



Institute of Sathya Sai Education Australia
National Education Conference 2011

Address by Dr Pal Dhall at opening of the SSE Conference at Murwillumbah - 20 August 2011

Vision of future prosperity

Sai Ram!

Welcome to all, especially the overseas delegates.

In sharing my vision of future prosperity I want first of all to note the significance of this moment in history when this Conference is taking place. 2011 is the beginning of a very significant phase in Sathya Sai Education. Sai Baba had been pouring out a most glorious stream of Love, suffused Philosophy, Metaphysics and Spirituality over 70 years. As long as He was in His physical form I tended to think *'He is here, He will take care of everything, and nothing bad is going to happen.'* In this attitude I tended to pass the entire responsibility for the future wellbeing of the planet and of the challenge that humanity faces onto Him and indeed He worked at many levels and averted many catastrophes. As a devotee I tended to focus on my own spirituality and on Education and the Organisation, not paying as much attention as I could have done to what is happening in the larger culture and where we are heading as humanity.

On the 24th of April when Baba assumed MahaSamadhi, He sent a clear message that it was time for humanity to move on to a new phase. He had given all the teachings that we need to make the changes that we need to make. It is therefore time to reflect deeply and take His teachings more seriously. It is time to implement His teachings systematically into personal lives and homes, into all systems and institutions, particularly in Education, Governance, Commerce and Inter-religious understanding. He had started by saying *'My life is My message'* and then changed that to *'Your life is My message.'* The stark reality of this change of message, which places a greater responsibility on us rather than Him, came home with great force into my consciousness as I sat in Prashanti day after day with the enormous change of a Prashanti without His physical Presence. It is of course not just our life that is His message. We are His message and we are His messengers! The onus is now on each one of us to take His Divine teachings and create many Prashanti Nilayams all around the world - in fact in every heart and in every mind. And this starts with making a Prashanti within ourselves first. Our heart therefore is the very epicenter of future prosperity of the planet.

Sathya Sai philosophy, like Vedanta, does not make any distinction whatsoever in the experience of lived daily life, the philosophic understandings and spiritual practices. According to His teachings spirituality is not confined to temples, churches and mosques but it permeates everything—all relationships—whether with people, with animals, plants or even inert matter. It embraces every moment of time. This is because all is Divine. Divinity is not confined to any one religion, any one ritual or any special devotional

practice. To experience this Reality we have to elevate our own consciousness and actively cultivate continuous Divine Presence through purifying our hearts and clarifying our minds. This means systematic application to remove negativity of thought, feeling and attitudes.

In this context we have to make a distinction, subtle but vitally important, between Sathya Sai Education as a system and Sathya Sai Education in Human Values. Sathya Sai Education as a system embraces the entire teachings of Sathya Sai, all His discourses, all the Vahinis, all the programs of Radio Sai, the SSE programs in the different countries, the study circles, Sanathana Sarathi, STP programs, Sai schools, Sai colleges and institutes and indeed this Conference itself is part of the Sathya Sai Education system. All these create and enhance awareness of something greater and grander than our individual ego and personal preoccupation with ourselves. SSEHV on the other hand utilizes the teachings of Sai Baba in preparing hearts and minds through educational activities and through the dynamics in everyday interactions and relationships. SSEHV is a tool to serve the world and bring prosperity and an awareness of Sathya Sai Philosophy. It is through SSEHV that we bring awareness that every activity, every moment of time, every relationship can be sanctified. It is SSEHV that can raise awareness of the workings of our own mind and heart and it is SSEHV that enables us to elevate consciousness and lead to a direct connection between our consciousness and Divine Consciousness.

Too often we equate SSEHV with the Human Values Education without Sathya and Sai; indeed we often equate it with a very secularized version of human values based on humanism. This is totally a misunderstanding. Baba's SSEHV has its origin in the concept of Divinity as the core of our very reality and our unity with Divinity as the goal of life. And unless these are key concepts we are not looking at the authentic message of Sai Baba. Humanism is NOT Sathya Sai Education in Human Values.

Secondly, like His teachings, the concept of prosperity too needs to be examined more deeply. The Eastern concept of prosperity is not just economic wellbeing. Prosperity has many dimensions and material wealth is just one of them. The other dimensions of prosperity are wealth of health, of positive emotions, of good relationships, of good leaders, good community and family life, of sharp intelligence and of discriminating faculty, of inner and outer peace. Still another dimension: we are prosperous if we are working to solve crushing problems that are foreseeable and we prepare ourselves to avert catastrophes.

We know that we are looking at a unique period in the history of humanity, not only because Sai Baba came at this time but because we are faced with an active choice for the first time in the history of humanity. Ours is a transitional generation forced to make the choice. The philosopher Freeman Dyson has said that currently our society is addicted to a way of dreams and shadows, TV and drugs, and has lost its sanity. Martin Rees puts a 50/50 chance of survival of the human race to the end of this century. Why? Consider the following. At present we are destroying every year 44 million acres of rain forest, 100 million acres of farm land, 24 billion tons of top soil which will take 200 years to replace. We are creating 215 million acres of desert and 160 billion tons of water is being used above replenishment every year. We are faced with some 17 major challenges: religious intolerance, terrorism, global warming, destruction of the biosphere, destruction of oceans, looming shortages of water and food, increasing disparity in the wealth of nations and an

increasing knowledge gap between the rich and the poor. Most of these challenges arise from greed, selfishness, exploitation, hatred, intolerance and pollution. I sometimes think that Baba's mission was to give us the strength to make the choice with clarity between where we are going and where we need to go!

The choice we have centres around what kind of planet and what quality of life we want on this planet for many centuries to come. Do we want to continue in the manner we have been doing and make the planet uninhabitable for ourselves? Or do we want to evolve a new peaceful civilization that lasts for many centuries to come and a civilization in which we order our priorities away from economics, consumption, greed, exploitation, hatred intolerance and pollution? If we make this choice, the choice of wisdom, love, unity and purpose, the choice of spirituality, then we can use the spectacular technology of computing that will be a million times more powerful than now and reach infinite potential in the next 20 years. We can use nano technology, genome research, neuroscience, stem cell research, agriculture and aquaculture. We can develop resources of solar energy, mitigate the threats of climate change, of terrorism and food and water insecurity. Our use of knowledge will increase by 2 to the power of 100 to solve our problems. The world economy will grow by a factor of 7. Our capacity to evolve too will increase by a quantum factor.

My vision is that our choice will be for a long lasting peaceful era of human flourishing and of powerful technology for this purpose. But at present the increase in technology is not growing in pace with the increase in wisdom and spirituality. So this means there is a wisdom gap, there is a spiritual gap. We have to grow wisdom and spirituality at the same pace as we are growing our science and technology. We need wisdom and spirituality to plan and protect a future from manmade disasters and avert the risks to the future generations. Our contribution is the contribution of the technology of wisdom and spirituality. SSEHV and Sathya Sai Philosophy, they are the direct antidote to all that is destructive in humanity – selfishness, greed, and intolerance. Sathya Sai Philosophy is compatible with all religions, all cultures and all traditions. It is not backward looking and it is fully compatible with advances in science and technology. It gives our choices and actions a voice of reason, responsibility and caution so we guide the direction of both the advances in science and the direction of the present global culture. The crown jewels of Sathya Sai's teachings are the five eternal human values sourced in the Atmic principle of Oneness, Unity of Faiths, Ceiling on Desires and selfless service. These will refine the human consciousness. When these teachings become at least as important to our civilization as speed, competition and economics are at present then we will be looking at a new era of peace, prosperity, a Golden Age that will last for many centuries into the future.

So we need to grow beyond religion without love, medicine without compassion; law without justice; education without character; business without morality and politics without principles. So my vision of future prosperity arises from spiritualizing everything.

Indeed this is shared by many of the presenters at this conference. You will see from the program and the presentations that Sathya Sai Philosophy and SSEHV have a lot of answers to the challenges that we are facing as humanity. We will have played our role in the Divine Drama if we become His instruments in serving humanity and contributing our share of effort in raising the level of awareness and raising consciousness that we can do

something about the challenges ahead. My vision is that the challenges are all surmountable and the technology we need are the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba. We may wonder "Can we as an Organisation or as ISSE's have that big an impact that we can solve global problems?" My answer is "Yes we can!"

There are many other organizations that share our ideals, if not the means of achieving these ideals. We need to work in sync with them. Consider the concept of the hundredth monkey, of culture creatives: 10 to 20% have to make the change and the quantum leap, the changes in culture, will occur.

At the ISSE we are very proud of the level of awareness, the depth of dedication and the broadness of view of our alumni and the faculty of the ISSE. We have personally witnessed the growth of consciousness and dedication in every single individual who has tried to go deeply into Baba's teachings in the courses at the ISSE, based as they are on a full understanding of the global issues and the power of Baba's teachings in transforming human consciousness. Many of the alumni will be presenting the papers on their special interests and it is both very pleasing and eye opening to see how far we have come in taking the vision of Sai further along the road to a prosperous future in Australia. But this is just the beginning, more is to come!!

All what you see happening here is happening everywhere. There are ISSEs and Sai Schools in so many places. Global prosperity, not global destruction is my vision. I envisage a vital role of ISSE, proactive individuals, alumni of ISSE and children that get SSE in Sai Centres and those who get SSEHV in their schools. We have now research that children going through SSE do just as good as children going through the Sai School. The impact starts with the individual who influences the home, then the nation and ultimately the world. Where there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in character. With harmony in the home it leads to order in the nation, what results in peace and prosperity in the world.

The Institute of Sathya Sai Education has a number of functions. Not all the Institutes undertake such a variety of functions as we do in Australia. Here we have been fortunate in the quality of the volunteers we have in the Faculty and this has enabled us to go into diverse fields of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values. A big thank you to the volunteers at the ISSE, the students and the alumni!

For those not familiar with the structure, the Institute in Australia has a central location in Canberra. This Sathya Sai School here in Murwillumbah is a part of the ISSE, as is the U Turn Training School in Gympie, headed by Doug Bettens. We are in the process of developing hubs of the ISSE in several states and Channa Seneviratne will talk on the activities in the Melbourne hub. Similar hubs are being developed in Sydney and in Perth and the Sai School here is of course one of these hubs.

The primary responsibility of the Institute is to oversee the Sai School in all its aspects and to design training programs in Human Values for the teachers and parents in the Sai School, and develop material for the Sai School children. In this respect there is very close collaboration between the Principal and the ISSE Director and the staff of ISSE. The ISSE is represented at the School by Deputy Director Bob Molloy. The ISSE manages the Sai School through its Board of Governors made up of myself, Neville Fredericks and Channa

Seneviratne. I congratulate the Sathya Sai Organisation on its support and commitment to the Sai School and it should be kept in mind that it takes 20+ years to fully establish a school!

There are several other functions of the ISSE. These include the running of various courses, including the Introductory, Intermediate and the Diploma Courses and the Advanced Diploma by research. The Australian ISSE is also responsible for the training of the SSE teachers. The National Education Coordinator is an ex officio member of the faculty of the ISSE.

The Institute trains the teachers in the state schools in the pedagogy of Sathya Sai Education and develops human values lessons and other material for the mainstream state schools for use by the teachers. Such material has been used over the years in many schools around the country. Shaninee will describe her experience in her cluster of schools.

In Australia there are several initiatives in SSEHV and these will be described by many SSEHV institute faculty members and alumni during this Conference in their papers and in workshops. E.g. Arti from Melbourne and also Selvanie and Krish Naidoo from Newcastle. In the past the ISSE has had collaboration with Australian universities in awarding the Diploma and Advanced Diploma. But the universities have proved to be commercial enterprises and the collaboration is expensive for our students. More recently we have been preparing ourselves for an independently accredited RTO status. But this is an onerous task, We have been the recipients of an award from the Queensland Government for the training in Queensland of 10 students with Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and this we will commence in the near future with the collaboration of an RTO.

In Australia we are very fortunate. We have more than 200 persons who have completed their Diploma studies and of these over 40 have gone on to undertake formal qualification through the Canberra Institute of Technology of Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Another 10 will undertake this training in Perth while, as mentioned, 10 will go through this training in Queensland. The Certificate IV Course in Training and Development is a fairly rigorous program but a lot of the Diploma holders were given recognition of their prior learning through the Diploma course and Advanced Diploma courses.

We feel proud as there is no other ISSE in the world which has so many well qualified trainers. The need for good quality trainers is grounded in the fact that both ISSEA and the Sai Organisation are essentially training organizations. In the Sai Organisation there are educational programs for the children, adolescents, young adults and for the adult devotees and the ISSEA is essentially a training Institution. Inevitably it is the quality of our trainers that will determine the quality of our programs and in this regard we want to be the very best. Indeed we feel proud also that our trainers are trained in the state of the art educational technology and we expect high quality work from them, both in the ISSEA and in the Sai Organisation.

Following the completion of the Training and Assessment Course some of the trainers in Canberra and in Sydney, and also in the Melbourne hub of the ISSEA were given specific tasks to deepen their understanding of the material they had learned. This gave them

hands-on experience of applying their learning to the context of the ISSEA training. This was an interesting learning experience for most of the trainers, particularly as their understanding was probed by requiring them to submit their assignments to scrutiny and feedback. This was as enriching as the course itself!

To enhance the level of understanding further and to increase the capacity and skills for training and assessment, we have held an intensive follow up weekend Workshop in Canberra with those who could attend. The participants came from Victoria, NSW, ACT and from the Sai School. These participants are now getting ahead with further training locally by working with each other using a draft Trainer Guide developed by ISSEA.

The ISSE is looking into the feasibility of planning further follow up Trainer workshops in Canberra. At present the ISSE is running a pilot Introductory Course in Canberra, is to run Certificate IV in Training and Assessment in Brisbane and Perth in the near future in collaboration with an RTO, and thus gain hands on experience in the delivery of this type of course material contextualized to SSE and SSEHV in preparation for our own application for RTO status. It is planned that with the material developed from these courses the Introductory and Intermediate course will be formally launched in the states where we have fully trained trainers.

The ISSEA is committed to steadily strengthen and build capacity locally in all the hubs in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and Murwillumbah. In the delivery of the Introductory and the Intermediate courses the hubs will conduct their activities under the supervision of the ISSEA in Canberra. Material for these courses will be standardized and given from the ISSEA in Canberra; however the hubs will be expected to contribute to enhance the quality of the teaching material on an ongoing basis.

Future

- more and more work will focus on the hubs with the ISSEA having a supervisory role

Challenges

- to motivate more people to become 'values activists'
- availability
- time poverty
- more grey power – come and settle in Canberra

Transformation is at the heart of all activity – nothing in life has been more rewarding!
There is an open invitation to one and all – release your creative energy in order to change the world!

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Murwillumbah,
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