

# Love in Action – Karnataka Youth

Mr. Vinay Kumar

The Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference held in Prasanthi Nilayam from July 26-28, 2007 has etched many sacred memories in the minds of all the Sai Youth from Karnataka who were part of this wonderful event. Sai Youth from all over the world came together at the Divine Lotus Feet of our most Beloved Bhagavan. In fact, this unique opportunity for the youth of Karnataka, India, to be part of a conference originally intended only for the overseas youth was created and conferred by none other than Bhagavan Himself!

## Compassionate Mother Sai

It all happened just a few weeks before the conference was set to begin. On one beautiful morning in Prasanthi Nilayam, when Bhagavan had finished Blessing the multitudes of devotees who had gathered for His Divine *Darshan* and was gracefully making His way towards the *Mandir*, He called the conference coordinator. Bhagavan asked how many youth were scheduled to attend the Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference and when they would start arriving at Prasanthi Nilayam. And then, out of the blue, He suddenly called out to me and said, “The overseas youth are coming in large numbers for the conference. How many are you getting for the conference from Karnataka?” I was actually stunned and dumbfounded because it was a well-known fact that youth from India were not scheduled to be part of this conference. I somehow gathered myself and prayed, “Swami, whatever number you want will attend. Please guide us.” He immediately said, “Get one thousand youth from Karnataka and ask them to register immediately for the conference.” I had tears welling up in my eyes

at the Love and Compassion Our Mother Sai had showered on Her children from Karnataka! All I could do was to thank Him in a choked voice and offer my humble *Pranams* at His Lotus Feet.

Since it was His Will at play, we had absolutely no problems in raising the required numbers. In fact it took just two days for us to come up with a detailed list of all the 1,000 youth which I took to Puttaparthi and placed at His Lotus Feet! He graciously accepted the list and lovingly blessed it. In all His infinite mercy, He went through every sheet of the ten-page list and again asked when the youth would be coming. I said, “Swami, they would all be in Prasanthi Nilayam by July 24<sup>th</sup> and get themselves duly registered.” The Love of a million mothers was there to be seen on that beautiful face of our dearest Swami!

## Divine Will at Play

It didn’t end with us just being allowed to attend this beautiful conference. A couple of weeks before the conference, Bhagavan blessed the youth from Karnataka with yet another shower of His limitless Love and Compassion. One afternoon, He suddenly called out to me in the veranda and said, “You along with other coordinators from Karnataka take care of all the food arrangements for the conference.”

While it was a great feeling to be chosen by HIM as the official caterers for a world conference, the several challenges the task involved suddenly started surfacing and time was running out! Bhagavan’s penchant for meticulous planning and perfection is a well-known fact and we knew there was no scope for any slippage on any count! Invoking His Grace through a collective

prayer, we got down to forming different teams for drafting the menu for breakfast, lunch, and dinner on all three days, setting up the dining hall on 40,000 square feet of land, sourcing items and transporting them to Puttaparthi, cooking, moving food to the dining area, pantry management, serving, drinking water dispensation and waste management. Those two weeks were an absolutely thrilling experience for the 350 odd youth who were specifically assigned different roles in His





master plan of making us the official caterers! These 350 youth dedicated themselves totally to the task at hand and it was unity amongst them and an incessant prayer on their lips to Bhagavan that made the entire process seem so simple! **It was yet more proof that once we surrender ourselves to His Will and have no trace of doership in us then He rushes forth and gets the entire task completed in Godspeed!**

The menu that was finally approved by Bhagavan included as many as ten different items for lunch and dinner, with a mix of Indian and Continental cuisines, and with a liberal spread of sweets, salads, and ice cream, not to forget the pistachio toppings!

### **The Impossible Becomes Possible**

With HIS Blessings and only due to His Grace, the dining area could be set up to accommodate 5,000 delegates eating at the same time without any crowding! The smoothness and speed with which the otherwise unqualified bearers (Karnataka youth) served the delegates was yet another testimony to HIS Divine Will that was at play! The ideas that sprung up in the minds of the coordinators regarding the splitting of the dining area separately for gents and ladies, pantry layout, VIP seating, the arrangement of food serving counters, dessert counters, adequate water dispensers and waste disposal mechanisms was all HIS *leela* (Divine play) that was there to be seen! The ambience created within the dining area was breathtaking and many devotees would simply come to have a look at the Sai Magnificence that had unfolded itself in the form of this large banquet hall.

The challenges that surfaced in transporting items on time to Puttaparthi, turning out almost 20,000 *rotis* (Indian bread) daily, and providing limitless scoops of ice cream were all overcome only due to one single factor – **faith in Swami!** The hours and hours of team meetings before the conference for planning the cooking and serving was all HIS way of showing us that **if one did his duty sincerely, then Grace will flow.** It was only His Love that ensured we did not have to turn away anyone for lack of food, and in spite of heavy rains on one of the nights the entire dining area remained guarded without even a drop of water seeping in!

Thus, the 2007 Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference was a very special occasion for all of the 1,000 youth from Karnataka who saw and realised the Supreme Power of our Dearest Bhagavan in getting extraordinary things done out of ordinary mortals like us! It has also motivated the youth, beyond measure, to function as one large united group in order to be able to work as His worthy instruments in HIS Divine Mission!

.....  
Mr. Vinay Kumar is the Youth Coordinator of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations for Karnataka State.





# Sadhana: A Step-by-Step Journey – A Pictorial Exhibition

Mrs. Sangeeta Lekhi

“Lord! Your Name is the bridge that can safely transport man across the Ocean of Life.”

In the epic *Ramayana*, an army of monkeys served Lord Rama by chanting and writing His Name on each stone, enabling the stones to float to form a bridge to reach Lanka. This inspired the central theme of *namasmarana* at the international youth exhibition during the Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference 2007. The exhibition highlighted Swami’s key messages for each of the nine disciplines of the Sadhana Programme, and how youth are practising them in their daily lives. Swami’s altar became the centre and the heart of the exhibition, highlighting the fact that He is our source and our goal. The altar was surrounded by an “ocean” with bridges of stones, representing *namasmarana*, leading towards the altar. *Namasmarana*, the basis of all our spiritual disciplines, vibrationally and visually permeated the exhibition, and each *sadhana* was graphically and interactively depicted in the respective booths.

With Swami’s Grace, there was full cooperation amongst the Zone youth leaders and each Zone undertook the responsibility of showcasing one spiritual discipline. Nine spiritual disciplines, nine world Zones, and nine booths...it was a perfect match! An international team of artists, architects, designers, and coordinators was also formed to plan, implement, and support the exhibition activities worldwide. The exhibition became a beautiful space for all youth, even for those not attending the Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference, to contribute their experience and practise of His teachings.

A few days after the youth arrived in Prasanthi Nilayam, the 7,000 square foot hall of bare walls was transformed into a temple filled with His Love and His teachings. When youth from various Zones first entered the hall to set up their materials, posters, and other exhibits, they were representing only their countries and respective world Zones. However, within a day of working together in harmony, **the youth were no longer focused on their individual booths, but were now representing all Sai Youth, in unity and Love for Sai.** Youth were sharing their resources, sacrificing their time, and most importantly, providing love and support to those groups who needed extra assistance to put together their booths. In fact, the team of youth no longer wished to be called merely a ‘team’; instead, we became one Sai family!

As youth volunteers and presenters filled the hall with their love, devotion, dedication and self-sacrifice, we could feel Swami’s Presence stronger by the day. From July 24<sup>th</sup>, we decided to start continuous *namasmarana* in the centre of the exhibition hall. From morning to night, this small group committed themselves to staying in the hall and truly experiencing what Swami refers to as the ‘**power of His Name.**’ But from the next day onwards, youth from different parts of the world began to visit, and word spread amongst the delegates about this rare opportunity in the *Ashram*. The volunteers came from UK, Croatia, Singapore, Germany, Hong Kong, USA, Mauritius, Australia, Japan, and Latin America. Delegates would throng to be a part of this non-stop remembrance of His Name. We had not even officially opened the exhibition for viewing, and already, **Swami’s Presence was being felt and experienced by all who entered.**

On July 26<sup>th</sup>, the day the exhibition opened, visitors from all walks of life came to see the works of youth worldwide. It was an opportunity for us to welcome and share with all how Swami has impacted our lives through the practice of the nine-point Sadhana Programme.

The first exhibit displayed Swami’s key teachings on how one must communicate with love in the family,





by creating a home environment, including a life-size kitchen. The 'Prayer and Meditation' booth had an interactive station with a *stupa* representing the unity of all religions; and the 'Namasmaraṇa' booth allowed visitors to chant His Name using prayer beads. Other exhibits included the 'Ceiling on Desires' world map displaying transformation stories of youth from around the world, while the 'Leadership' booth depicted Swami as our ideal leader, and portrayed exemplary world leaders for youth to emulate. The 'Service' booth took visitors on a 'Journey to Enlightenment' through proper understanding and practice of service, and the last booth depicted the 'Head, Heart and Hand' as the 3HV impact of studying Swami's teachings. There was also a 'Media Centre' where visitors had an opportunity to sit and watch youth in action in the three wings of International Sathya Sai Organisation, namely education, devotion, and service.

Swami showered His Blessings by sending His staff, primary, secondary and graduate school students from all the three campuses to visit the exhibition. They came in hundreds, and explored and inquired about the various exhibits from around the world. They participated in the different interactive activities available in the booths, such as sharing practical tips of how to control the senses or live a *sathwic* lifestyle, and imparting important characteristics that mark a true leader, as per Swami's teachings. They expressed great delight in seeing how young people are integrating Swami's teachings into their daily lives, even though living so far away from Prasanthi Nilayam.

After the three days of the Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference were over, we were requested to keep the exhibition open for two more days, allowing delegates and visitors a further opportunity to come and experience the love and work of Sai Youth. Over the five days, we encountered more than 7,000 visitors, and each person stayed and spent an average of one hour soaking in this Divine experience. Many visitors including the students of Sri Sathya Sai University made comments that they were moved by this exhibition and suggested that this exhibition should be shown in different parts of India and various parts of the world to help spread the Message of Sai and His Love.

After the exhibition closed, by Swami's Grace, most of the content and design was distributed for further use. Many items were shared with the Sathya Sai Orphanage, with Andhra Pradesh youth for their upcoming exhibitions, and with the Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust in Prasanthi Nilayam. A couple of items were donated to the Chaitanya Jyoti Museum. Also, some youth exhibits were taken back to their home countries to further share and spread His Message. And if the Message wasn't clear, when the hall was entirely empty, only one thing remained: His radiant,



glorifying altar sitting on a lotus flower, crowned with a golden dome. It was a sign that **everything may come and go, but His Presence remains.**

The days and nights that passed in the exhibition hall were unique in that each day was increasingly more fulfilling than the last. Though we were missing days of *Darshan* in the Sai Kulwant Hall, we were actually feeling Swami's Presence more and more each day. One day, I approached two volunteers who swept the carpets from morning to night everyday, missing several *Darshans*. I asked why they don't go for *Darshan*, and stay here all the time. They sweetly replied, "We feel Swami's Presence so much here that we look forward to coming to the exhibition hall right from morning. We do not feel like we are missing His *Darshan* by not going to the Sai Kulwant Hall." Such examples inspire us all and show us the true meaning of being "Ideal Sai Youth - Messengers of Sai Love".

Today, months have passed, but our memories remain strong, our experiences still fill our hearts with joy, and His Message is being practised and shared with our sisters and brothers in our respective regions.

.....  
Mrs. Sangeeta Lekhi, National Female Youth Representative in USA, served as the Coordinator of the Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference Exhibition.