students to develop a fearless and confident stance in the face of adversity.

The next item, Sumos, demonstrated several gymnastic feats, including somersaults and a game of kabaddi! They did justice to their name (Sumo) by perfectly balancing size and speed with versatility, surrender and grace. The creativity of the students was at full display during this presentation.

Saibots then took centre stage. The presentation highlighted the saga of Bhagawan Baba through an innovative mode of dance and storytelling: robotic movements.

The stage was then set for Impavidos Reborn, a gymnastic performance of dive rolls, somersaults and obstacle jumps with the aid of a trampoline, and Shotokan Warriors, a display of a series of katas (self-defence moves), wheeling traditional weapons like kamas, Nunchuks and Short Swords along with exhibition of their physical valour in breaking techniques. Shotokan is the most widely practiced style of Karate originating from Martial Arts Schools of Japan. Students trained under Professional Shotokan Coaches (Dan with Black belts).

Acroyoga, a physical activity which combines yoga and acrobatics, paired together groups of students to perform various stunts.

A display of juggling with three or more balls, hats, clubs and some other props followed next. The Dynamic Jugglers also bundled in some juggling stunts on cycles and roller skates into their presentation.

They were closely followed by Acrophiles, an item where students exhibit their strength and skill by climbing and performing breath-taking movements on ropes, hung from a 45 feet iron structure. Some of these included a freefall from over 35 feet to form complicated knots that lock just a couple of feet over the ground.

Audiences were then transported to the American Old West where the legendary Cowboys charmed us with classic moves and tricks, along with an occasional stunt or two. The item was truly a throwback to the Spaghetti Western era, and then some.

Dressed in black with white gloves up to their elbows, the Hidden Hands channelled a street-dance style set of sequences based on intricate movements of the fingers, students make different formations that echoed national sentiments such as the exuberant Bhartiya, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), the Indian cricket team, the chakra of Gandhiji, the Swachh Bharat movement and the like. The penultimate formation, though was that of Sai Himself, whose hand commands the Universe.

The grand formation around Sai brought all the students of this morning's present together to signal the end of the morning's presentation, which ended with Mangala Aarati offered to Bhagawan Baba.

The Evening Session

The evening session of the 2020 Annual Sports & Cultural Meet began at 4 p.m. with the ceremonial procession welcoming Bhagawan Baba into the Sri Sathya Sai Hill View stadium.

The first presentation, with the theme of Atmanivedanam, was by the students of Smt. Eswamma High School, ranging from I Std. to X Std., had the honour of the opening performance. They began with the younger children performing the Maruni Dance, a popular traditional form of the intrepid Gorkhas of the snow-capped Himalayan regions.

They were followed by an ode to Charlie Chaplin with a bunch of tiny Chaplins dancing to many a tune that harped on one of his famous sayings, 'You will never find a Rainbow if you are looking down'.

Fan Drill, a synchronised performance with Pink Pearl like fans was followed by Aerobics and Hoops, which was focused on rhythmic beats as the young men of the school performed an array of acrobatic moves. The Naari Sena then took the field. Their dance presentation was a dedication to the Lord within us, who helps us transgress the dualities with us. They ended with a dance ballet celebrating Lord Hanuman, who, by example, gifted mankind with the greatest lessons of love and surrender.

SSSIHMS College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences followed them with presentations that included a drill using a ball and pluck card showcasing the importance of harmony between body, mind and soul. They achieved this through a Basketball Drill (depicting the effort, elegance and hard work that present the dedicated effort to keep the mind in control with beauty and co-ordination) and Tai Chi, that highlighted controlled movements and breathing that generate internal energy, mindfulness and serenity within us.

Students of Sri Sathya Sai Primary School and Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School (Girls) then put up the most colourful presentation of all. They took off with Sai Samarpan, a heartfelt dance that paid obeisance to the inner dweller and moved on to a dexterous gymnastic display that revealed the essence of life, Life is a game, Play it! This was followed by a Pranams Dance (to Prakriti and Purusha) and Dandiya, that saw cherubic angels dance in supreme ecstasy and exuberance extolling life's benevolence.

The Dance of Love, with Dandiya (a socio-religious folk dance originating from Indian state of Gujarat), Sai Symphony (that had the little tots hop, skip and fill every heart with delight) and a floor exercise item followed them.

The final three items included Divine Raas Leela, an endearing dance, Divine Dexterity (where students performed daring feats on suspended rods and Divine Awakening, where the higher secondary school girls expressed their devotion through a divine symphony of music of the soul that emanates the awakening of the primordial shakti, the power of Durga within.

Last, but never the least, were the students of Anantapur Campus, SSSIHL. They began with Aerials, a powerful and graceful performance of aerial acrobatics while hanging from suspended fabric folded to form loops. They then put on a show for the cameras with Human Pyramids, an acrobatic formation displaying students' balance and athletic prowess.

As daylight faded on Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium, straddled hoppers and Sufi dancers with wings performed a Graceful Rhythmic Drill. The grand finale was a luminous display on Bhagawan Baba's Advent and Mission through a series of LED light formations.

Mangala Aarati offered to Bhagawan Baba brought an end to the Sports Presentations for the 2020 Annual Sports & Cultural Meet.

Notes for Editors

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The Annual Sports and Cultural Meet is a stand-out event of the annual academic calendars of all Sai educational institutions. The event puts into effect all the underlying principles of the values-based integral education system practiced at these institutions for over thirty-five years. Perseverance, Self-confidence and team spirit are some of the traits that students develop during the lead to the event.

The prime motivation for this offering is to please the Revered Founder Chancellor, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Preparations for the event began a month in advance. The creative ideas, setups, props, practice and final performances were a combined effort of the teachers and students of the institutions with limited budgets and very little assistance from the outside.

During a public discourse on 14 January 2003, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba said, "Here, people have to understand the difference in the sports activities of our students and the students elsewhere. The students outside have only one goal in their mind, i.e. to win a prize or a medal, whereas our students' only aim is to please Swami."

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) is a unique university established in 1981 to inculcate ethical and moral values in students. It is a modern gurukula that puts equal emphasis on both secular education and spiritual growth and the development of a student's character in an effort to fulfill the vision of education for human transformation of its Revered Founder Chancellor, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The university hosts over 1350 students across four campuses in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, India. It has a merit-based open admissions policy for all, irrespective of income, religion or social status.

SSSIHL provides free education to all programmes of study. This includes waiver of all fees- including tuition, examination, laboratory, library, sports and medical.

Programmes offered include undergraduate, postgraduate, professional and research.

For further information, visit: sssihl.edu.in

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