

ALL INDIA SAI SAMAJ

The Five decades of growth

His Holiness Narasimha Swamiji started the monthly magazine 'Sai Sudha' in June 1940. Swamiji was a brilliant writer, a great orator and a capable organizer, and by his forceful and convincing presentation of facts and events, could carry the audience with him (he being a capable analytical lawyer himself) and will leave an everlasting impression on the lucky audience. The 'Sai Sudha' became a powerful magazine, eagerly awaited, carrying his speeches, editorials, and messages inspiring the devotees with faith in God and in Sai and enabling them to solve their various problems of life.

The first decade therefore was full of his speeches and writings and his tour programs. 1940 to 1950 were ten years of great pioneering, foundation work of Swamiji, when the seed that was sown has now grown into a big Banyan Tree with thousands of roots in the form of Sai Mandirs, Sai Bhajan groups, Sai Centres of philosophy, Sai Libraries, etc, all over the vast country of ours. North, East, South and West. If Sai has become a household word, and Sai Baba Pictures adorn the Pooja room of every house, this was entirely the result of Sai Prachar by His Holiness Narasimha Swamiji. Swamiji had visited every town in Tamil Nadu, addressed numerous meetings, performed Sai Pooja himself at various devotees' houses, and had addressed elders as well as students in all towns, and today every taluq and town has a Sai Mandir and a Sai Bhajan group. The places visited were Kancheepuram, Wandiwash, Vellore, Kumbakonam, Tanjore, Tiruchi, Madurai, Pudukkottai, Coimbatore, and numerous villages on the way. Andhra Pradesh too was extensively travelled by Swamiji starting from Gudur, to Nellore, Chirala, Rapalle, Guntur, Vijayawada, Vishakapatnam, Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Ramachandrapuram etc. Sai Bhakthi flooded Andhra Pradesh, and every village, Taluq and Town has Sai Mandirs and Sai Associations. In Karnataka, Swamiji visited Bangalore, Hubli, Mysore, Shimoga, Arsikere and other places where too Swamiji's visit had resulted in Sai Mandirs and Sai Associations. So far as Kerala was concerned, Swamiji had visited Palghat, Calicut, Ernakulam and Trivandrum. The entire South India witnessed the resurgence of

religious faith, especially in Sai's faith which resulted in bringing together a synthesis of religious outlook and all classes of people were drawn together by Swamiji's personality and Sai Prachar.

North India too felt the impact of Swamiji's soul-stirring Sai prachar work. Swamiji visited Poona, Bombay, Indore, Allahabad, Calcutta, Baroda, and by his speeches and writings had a tremendous following in all these important cities.

Swamiji's initial work 'Self Realization' put Sage Ramana Maharishi on the international stage, and many foreigners from Europe and America were drawn to Sage Ramana, because of this interesting book. In Madras, ardent devotees attracted to Swamiji were Sri K. Varada Rao and his wife, Sri V. Venkatarama Iyer, Advocate, Sri A. Kuppuswamy, Sri Panini Rao and family, Sri B.V. Viswanatha Iyer. Barrister Sri Krishnamurthy, Smt S. N. Sastry, Sri Vanchinatha Iyer of Egmore, Sri Kuppuswamy Iyer, Sri Kothandarama Chetty, Sri A. Varadappa Chetty, Sri G. Viswanatham Chetty, Sri V K. Pantulu, and a host of other Advocates, Doctors, Engineers, students, and others in different walks of life. Sri A.V.K. Chari of Coimbatore, Dr. Surianarayanan and Sri K.R.S. Iyer of Madurai (Railway Officer), Sri P. Gopalaswamy Iyer, Sri J N. Bose of Calcutta, Sri K.R.R. Sastry of Allahabad, Sri Sharma of Tribune, Sri Saipadananda Radhakrishna Swamiji, Sri K. G. Sreenivasan of Bangalore, Sri Durgiah Naidu, Sri Chalapathi Rao of Guntur, Sri G.V.R. Naidu Garu of Secunderabad, Sri Swami Kesaviahgaru of Shenoy Nagar, Madras and many people from various centres of India became close to Swamiji and helped Swamiji in Sai Prachar work.

Swami Kesaviahgaru was a great Sai Bhaktha and his Pooja at Sai Mandir at Shenoy Nagar, Madras, attracted many devotees and Swami Kesaviah used to give Udhi as Baba Prasad, and gave good counsel and solace to innumerable devotees. The Naga Sai Mandir at Coimbatore where Sri Sai Baba appeared as a Naga - Cobra was a great post-Mahasamadhi event evidencing Sri Sai Baba's continued work of protection and guidance.

The All India Sai Samaj was started by Swamiji in 1941 and was first located in a small rented room in Venkatachala Mudali Street, Triplicane, Madras. From there it was shifted on 13-4-1942 to a rented house No. 2/14 at T.S.V. Koil Street in Mylapore, Madras. The house owner was scared at finding a dead rat in the house and no one was prepared to live in that house. When the information was passed on to Swamiji by Sri Panini Rao, Swamiji took up that house and Sai Mandir was housed there. Sai worship dispelled all evils and doubts and when the owner got a good price by selling the house, Swamiji shifted the Sai Mandir to Dr. Nanjunda Rao's house at Brodies Road, (now RK Mutt Road) Mylapore on 1-9-1943. Sai worship continued there till January, 1949. When that house was needed by the owners, the Mandir was shifted to a compound in Sri Thyagaraja Iyer's (Advocate) house at Vonkatesa Agrahara very near to our present place on 14-1-1949. Meanwhile funds were raised for purchase of a plot for finding a permanent place for Sri Sai Mandir. In Aug-Sept 1951, Swamiji arranged to perform Homas for the welfare of humanity.

In 1943 a drama on the "Life of Sri Sai Baba" was staged by Dr. V. Ramamurthy, himself acting as Sai Baba. He resembled Sai Baba himself and many devotees actually offered worship and Aarathi, and many broke down at the Mahasamadhi Scene. Swamiji congratulated Dr. V. Ramamurthy on this splendid performance and the Doctor became an ardent follower of Swamiji and took part in all functions of All India Sai Samaj. Fortunately he is present today at Besant Nagar, Madras, leading a retired life, and we offer our sincere prayers and wish Dr. Ramamurthy, his wife and family members all prosperity and a happy life.

By the support of the public and ardent work by Swamiji's close devotees. Sri M. D. Krishnamurthy, Sri V. K. Pantulu, Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji and Sri J.D. Pannalal, the land where the present plot of land housing the Mandir was purchased Sai Mandir was constructed and the Samaj moved in on 7-7-1952, Guru Poornima day. The adjoining place, where the centenary Hall has been constructed and where all our AISS conferences are being held, was acquired later. The Sai Mandir has been built step by step by the efforts of the Sai devotees with their devotion and selfless service at the feet of our Gurudev H.H. Narasimha Swamiji. The period

1951 to 1960 witnessed the speedy growth and consolidation of All India Sai Samaj. The Maha Kumbabhisheham was performed on 19-10-1953 after performance of various Homam etc. in the immediate presence and blessings of Swamiji, Sri Thambaiappakkam Arunachala Sasthri did all religious rites with great fervor and enthusiasm. There was a serious accident to Swamiji when he slipped in his bathroom and he suffered thigh bone fracture. He was admitted to the General Hospital, Madras, where he lay like Bhishma with a leg tied up for over a month. Who knows the ways of Baba! This period was utilized by Swamiji to embark on his final phase of work of all times, namely, completion of the meritorious book on 'Life of Sai Baba' in four volumes. The first two volumes were published in his life time.

The first two decades saw the publications of Swamiji coming out one after another, like wave after wave. His books 'Introduction to Sai Baba,' 'Who is Sai Baba,' 'Puja vidhi,' 'Sai Mananam' 'Glimpses of Sai Baba,' 'Devotees Experiences/ 'Wondrous Saint/ 'Sai Harikatha/ 'Khaparde's Diary' 'Guide to Shirdi 'Sai Sahasranamavali', 'Sai Bhajans', 'Sai Puranam' 'Sai Charithram', 'Sai Baba's Charters and Sayings', all became the invaluable treasure given to us. These publications were made available to one and all, and Swamiji, besides these important works, was busy with the monthly 'Sai Sudha'. These books were all *"No copyrights reserved"*

Swamiji corrected the proofs, even wrote addresses etc and was very particular that 'Sai Sudha' should reach all members in time. It is for us his followers to see that 'Sai Sudha' is well edited and published.

In 1956 on Oct 19th after the Mahasamadhi celebrations, we witnessed the merger of our dear Swamiji with the Master. All of us maintained nonstop vigil at the bed side of this great Rishi of our modern times. Doctor Rangachari and others did their utmost to save Swamiji. It was a Thursday night on 19-10-1956 and early Friday morning at about 3 A.M. Swamiji merged with the Divine Master Sri Sai Baba. Just about 15 days prior to his nirvana he made the declaration that he is the only spiritual head of AISS and will continue to be a permanent indweller at the cottage behind the Mandir and will continue to lead, guide and protect the

devotees. He, however, nominated Sri D Bhima Rao, Retired Post Master General as his successor President of AISS.

Swamiji was cremated at the Mylapore cremation grounds. Thousands of devotees paid homage to this great and beloved Gurudev, and it was Baba's grace that I was one of the pall bearers carrying the body with the japa of 'Sai Ram'. Sri V. K. Pantulu, a dedicated follower of Swamiji made all arrangements for this last journey attending to every minute particular.

When there was a great spiritual void in AISS created by the absence of Swamiji in flesh and blood, by the blessings and grace of Sri Sai, we had the august presence of Brahmasri Gopalakrishna Bhagavata Swamy who recalled that he had known our Swamiji even before, and his presence and participation in all major functions of AISS from 1959 onwards fulfilled the much needed spiritual leadership. The era of Namasankeertan was thus started by our dear 'APPA' as he was called, and the AISS became the headquarters of Sai Namasankeertan with Appa taking the lead and giving us the amrit of Hari Kirtanas, the Divine Music as was done by Saint Sri Thyagaraja, Meera, Chaitanya Prabhu, Dasganu etc.

During the third decade, from 1961-1970, after Swamiji left his mortal coil, Sri D. Bhima Rao, humility personified, carried on 'he mantle of Swamiji and was full of Sai Bhakthi. Sri V. K. Pantulu like the true and dedicated disciple of Swamiji carried out Sai Seva and Sai Bhakthi along the path laid down by his Gurudev. When Sri Bhima Rao became sick and could not carry out his duties as President, Sri Saipadananda Radhakrishna Swamiji took over as President.

Earlier, Swamiji had sent Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji to Bangalore in 1952 and conferred on him the title 'Saipadananda'. True to his Master, Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji strove hard to continue Swamiji's teachings and Sai prachar. Wherever Swamiji toured, Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji accompanied and was indeed the AISS representative at Shirdi Samasthan. Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji developed contacts with Shirdi Samasthan, which started realising the sternuous work of AISS in the spread of Sai's Message. Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji as the Founder

of Sai Spiritual Centre, Bangalore and later as the President of AISS brought these two organisations very close and had continued the work of Narasimha Swamiji with a missionary zeal. From 1963 till 1980 Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji personally took part in all the All India Sai Devotees Conventions held by AISS and other Sai Institutions at various centres of India. His work as editor of Sai Sudha was outstanding and his biography of Gurudev H.H. Narasimhaswamiji was a simple effective tribute to his Guru Seva.

The Silver Jubilee Celebration of Sai Sudha together with the 10th All India Sai Devotees convention in 1965 and the Golden Jubilee of Sri Sai Baba Mahasamadhi in 1968 were the highlights of AISS in this decade. The year July 1962 was a great shock to us in that the ardent devotee Sri V. K. Pantulu merged in his Gurudev H. H. Narasimhaswamiji. His life of total surrender to Swamiji, his selfless service, and his inspiring leadership in building a team of young workers were a great contribution immediately after 1956 for continuing the future role of AISS.

Sri P. Gopalaswamy Iyer till then Vice President took over as Secretary and carried on the work of Samaj with all devotion to Swamiji and with an earnestness of purpose.

The Sai Free dispensary was started by Sri Narasimhaswamiji, with Dr. Mahadevan as its first doctor. There was also a Homeopathy wing. Many doctors are doing honorary service even now. At least about 30 to 50 patients are being treated daily. A Dental wing was opened in 1962 in grateful remembrance and homage to Sri V. K. Pantulu.

The Narasimha Swamiji Free Reading Room and Library was inaugurated in 1957 by Sri B. N. Datar, the then Minister of State for Home Affairs in the Cabinet. Sri S. Seshadri, Sri M. S. Srinivasan, Sri S. Vittal Rao, Sri B. S. Padmanabhan and many others did tremendous service in the opening of Library. Sri S. Seshadri took over as Secretary in 1965, and from 1965 onwards we had the unique privilege of having in our midst Sri M. B. Rege, the ankita child of Baba.

The Zinc Sheet shed that was housing AISS was replaced by a concrete slab, the first of its kind with no pillars in the Hall, and this work was done just in time for the grand celebrations in July 1966. Sri S. Janakiraman, Engineer, and his nephew Sri G. Seshan were responsible for this monumental construction of a pucca roof for the Main Hall of AISS. Sri Bhagawataswami of Pudukottai opened the Hall. This decade saw the starting of Sai Vidyalaya and the school was inaugurated at the sacred hands of Sri M.B. Rege in 1967. It was our great fortune that we were able to get the guidance and active participation of Sri M.B. Rege from 1965 to 1971 in all our activities of AISS and in the Shirdi tours organized by us and at the Madras and Bangalore conventions. Bhagavatha Sammelan in 1968 being the Golden Jubilee of Sri Sai Baba's Mahasamadhi celebrations was indeed a memorable occasion when we had in our midst the great spiritual personalities in the august presence of Shri M.B. Rege, Sri Gopalakrishna Bhagavataswamiji, Swami Abedananda Maharaj, Sri Basheer Baba, Sri Haridass Giri, Sri Purushothama Goswami of Brindavan etc. Sri Harigovindji of Brindavan with his team of young children enacted the Chaitanya Mahaprabu Leelas and Sri Krishna Leela. These events were unparalleled, and it was the glorious Namasankeertan with Bhakti overflowing and devotees were overwhelmed by Divine ecstasy and were very happy they were fortunate enough to take part in the feasts of spiritual food. This was indeed the grace of Sri Sai Baba and his beloved apostle Sri Narasimha Swamiji.

In 1963 a Koti Archana to Sri Sai was undertaken. The Koti Archana concluded in July 1966, Guru Poornima Day, synchronizing with the Silver Jubilee Celebration of All India Sai Samaj. A second series of Koti Archana was started in 1966, at the request of several devotees, which concluded in October 1968 during the 50th Mahasamadhi Celebration (Golden Jubilee). Chanting of the Lord's Nama two crores of times was the Power behind the tremendous strides taken by the institution during the third decade of the Movement.

The fourth decade 1970 to 1980 once again plunged us in sorrow, Sri M.B. Rege Maharaj reached the feet of Sai in Feb. 1971 and in April 1971 our Gopalakrishna Bhagwataswami reached the feet of Lord Narayana. We were again orphaned. Our Sri Saipadananda

Radhakrishna Swamiji merged in Sai in Jan 1980 on the eve of Uttarayana. Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji had been our guide from 1963 to 1980, and with his kindness, all embracing love and patience guided the AISS to overcome many problems. His presence, his wise counsel was very much needed to steer on a correct course for AISS. He brought about a great deal of understanding and brought AISS and Sai Spiritual Centre as one united Sai institution. We had to once again invoke the blessings of Sri Sai and our Swamiji to put us on the correct path. We again started our Bhajan and Namasankeertan with Sri Sanjeevi Anna in our midst.

Sri R. Natesan took over as Secretary in 1970; we had of course Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji to guide us as President of AISS. Sri R. Natesan was responsible for the pictorial depiction of "Life of Sai Baba" in beautiful and attractive paintings which adorn our Main Hall. This indeed is of great help and attracts all devotees who are all able to see the important events of Sri Sai's life in pictures, so well drawn by Sri Kandaswamy of Sai Arts. After the demise of Sri R. Natesan, Sri K. Viswanathan took over as Secretary and during his period, there were the Nellore and Calcutta conventions, where the message of Sai and Swamiji were taken to East, City of Calcutta, which resounds with the eternal message of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. Sri Sai Baba and Swamiji were indeed the continuing link in the spiritual history for religious renaissance stressed the essence of all religions and contributed very much to communal harmony, having followers from all communities, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis etc.

The Padhukas of Sri Sai Baba were brought from Shirdi to Nellore and from Nellore to Madras, AISS. The devotees worshipped the Padhukas, and it was indeed the grace of Sri Sai and proof of His assurance that He continues to protect and guide us in our activities.

During 1980 to 1990, the last decade, there was again a great shock. Our beloved Gurudev H. H. Saipadananda Radhakrishnaswamiji merged in the Master in January 1980. This loss created a great void in spiritual leadership. But remembering his wise counsel, we are carrying on along the path shown to us by our Narsimhaswamiji and Sri Radhakrishnaswamiji.

Sri T. Kesava Rao became the President and Sri Muthu Venkataraman, the Honorary Secretary. During this period, three Conventions were held, 22nd at Bangalore, 23rd at Madras and 24th at Kausali, Garkhal, Himachal Pradesh. At the 23rd Convention, the book "Baba's Charters & Sayings" was released, and this fulfilled the long felt demand of the devotees. It was on 2nd February 1987 the Marble statue of Sri Sai Baba was installed without in any way disturbing the present sanctum sanctorum and preserving intact the legacy left by our Swamiji, and we are continuing to worship Sri Sai Baba Portrait placed by our Swamiji in the Main Mandir.

Today as we celebrate the 25th Silver Jubilee Convention of the All India Sai Devotees marking the Golden Jubilee issue of our 'Sai Sudha' the most sacred Sai journal, we must plan for the coming decades. Sri M. Vasudevan who is now the Secretary and Sri R. S. Ramakrishnan, the President of AISS. have been doing their best in conducting the affairs of AISS with the help of the various members of the Managing Committee. Sri S. Karunakaran and Sri K. Ramaswamy, the Vice Presidents, have taken up important functions, and the AISS is planning its future development, especially in again restoring and expanding the Library, in developing the Sai Free Dispensary and also in the expansion of Sai Vidyalaya. Efforts are being taken to reprint all books written by our revered H. H. Narasimha Swamiji. The 'Life of Sai Baba', Vol. I has been reprinted, thanks to the great help given by Sri Durga Rao and family. We at AISS must maintain high principles of public conduct especially when running such religious institutions as ours. All our actions must be characterised by humility, integrity, earnestness and devotion. The devotees must be enabled to obtain the highest fruit of Sai's grace. The reading room and Library must be run efficiently. The Sai Free Dispensary needs greater attention and Medicare must touch the sick, the poor and the economically backward sections.

The Sai Sudha maintains its rich traditions. The 'Sai Sudha' must carry articles which foster inter religious cooperation and universal brotherhood. The 'Sai Sudha' stands for the essence of all spiritual pursuits and represents the essence of Sai teachings on Sai Faith built on Nishta and Saburi. It has no place for hatred or dishonesty. It must at all times propagate the life and teachings of Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi along the path shown by H.H. Narasimha Swamiji and

also deal with Swamiji's dedicated life of absolute surrender. We must march forward in bringing about a Sai Family based on love, service and cooperation. It has no place for quarrels on religious or any other matter that deprecates any individual or society. The 'Sai Sudha' stands for the highest ideal of Human dignity and shall carry on this Sai Torch for the younger generation to emulate, and carry on this Sai Faith and Sai Bliss assiduously built on Nishta and Saburi. This goal is as eternal as the Sun and the Moon and the Stars and let us become the Ankita Children of Sri Sai Baba and Gurudev H. H. Narasimha Swamiji.

The Golden Jubilee of 'Sai Sudha' is a milestone and by the grace of the Master Sri Sai and blessings of H.H. Narasimha Swamiji, we hope to continue the Sai Mission through the columns of the 'Sai Sudha'. The Silver Jubilee convention of the All India Sai Devotees reaffirms our total commitment to Sai Worship as our Divine Master. Let us build Sai faith and, marching together as a Sai Family, work for the advancement and progress of all classes of people in India and abroad without any differences based on caste or creed or religion or language barriers.

<http://saileelas.org/articles/articles.htm>