



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)

Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality 2024 at Anantapur Campus: A Brief Report

25-27 July 2024

Introduction:

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) has the unique tradition of conducting a month-long Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Revered Founder Chancellor of SSSIHL, had envisaged the Summer Course way back in 1972, and used to conduct it regularly from that year. The discourses of Bhagavan during the Summer Courses have been available to all seekers, as they have long been compiled and published as Summer Showers, translated into many languages. Though the Course was initially held for the youth of the country and abroad, later Bhagavan decided to conduct it primarily for the benefit of the students of the Institute. The highlights of the Course included physical proximity to the 'Loving God,' who used to train, encourage, and inspire the students to learn about Indian culture and spirituality so that they could practice the invaluable lessons of Vedanta in their lives. Great scholars specialised in the areas of religion, culture, and spirituality used to conduct classes for the students. The Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality, thus, has always been an integral part of the Institute's offerings to the students. While earlier the Brindavan Campus was chosen by Bhagavan to host the Course (except for the Summer Course held in Ooty in 1976), later the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus became the venue from 2011 to 2017 for this much-awaited spiritual treat.

This year the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality was held by the different campuses of SSSIHL at the beginning of the academic year in July 2024 to familiarise the newly admitted students with the larger vision of the academic institution that they have chosen to join. The Anantapur (ATP) Campus for Women conducted the Course from the 25th to the 27th of July 2024. The planning for the Course had begun three months before the event and the preparation was on and agog from a few weeks before the commencement of the Course. As with all the Professional Ethics Programmes and Extra-Curricular Activities conducted by the Institute, the smooth and efficient conduct of the Summer Course too was made possible by the organisational skills and teamwork of the administration, the teachers, the research scholars, the students, and the entire community and ecosystem of the ATP Campus.

Day One:

As is the tradition, the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality-2024 on ATP Campus commenced with the devout ritual of worshipping Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, which included the preparation of the auspicious Kalasham, following which a prayerful and ceremonious procession was carried out from the room dedicated to Bhagavan in the uppermost storey of the College Building to the College Auditorium. At the head of the procession was Bhagavan Himself in His Image, with the accompaniment of the student teams chanting Veda mantras such as Ganapati Atharva Sheersham and Sanyasa Suktam. 'Sai Melodies,' the ATP Campus Band, simultaneously played the Sai Bhajan, "Sai Ram Sai Shyam." The tunes of Jagadananda Karaka, Adivo Alladivo, and the Arathi Song played by the Campus Nadaswaram Team added to the grace and beauty of the momentous occasion of the inauguration of the Summer Course. The august and serene procession included a bevy of dignitaries such as the Guest of Honour and Managing Trustee of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, Sri. R. J. Rathnakar; the Honourable Vice-Chancellor of the

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prof. B. Raghavendra Prasad; the Chief Guest, Brahmachari Sri. Narayana Chaitanya of Chinmaya Mission; the Director of the ATP Campus and the Dean of Humanities & Social Sciences and Languages & Literature, Prof. Rani P. L.; the Chief Warden of the ATP Campus, Dr. Meera Manikkavachakan; invited



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speaker, Dr. Shilpa Narayanan; former Directors of the Campus; Deans and Heads of various Departments; senior faculty members; and other distinguished guests.

The programme in the Auditorium began with the placing of the holy Kalasham at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet beside His Throne in the front row of the Auditorium, with the students invoking divine blessings by chanting Narayana Suktam and the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries. The welcome address was given by Prof. Rani P. L., the Director of the Campus, who began her speech by invoking the divine grace and guidance of Bhagavan for the seamless conduct of the Summer Course. She stressed the importance of acknowledging the presence of Bhagavan who is the doer of all our actions using an analogy she drew from the instance of lighting a lamp: even when oil, the container, wick, and matchstick are available, the lamp cannot be lit without the presence and action of a person who does it. To light the lamp of love and learning during the Summer Course, Bhagavan has to be there, she reminded the audience.

The Welcome Address was followed by a video presentation titled Sai Darshan for the audience to soak in the bliss of Bhagavan's Darshan and witness the various facets of Divine Love in action. Bhagavan was seen gliding amidst all, initiating children into Vidyarambham; applying Vibhuti on the foreheads of devotees; and distributing Prasadam as well as Summer Course presentation sets consisting of notebooks, pens, and badges to the students.

Prof. Deepa Seetharaman, Professor of Physics, SSSIHL, set the stage by taking a trip down memory lane, recalling her experience of the Summer Course as a student in the 1990s when being able to see Bhagavan in his physical form was itself a treat to the participants. Bhagavan used to take complete charge of the Summer Course then, as the event was His event, and the subject His subject: that of spiritual education or Adhyatma Vidya. Each item of the intellectual and spiritual treat as well as the sumptuous feast was completely curated by Sai Krishna Himself. Prof. Deepa recounted a "Chinna Katha" that Bhagavan had narrated in His inimitable style to the students about a king and a sage who engaged in a debate as to which of a set of three dolls was superior to the other two. Debates and challenges being part of the Indian tradition, the minister of the kingdom took up the challenge to answer the question by putting a wire into the ear of the dolls. While the wire came out of the other ear of one doll, in the case of the second one, it came out of the mouth. The wire stayed inside the third doll.

Bhagavan used the analogy to classify three types of listeners: the ones in whom nothing stays, another type who will speak and expatiate upon what is heard, and the third type who would listen and assimilate what is heard. Prof. Deepa hoped the students would prove to be the third and the superior type of listeners who actively listen, internalise, and also put into practice the lessons learned.

Sri. R. J. Rathnakar, in his address, reiterated the incomparable and central role that women have played and continue to play in the Sai Mission worldwide. In 1968, Bhagavan declared that He would establish a college for women in Anantapur when the possibility of it appeared remote, but by 1971, Bhagavan's Sankalpa became a reality. He was witness to the wonderful relationship that Bhagavan had with some exemplary and great lady devotees. Sri. Rathnakar remarked that Bhagavan allowed the male devotees, students, and teachers to have physical proximity to Him as He knew it was, they who required grooming under His close care and watchful eye while the women devotees never needed the kind of grooming that the men needed. Sri. Rathnakar commended the role played by Bal Vikas Gurus, young adults, and Samithi organisers, the majority of whom are women, in taking the Sai Mission forward. He recounted several instances that allowed him to witness Bhagavan's mission being carried out by His students and devotees, many of whom gladly do Seva or service activities, irrespective of occupying high positions in various walks of life. Bhagavan wanted His students to live His teachings. Therefore, to be able to claim that one is a Sai student, one must behave like a Sai student, who talks, walks, and behaves as guided by Swami. It is not the attire that matters but the conduct and the inner transformation. He exhorted the students to have Swami as their anchor. "He is the best friend you can ever have," he assured.



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Brahmachari Sri. Narayana Chaitnya of Chinmaya Mission delivered a talk titled, “Wisdom of Indian Saints for Modern Youth.” His speech justified the case for leading a spiritually oriented life to balance the emotional and other turmoils that usually plague the youth elsewhere. He highlighted the need to use kind words that would help change the way feelings are experienced or perceived. He drew the attention of the audience through a video that portrayed inner peace as the one factor that would rescue the youth in the face of any amount of trials and tribulations. The essence of all education is the attainment of inner peace, he underlined. The special ability that the human being alone possesses, the power of discrimination, should help humans streamline their different urges, feelings, and thoughts and balance the EQ and the IQ equally, the imbalance of which would prove detrimental to anyone, as was the case with Arjuna when faced with the crisis of having to fight the battle of life. Sri. Chaitanya further elaborated on the spiritual wisdom of Adi Shankaracharya and the supreme devotion of Andal. Works such as Tulasi Das’s Ramayana have inspired many and have traveled to countries far and wide, bringing succour to people during times of invasions and wars.

One of the highlights of the morning’s proceedings was a Panel Discussion titled “Adhyatma Jnana Jijnasa” by the final-year students of SSSIHL, ATP Campus on the topic of Bharatiya Darshanam. The students lucidly expounded on the various schools of Indian thought with stories and anecdotes, shlokas and sutras. The panelists concluded their captivating discussion interspersed with many examples, with a couplet from Shankaracharya’s Bhaja Govindam that Swami often used to sing to emphasise the importance of keeping good company which would eventually and logically lead to the attainment of liberation: “Satsangatve Nissangatwam...Jeevanmukti.” The morning session included a video presentation, which highlighted the glory of Bharat and the country’s advancement in all fields.

The afternoon session began with a musical presentation and philosophical exposition titled, “Sai Nama Kerthana: Kaliyuga Sadhana”, by Sri. Ravi Kumar, Manager, Department of Radiology, SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram and Dr. Siddhartha R., Assistant Professor of English, SSSIHL, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. The speaker-singer expounded the theory that sound is the essence of all and the name of the Lord is the essence of all religious scriptures. The speakers transported the audience to a sublime level with their soulful rendition of melodious Sai bhajans that represent various important dimensions of the rich repertoire of Sai devotional music. The blessed singers of the Prasanthi Bhajan Group interspersed their presentation with conversation, anecdotes, and examples concerning the bhajans that they had learned under the tutelage of Bhagwan Himself, whom they referred to as Sai Nadabrahmeshwara. The musical treat was highly enlightening as they educated the audience on the importance of sound, Nama, and the myriad devotional feelings that the singing of God’s name evokes in the singers and the listeners. Each type of Keerthanam, namely, a) Nama Keerthanam, b) Guna Keerthanam, c) Leela Keerthanam, and d) Bhava Keerthanam was demonstrated through the singing of a particular bhajan. The audience was reminded of Bhagavan’s instruction that “Shravanam alone is not enough but Keerthanam or rather Sankeerthanam is even more important.” Bhagavan started the Pandhari Bhajan Group very early in His life to emphasise the importance of community singing in the tradition of the great saints and devotees of Bharat. It was an instance of God Himself singing God’s name. The enthralling session, which concluded with the Sai bhajan, “Sai Ram Ghana Shyam Bhagavan Tumhara Naam”, witnessed a standing ovation from the audience.

The ethereal musical session was followed by “Sai Vaibhava Smaranam: Recollection of Experiences with the Master.” Prof. (Hon.) B. Andallu of the Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences fondly recalled her experiences with Swami and shared with the audience many instances in her life when she was blessed to receive the motherly love of Sai Ma. She placed on record her gratitude to the bounty of Swami and His University that has taken her to places and given her recognition in the field of academia. Nothing pleases the Divine Master more than the dedication and hard work that His students put in towards whatever they do, Prof. Andallu recalled. She assured the students that this one effort that they make, that of uncompromising dedication to one’s work, will take them close to Swami.



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Ms. Priyamvada C., a Doctoral Research Scholar in English, Department of Languages and Literature, shared her experiences of having received Bhagavan's guidance and blessings at every juncture in her life from her childhood days of attending Bal Vikas classes, followed by her days of studying for BA, MA and now PhD in His Institution. She recalled vividly one of the dreams she had in which Swami had assured her of His love and presence in her life. She shared many miraculous incidents in her life that have made Swami the One Constant in her life.

Day Two:

The second day of the Summer Course-2024 began at 6: 15 a.m., with a practical Yoga Session guided by Dr. Shilpa Narayanan, a highly accomplished Sujok and Yoga therapist. After the rejuvenating session where the students practised Asanas and Pranayama, the programme in the College Auditorium began at 9: 00 a.m., with the invocatory Vedam chanting of Medha Suktam, followed by Bhagavan's divine discourse. Bhagavan emphasised purity of heart and cautioned the students against indifference to the words of elders, disobedience, ego, jealousy, and the violation of social etiquette. He exhorted the students to lead exemplary lives and become future leaders, pleaders, and patrons of Mother India. Bhagavan highlighted the need for secular education to go hand in hand with spiritual education. Bhagavan insisted that His students must see no evil, hear no evil, talk no evil, do no evil, and think no evil. "Dharmo rakshathi rakshithaha," He assured, meaning that the one who protects Dharma will, in turn, be protected by Dharma. Using the analogy of the movement of a clock, Swami illustrated how Satkarmas, or good action will lead to Chitta Suddhi. Bhagavan emphasised the importance of developing self-confidence as it leads to self-satisfaction and contentment; only a self-contented person can do self-sacrifice, which in turn will lead to self-realisation.

Following Bhagavan's divine discourse, Dr. C. Prathibha, Associate Professor and Associate Head of the Department of Physics, set the stage for the day's proceedings. Dr. Prathibha began her speech by recollecting her experience of the Summer Course in SSSIHL in the year 2000 when she was a third-year B.Sc. Physics student. She recalled that the Summer Course exceeded all her expectations and encompassed all the aspects of spiritual education. Dr. Prathibha mentioned that the students then used to copiously take down notes to prepare for the Summer Course Examination. The greatest attraction was of course Bhagavan's presence amidst all. Since the subject of the Summer Course was spirituality and culture, Bhagavan was delighted to see His students benefitting from the learnings and standing first in the subject, proved by His bestowing them with unexpected and precious gifts. Dr. Prathibha recalled the exhilarating experience of a classmate of hers receiving a golden chain that Bhagavan materialised and gifted her for scoring the highest marks in the Summer Course examination. Since Bhagavan gave the precious time of His Avatarhood to students, it was their bounden duty to live His teachings and take up the great responsibility of doing His work. Dr. Prathibha reiterated that God's vision is always ahead of the times, borne out by the fact that each dimension of Bhagavan's teachings is now being followed by the world and has been validated and upheld as necessary for human upliftment by many scientific, research, and governmental bodies. "Scientists are only capable of unfolding the mystery of Bhagavan's creation," Dr. Prathibha concluded.

Sri. Vedanarayanan, Post-Graduate Teacher of Sanskrit at SSSHSS, gold medalist in Master's education in both Sanskrit and Philosophy, and the recipient of the National Award for the Best Teacher from Sri. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, next addressed the gathering on the topic, "Vedas and Its Relevance in Modern Times." A familiar voice that reverberates in the Sai Kulwant Hall with the sacred Vedas, Sri. Vedanarayanan acknowledged that the greatest fortune in his life is his having been able to chant Veda in front of the Veda Purusha Himself. Swami started the Veda Pathashala as early as in November 1962. He went on to explain Bhagavan's vision of taking Veda chanting to the common people and the fourfold Sai Mission of Veda Samrakshana, Dharma Samsthapana, Vidyut Poshana and Bhakta Rakshana. In 1983, on a Vinayaka Chaturthi day, Bhagavan commanded Sri. Vedanarayanan to start



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teaching Vedam en masse and later when the students chanted Vedam in front of Bhagavan, He remarked that “the children are chanting well”, a compliment from the Lord to sustain him for a lifetime. Sri. Vedanarayanan’s erudite lecture covered the multifaceted aspects of Vedic wisdom ensconced in the four Vedas and the six Vedangas. He reminded the audience that in Bharat, the religion is Sanathana Dharma, the elements of which cannot be condensed into one text. The rich repertoire of texts includes Mimamsa (interpretation), Nyaya (logic), and Dharma Shastra (code of conduct), among many others. While Shiksha is on phonetics and euphony, Vyakarana deals with grammar, Chandas with meter, Niruktha with etymology, and Kalpa with the procedure. The Upavedas, the eighteen Puranas, and the Ithihasas constitute yet another vast body of knowledge. Sri. Vedanarayanan’s talk kindled the interest of the audience to explore Vedic wisdom in all its grand comprehensiveness, depth, and applicability. Bhagavan was insistent that the students chant the Vedas regularly, as without following the discipline or Niyama enjoined upon human beings to follow Dharma and practice Vedic wisdom, no good can happen to the universe. Citing instances of scientific experiments having been conducted, validating the effect of chanting Mantras on those who chant and those who listen, Sri. Vedanarayanan reiterated that chanting creates a ripple effect of positive energy in the universe.

Sri. Vedanarayanan’s scholarly lecture was followed by a talk titled, “Yoga: The Eightfold Path to Divinity” by Dr. Shilpa Narayanan, an accomplished Sujok and Yoga therapist, who dons many roles in her personal and professional life, as she is involved in various activities related to childcare, health of newborn babies and mothers, and women empowerment. She demonstrated the wonderful connection between Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras and the daily routine that the students of the Institute follow, beginning from the chanting of Omkara and Suprabhatham to the Yoga sessions and other daily activities. She shared her insights regarding the perfect alignment of Swami’s Sarva Dharma Stupa and all the aspects of His teachings with Vedic wisdom. Yoga is Chitta Vrithi Nirodhakaha, she reminded the audience. Controlling the agitations of the mind would lead to purity of thought and unity of vision, and finally to the realisation of divinity. Dr. Narayanan explained the wonderful synthesis of the theoretical and practical dimensions of spirituality that is ensconced in the routine that Bhagavan has enjoined upon His devotees to follow. The talk was followed by a video presentation on the greatness of Bharat.

The morning session came to an end with a highly impactful enactment of one of the charming Chinna Kathas of Bhagavan, titled “Winning Smiles.” Through “Okka Chinna Katha...Situation Analysis through Swami’s Chinna Katha,” the students brought the message alive through a panel discussion, narration of the story, and a dramatic rendition of the same. The discussion and detailed analysis of the scenes enacted from the story helped the audience relate to similar situations in their lives when the challenges thrown by social media and other modern developments might turn out to be distractive and result in the formation of a negative sense of ego, leading to behavioural aggression, the aggravation of which can harm all in society. The winning smile of Lord Krishna is seen to transform the demon into a lamb in the story. Through the analysis, the following values were conveyed: that students should be conscious of the time, the people around them, and the surroundings, and respond as per the situation; develop a sense of unity and togetherness; cultivate forbearance in mind; and nourish the love, tenderness, and compassion in heart. The situation analysis of the Chinna Katha could be summed up with the formula, Compassion + Action = Response + Transformation. The session ended with Bhagavan’s exhortation for all to “be happy, happy, happy.”

The afternoon session began with an exciting “Quiz on Indian Culture and Spirituality” led by Dr. V. Prathyusha, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, and her team constituted by members of the faculties of Philosophy and Management and Commerce, Ms. Arunima Pant, Ms. Aparna V., and Dr. Swetha Thiruchanuru. The quiz had six rounds of questions, round 1 on “Epic Insights,” round 2 on “Veda Saara,” round 3 on “Sthothra Saara,” round 4 on “Bhajan Bliss,” round 5 on “Sai Chronicles,” and round 6 on “Wisdom of Sai.” Bhakti Brigades, Jnana Gems, Shanti



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Seekers and Karma Comrades comprised the participating student teams. The session that witnessed enthusiastic participation from all the participants and the audience came to an end with the Jnana Gems scoring the highest points.

The spiritual treat of the day came to an end with “Sai Vaibhava Smaranam: Recollection of Experiences with the Master.” The esteemed speaker of the session was Sri. Sanjay Sahni, an integral part of Bhagavan’s Divine Educare Mission in various capacities, such as being an Associate Professor in the Department of Management and Commerce, besides being the Controller of Examinations from 2016 to 2023, the Principal/Director of the Brindavan Campus and the Warden of the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. Sri. Sahni was a gold medalist for his academic excellence in UG and PG education at Bhagavan’s Institute, which excellence he carried over to all the later roles that he impeccably played in SSSIHL. He began his speech with the question, “How should I describe my Divine Mother?” to which he answered himself with an Upanishadic quote, “Yatho Vacho Nivarthanthe Aprapya Manasa Saha,” to imply that Mother Sai is a glorious phenomenon that words cannot aspire to describe or mind cannot hope to comprehend. Sri. Sahni enunciated the spiritual teachings that he had learned being in the divine fold of Swami. Discipline, Love, Service, and Sadhana are the exclusive portfolios of Swami, he emphasised. He exhorted the students to follow the practice of prayers enjoined by Swami, saying that prayers done during Brahma Muhurtham are equivalent to opening and maintaining a fixed deposit, while prayers done at any time of the day are akin to having a running savings account. He reminded the students that Bhagavan’s Institution, which offers free education, is the most expensive college to study, as to study here they certainly have to pay: they are paying through the Punyam or the virtues accrued by themselves and their ancestors. To the “august assembly of God-lovers,” Sri. Sahni reiterated that Bharatiyas are those who have Rati in Bhagavan, meaning those who are attached to God. He recounted many instances of devotees who visit Prasanthi Nilayam from across the world as their lives have been miraculously touched and transformed by Bhagavan and their faith in Him exceeds boundaries.

One of the most heartening and intellectually stimulating components of the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality-2024 was the Poster Presentation made by the students of the Campus on Bhagavan’s Divine Discourses on three occasions, one, during Sankara Jayanti, sourced from Summer Showers in Brindavan 1972; two, on the topic of Vedic Wisdom, sourced from Summer Showers 1990; and three, on the topic, “Experience Oneness with the Divine,” delivered by Bhagavan on Onam Day in 1989, in the Poornachandra Auditorium. The posters displayed along the corridors of College Building-II on the first and second days of the Summer Course led to enthusiastic and interactive discussions between the student presenters and the viewers constituting members of the faculty, research scholars, and students. The posters showed a wide variety of presentation ideas, formats, and visual representations of the profound messages of Bhagavan’s teachings that were creatively and thoughtfully captured through the visual medium of the poster. The student presenters articulated the ideas lucidly and effectively.

Day Three:

The last day of the Summer Course began in the Auditorium with invocatory Vedam chanting by the Homecoming Batch of 1996-1999. Before the day’s proceedings began, Prof. Rani P. L., the Director of the Campus, called upon the audience to make a silent and prayerful submission to Bhagavan to give eternal rest to the soul of Prof. Vishwanath Pandit, the eighth Vice-Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, who merged in the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan on the previous day, 26th July 2024. The first event was Bhagavan’s Divine Discourse on Nava Vidha Bhakti. Bhagavan defined devotion as developing closeness to the Lord by having Trikarana Shuddhi. Devotion can be classified into three types, Bhagavan said: Ananya Bhakti, Ekanta Bhakti, and Samanya Bhakti. Samanya Bhakti finds expression in nine forms: “Shravanam, Keerthanam, Vishnu Smaranam, Pada Sevanam, Archanam, Vandanam, Dasyam, Sneham, Atma Nivedanam,” Bhagavan melodiously sang the line. He cited King Parikshit as an exemplar of Shravana Bhakti as he listened to the glory of the Lord for seven days, forgetting his body and possessions, and attained Vishnu Pada in the end. Shravanam should be followed by Mananam and



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Nidhidhyasanam, which is the royal path to divinity, Bhagavan reminded the devotees. For Keerthanam, Bhagavan gave the example of Narada, who is singing the Lord's name at all times. For Vishnu Smaranam, Prahlada serves as the best example, as when he was troubled and tortured, he was never frightened or worried, as he always remembered Lord Vishnu, whose name he chanted. For Pada Sevanam, Swami cited Goddess Lakshmi as the best example, as She prized Pada Sevanam above all the wealth and prosperity that She commanded and embodied.

Bhagavan cited Akroora as the paragon of Vandana Bhakti, as it requires giving up ego and doing Namaskaram or Vandanam of the Lord joining the five karmendriyas and the five jnanendriyas. Emperor Prudhu exemplifies the form of Bhakti called Archanam or worship, as he performed sixteen types of worship. Bhagavan highlighted the significance of Angarchana as when it is chanted "Netrakamalam samarpayami," the worshipper is transforming his or her vision to the divine vision. Bhagavan pointed out Lord Hanuman as the shining example of Dasya Bhakti. Though he was endowed with many virtues and siddhis, He identified himself as Rama Dasa only. Arjuna is a paragon of Sneha Bhakti as he desired only Krishna's friendship. Atma Nivedanam, which Bali exemplified, requires one to offer oneself eternally in complete surrender. To cross the ocean of samsara, the name of the Lord is the boat.

Dr. A. Sumana, Associate Professor in the Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences set the stage for the day's programmes. Belonging to the 1996-1999 batch, she had the good fortune to attend the Summer Course held at Trayee Brindavan for fifteen days, when she could listen to the Rama Katha Rasa Vahini from Sai Rama Himself. She recalled many fond memories of having been able to interact with Bhagavan. Bhagavan taught them how to yearn for His Divine Love during the final year of their study when they visited Prasanthi Nilayam as the passing out batch. Bhagavan, by ignoring them, made them realise the importance of seeking nothing else from Bhagavan but only His Own Self. Dr. Sumana narrated how they sang the heart-touching song, "O Nestama" during the occasion. She concluded her speech by saying that blessed are those who listen to the glories of the Lord; even more blessed are those who spread the glory of the Lord; but the most blessed are those who themselves become the message of God.

The Guest Speaker of the day was Dr. T. R. Rajeswari, a Volunteer with Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini, who formerly served as a member of the faculty in the Department of Management and Commerce and also as Warden of the Anantapur Campus. The topic of her lecture was "Navavidhabhakti: The Nine Anchors of Life." She has been associated with the Summer Course since 1991. Since Bhagavan in His Divine Discourse has elucidated the subject of Navavidhabhakti, she has nothing more to say, she remarked. Drawing many instances and anecdotes from her own life and the lives of people whom she had come across, Dr. Rajeswari made the audience realise the relevance of Navavidhabhakti in the present times. She spoke at length about the four types of devotees that the Bhagavad Gita mentions: the Artha, the Jijnasu, the Artharthi, and the Jnani. In her endearing way, Dr. Rajeswari narrated how each of the nine forms of worship can be practised in one's day-to-day life by following Bhagavan's teachings and leading life as an offering to Him. Knowing about Him is different from knowing Him, she reminded. To know Him, His Grace is needed. She exhorted the students to read Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, listen to OMS (O My Sai!) episodes broadcast on the SSSMC's channels, and reflect on the insights gained thereby, which would make them too paragons of Navavidhabhakti to Swami.

The morning session concluded with "Krithanjathayaha Pushpani" (Flowers of Gratitude), a programme by the Homecoming Batch of 1996-1999. Prof. Rani P. L., Director of the Campus welcomed the alumni and reminded them of the Divine Drama that Bhagavan plays by bringing together on the stage, after 25 years, the students of the Batch of 1996-1999 and the teachers who taught them during the initial years of their career at SSSIHL, including herself. She remarked that it is the solidarity that Bhagavan has built into the system that makes such occasions possible. Eating laddu is different from describing it, she affirmed while inviting the alumni to recount their experiences at SSSIHL. What followed was a lively and fascinating melange of performances such as



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“Ganamrutham,” soulful bhajans offered at Bhagavan’s sannidhi by a group of alumni; “Natya Aradhana,” dance duets performed by mother-daughter pairs; a mandolin recital of “Ksheerabdhisayana Narayana” and “Bhasmabhooshithanga”; a documentary, “Memories That Bind Us”; and a panel discussion titled, “Karishye Vachanam Tava.” The panel discussed a range of topics that formed a significant part of their life as Sai students on the ATP Campus and shaped them in crucial ways. Some of the discussants recounted their personal experiences of having received Bhagavan’s Grace in each moment of their lives, including their lives being saved and their character being moulded. They recalled Bhagavan assuring them that they are safe in His Love. Many miraculous experiences were narrated by the panel. They also discussed the relevance of the salient features of the disciplined hostel life that they led, which later stood them in good stead in each walk of their personal and professional lives. The lessons learned here regarding duty, discipline, prayers, and tolerance or loving acceptance of differences proved to be life lessons, they remarked. The discipline in the Sai education system and hostel life has made them self-disciplined. To whom much is given, much is there to give. This is the attitude that continues to inform their actions, as they lead lives aligned with Swami’s teachings.

The Valedictory Session in the afternoon began with a captivating drama by the students of the Campus, titled Nine Bytes of Bhakti, which beautifully blended technology with spirituality. Beginning with a disclaimer displayed on the backdrop saying “This is not an AI-generated play,” the drama kept the audience spellbound by swift shifts of scene alternating between dance and dramatic performances. Using the format of a reality TV show, the play drove home the message of the relevance of Nava Vidha Bhakti in the life of Gen Z. Right from the plot, the characters, and the thought of the play to the music, the dance, and the dialogues, and the spectacle, the setting, and the attire, the play set new benchmarks in terms of representing the spiritual teachings of Bhagavan in the form of drama, which was one of His favourite items too among the cultural activities performed by His students. Each of the nine callers who called up Narada, the host of a show titled “Calming Conversations,” got their worries dispelled, their confusions cleared, their dilemmas solved, and their minds calmed. The callers from different walks of life facing situations that resonate with the predicament of the people of present times were calmed by Narada who was ably directed and assisted by AI in his job of offering succour to the needy by suggesting an apt form (“byte”) of Bhakti to be practised. After all the conflicts were resolved for the characters of the play, the play still reserved some dilemma and inner conflict for the audience who were left wondering if the firm and sure voice of the AI would mean that the spirituality of Narada cannot survive without the new-age technology represented by AI. However, the denouement was unexpected, leaving the audience happy and enlightened, when the AI revealed to Narada that “I am the Atmic Indweller.” With the AI icon on the screen merging into the silhouette of Bhagavan’s Divine Form, the play ended. The team of students who worked on and off the stage were ably directed and guided by a team of teachers, headed by Dr. N. Vani Sri, Assistant Professor of English.

The cultural drama was followed by “Sai Vaibhava Smaranam: Recollection of Experiences with the Master” by Dr. T. Ravi Kumar, Warden of the Brindavn Campus. He narrated the many lessons that he learned right from his school days as a Bal Vikas student to his years as a student of Bhagavan’s Institute, and then as a member of the faculty, Associate Professor of Chemistry, and for many years now as the Warden of His Campus. It was a learning experience all through for him to learn that Bhagavan is indeed the Atmic Indweller, as He used to let him know that he cannot hide any prank or mischief or thought or feeling from Bhagavan. Bhagavan used to chide him asking him to keep good company but would also protect him as a mother would do, during many occasions of possible embarrassment that he feared would happen in front of his father. Dr. Ravi Kumar regaled the audience with his humorous style of narration which was a testimony to the wonderful way in which Bhagavan had taught him to evolve into the great devotee that he has become, exuding cheer and happiness in his words when he recalls the life lessons learned at the Lotus Feet. Through the narration of many incidents, Dr. Ravi Kumar pointed to the futility of human beings assuming the bhava of the doer as Bhagavan alone is the Doer, the Propeller, and the



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Indweller. Bhagavan surpasses all human imagination and comprehension, he reiterated. If He gives us problems, He would also give us the strength to solve them, he assured. Even as he is performing the duties of the Warden, he knows that he only needs to remind Bhagavan that it is He who is the Warden. Dr. Ravi Kumar corrected himself to add that there is not even a need to remind Bhagavan, rather it is he who should remind himself that Bhagavan is the Warden.

The Valedictory Address was given online by Dr. Arathi V. B., Founder and Chairperson of Vibhu Academy and Adjunct Professor of Humanities at Dayananda Sagar University. She enumerated the beauty and richness of Bharatiya culture and reminisced about the selfless contributions made to the world by Bharatiyas including Swami Vivekananda and the many seers, sages, and saints of the country.

Dr. Sowmya Srinivasan, Assistant Professor of English, SSSIHL, proposed the Vote of Thanks. She echoed the sentiments of the audience and the entire team of the organisers of the Summer Course when she expressed her gratitude to Bhagavan for making the grand event a spiritually elevating and intellectually stimulating experience for all. She thanked the former Director, Prof N. Srividya, for having begun the conceptualisation of the event around three months ago. The successful conduct and completion of the Summer Course became a reality owing to the dynamic and democratic leadership of Prof. Rani P. L., the Director of the Campus, she remarked. Dr. Sowmya expressed her gratitude to Dr. M. Venkatalakshmi and all the senior faculty members, the Deans, the Heads of various Departments, fellow teachers, and research scholars in charge of various events, whose support to the Organising Committee bore fruition in the seamless conduct of the event. The speakers and guests who honoured the event and the students who enthusiastically participated in various ways, capacities, and roles were thanked. Dr. Sowmya thanked the Audio-Visual Team, the Publications Team, and the Auditorium Team of the Campus who rose to the occasion, which demanded tireless efforts on their part. Dr. Sowmya proposed thanks to Dr. Meera Manikkavachakan, the Warden of the Campus who ensured that the hospitality extended to the guests, the homecoming batch, and all the participants was impeccable. The spiritual treat was complemented by the delectable lunch that was served on all three days of the event. Dr. Sowmya extended her gratitude to the matchless services rendered by the non-teaching staff and all the support staff in making the Summer Course-2024, a memory to cherish.

The three-day Summer Course in Indian and Culture and Spirituality-2024 offered by the Anantapur Campus came to a close with Mangala Arathi.























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