



Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Healthcare Mission



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*Offered With love and humility
at the Divine Lotus Feet*

Overview

This booklet provides a brief introduction to Sri Sathya Sai Baba's philosophy regarding health maintenance, healthcare and healthcare administration.

It begins by describing a need for a second look at healthcare delivery and then provides a succinct history of the vast Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare Mission.

The concluding section provides excerpts from some of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's discourses on health issues that have been delivered over several decades.

Introduction

Doctors who are eminent experts in their fields have come to participate in the symposium here. Sincere efforts should be made to put your great talents and skill to good use. The countries from which you have come may be different. But all of you have one thing in common: noble feelings. These noble feelings are God's gift to man and come by Divine grace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, January 1994

Modern medicine has come a long way from the days of Ayurvedic medicine and Hippocratic rationalization to the present-day bustle of tertiary care hospitals, air ambulances and robot-assisted remote surgeries. Medicine began as the first human science with the goal of improving life and easing our souls. But somewhere along the way it lost the “human” touch and morphed into a mere science.¹

Intellectual regression is not the way of history. Man has always progressed, yet how is it that today we see medicine as a purely disease-oriented science? The power of social evolution to transcend human progression cannot be underestimated. It is driven by a simple redefinition of what constitutes human welfare. In the past, medical achievements were predicated on the premise that the body and the mind were a unified entity closely linked to an individual's health. Taking care of a sick individual meant understanding the disease and the patient. In modern times, however, the mind and the body are divorced from each other. This has persuaded medical science to focus on either the disease in the body or that in the mind. Hippocrates remarked, “It is more important to know what sort of person has a disease than to know what sort of disease a person has.” Indeed, it is even better to know well both the disease and the person.

Viewing a disease as a conglomerate of the mind, body and soul of the patient is an exercise in redefining medicine. For the patient to heal fully the healthcare team cannot ignore any one of this triad.² Many view such an exercise as a luxury with marginal benefits at best. In any case, for this view to have an impact on the health of the patient all healthcare workers who come in contact with the patient must exude the same approach of caring for the patient as a whole.

I must also point out to the doctors serving here that perhaps even more than the drugs they prescribe, the sweet, soft words they speak and the love and sympathy they evince can cure better and quicker the illness of their patients. Look upon them as your own kith and kin, as your special guests and as your closest friends, and attend to them lovingly and with unflinching care. I call upon you to maintain this attitude in every situation. Remember that the patient has to co-operate with you in order that you may affect the cure, and when cured, the patient confers on you satisfaction, joy and a sense of elation. Be grateful to the patient for all this.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, August 1976

Institutionalization and financial viability have been rigid edifices that have stood at the entrance to centuries of social reform. In this setting, empathy, love and compassion have taken the back row, being looked upon more as a synonym of pointless altruism than a corporate mission.³ Empathy, love and compassion do not have to lead to a path of financial self-destruction. To the contrary, they can speed healing and result in immense patient and physician satisfaction, leading ultimately to corporate growth. More importantly, it can put the “human” before the “science.” Thus, medicine is reborn.

The Economics of Humanity

The healthcare industry is built on a dichotomous relationship. Point-of-contact professionals like physicians, nurses, paramedics and pharmacists have the opportunity to be mostly patient-oriented, while institutions, corporations and managers are understandably bottom line driven. Modern medicine is increasingly institution-dependent. Admittedly, we have healthcare crises in many developed and developing countries. It may be in the form of funding and budget shortfalls or declining health indices or even patient dissatisfaction. This raises the question of whether past ideals of patient care with love and compassion are compatible with corporate financial goals. To put it simply, do we have the time and financial resources to be loving and compassionate? The answer is a resounding yes.

Humane and empathetic medicine suffused with love and compassion soothes the patient. This impact on the patient together with the very act of radiating a loving attitude soothes the caregiver. If caregivers and patients are happy, the corporate environment is bound to prosper.⁴

Western competitive economies share a common characteristic that make them quasi-efficient. The property was first identified by Vilfredo Pareto and is referred to as Pareto efficiency.⁵ Pareto efficiency is now the yardstick by which

economies and corporate performance are measured. It embodies the concept that efficiency necessarily involves a state where no single individual or corporation can improve its position without making someone else worse off. In contrast, by incorporating actions, speech and character that are suffused with love and compassion, the patient is better off, the caregiver is better off and the hospital is better off. Since every party concerned is better off, it must mean that the previous state of eschewing love and compassion as part of a primary corporate mission was not Pareto efficient.

A Spiritual Hospital

Body, mind and spirit are the essence of human existence. They are an integral part of a human being. Spirituality enables one to maintain inner peace and tranquility. Such peacefulness is well known to reduce stress, boost the immune system, speed up tissue healing, enhance physiological response to disease, and improve individual quality of life.^{6,7} What then are the factors that give one this enigmatic tool of inner peace?

Our interactions with other individuals form a large part of our lives. If these interactions are filled with love and driven by compassion, the outcome at the end of the day is a deep sense of peace in the individual. However, few take the time to incorporate the simple act of love into their daily professional lives. Sri Sathya Sai Baba has urged each individual in the healthcare profession to provide loving and compassionate care to their patients. This endows the caregiver with the deep sense of inner peace, resulting in better performance and better health outcomes for the patient.

Doctors should win the hearts of the patients by talking to them with compassion and concern. Diseases are half cured when the doctors talk to the patients with love and consideration. The sick and the diseased respond favourably to your treatment once you start talking to them with love and with a smiling face. But, if you wear a grim expression, the patient loses heart. Doctors should administer the injection of courage and encouragement as calcium is administered to the weak. It is essential that doctors should have the sterling virtues of love and compassion. Compassion is more important than money.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, January 1994

Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Healthcare Mission

Developed economies of the world face a common dilemma today: can adequate reallocation of healthcare budgets avert the dismaying trends of an increase in the proportion of aging population (with decreased healthy life expectancies over 60) and decreasing financial contributions from governments?⁸ A solution may not be straightforward, and the debate may continue over private versus public funding of healthcare. The following is a brief look at one successful model of compassionate, free healthcare.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba's mission of humane healthcare delivery is accomplished through several instruments: the general hospitals, the super-specialty hospitals, community care, medical camps, disaster relief, preventive healthcare, health maintenance and education. But more than any institution, the single most significant factor in the successful delivery of this vision of healthcare is Sri Sathya Sai Baba. His teachings and exemplary life have inspired thousands of individuals who administer care for patients. Each healthcare professional in this system is suffused with a deep sense of love, empathy, compassion and commitment for every patient and works to his utmost abilities as if the patient were his own kith and kin. This inspired commitment produces excellent patient outcomes.

For several years now, Sri Sathya Sai Baba's vision for Healthcare has resulted in the provision of free state-of-the-art primary, secondary and tertiary medical care for the needy. This smooth delivery of excellent free medical care is unique in the world and has been widely studied. Several healthcare professionals in the world are now turning their attention to the documented benefits of applying Sri Sathya Sai Baba's principles to healthcare delivery. The epidemiological reach of such a global effort can be stunning, with considerable impact on disease prevention. A brief history of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Healthcare Mission and its continuing efforts in this direction is now provided.

Preventive Healthcare

The units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organization are engaged in enthusiastic service in the two areas of Health and Education. To improve and maintain the health of the people, continuous education on the principles and practice of hygiene and environmental cleanliness is essential. Education is the most effective safeguard against physical and mental ill-health. So these two activities are closely interrelated.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, August 1976

Sri Sathya Sai Baba has said that the duty of the physician is not only to treat with love and compassion but to educate patients in healthy living and thus prevent frequent visits to the physician and hospitals.

In countries outside India, medical camps are organized by the Sri Sathya Sai Overseas Organization on a regular basis where patients are screened for common preventable diseases and given medicines free of cost. From Abu Dhabi to Zambia, in 24 countries and 6 continents, 213 medical camps were conducted in the last 12 months by the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Overseas Organization.

These camps lasting one to four days cover two aspects of healthcare: primary prevention and minor treatments and surgeries. Health maintenance and disease prevention brochures have been handed out and patients individually counselled regarding a healthy lifestyle. Patient education was offered for heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, dyslipidemia, obesity, asthma and smoking cessation.

Malaria Prevention Project

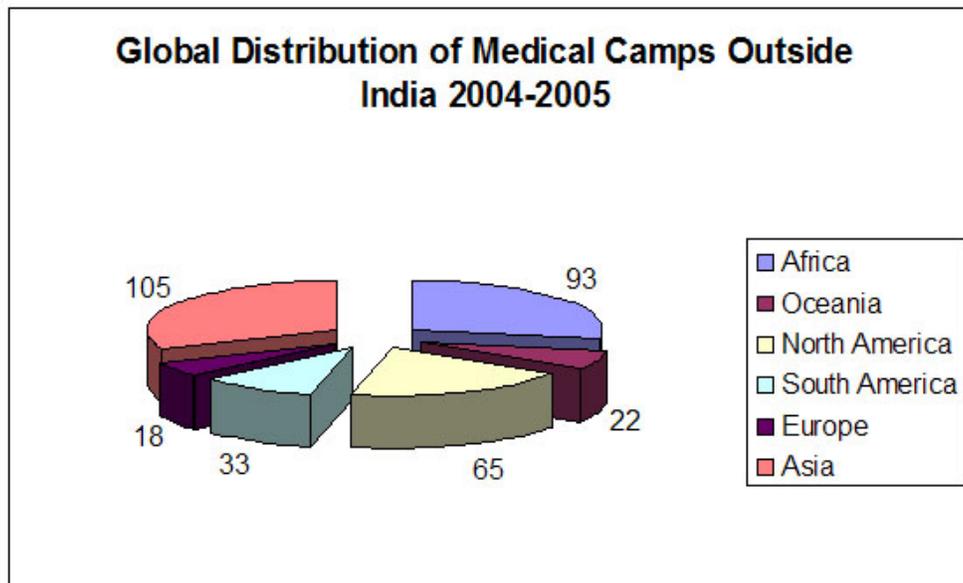
Malaria kills up to 1.8 million children per year in the African continent and 350 million people live at high risk of malaria in 26 African countries. In order to combat the spread of this vector-transmissible disease, the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization of Kenya has embarked on a remarkable mission to endow individuals in Kenya with mosquito nets. This national project, referred to as the Sai Net project, has the full cooperation and appreciation of the National Ministry of Health in Kenya. After several discussions and briefings with the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization, the National Ministry of Health, Malaria Control Program, has accepted the Sai Net Project as a partner in the roll back malaria program. It now has a plan to provide 50,000 Sai Nets to the people of Kenya, particularly to the high-risk people (pregnant women and children below 5 years of age) by Swami's 80th Birthday in November, 2005. This started in Kitale in west Kenya with a population of 16,800 in 20 villages on June 11, 2005. One hundred and twenty volunteers, some of them experienced doctors from Sri Sathya Sai Organization provided two Sai Nets along with 4 kilograms of maize meal to each family. The insecticide-treated mosquito nets in distinctive ochre shade, has the name Sai Net and the message of Baba, "Love All and Serve All", inscribed on them. A total of 4,400 nets were given with love to 2,200 households with a total population of 16,800 spread over 20 villages.



A Sai Net on display

Diagnosis and Therapeutics

In addition to health education and disease prevention, diagnostic and therapeutic services, including surgeries, have been carried out. During the last year, more than 68,000 patients were seen in the Sri Sathya Sai Baba medical camps all over the world. Professionals present in these camps included physicians, dentists, audiologists, pharmacists, nutritionists, opticians, podiatrists, physiotherapists, lab technicians, nurses and speech therapists. Physicians provided care in specialties such as internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, cardiology, pulmonary medicine, endocrinology, gastroenterology and ophthalmology.



In India, medical camps are organized on a regular basis in rural areas where patients are screened for common age-related preventable diseases and given medicines free of cost. Hundreds of thousands of patients are treated for eye ailments, and thousands of cataract operations are performed. Free medical dispensaries are being run at various places by Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organizations. Blood donation camps are organized. Medical teams from Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organizations of various states visit orphanages, old age homes, leprosy homes, etc. for medical check-ups on a continuous basis.

Secondary Healthcare (The General Hospitals)

Sri Sathya Sai Baba's mother Easwaramma had expressed her desire to Him that there should be a hospital for all the poor people of Puttaparthi. Sai Baba had promised her that it would be done at the proper time. Accordingly, in 1956 Puttaparthi was blessed with its first hospital.



The Sri Sathya Sai Baba General Hospital, Puttaparthi circa 1957

What started as a small 2-bed hospital has blossomed over the years to a full-fledged 100-bed hospital.



The Sri Sathya Sai Baba General Hospital, Puttaparthi, present day

Under the benevolent guidance of Sri Sathya Sai Baba another hospital was opened at Whitefield, Bangalore. Since the hospital was located on the outskirts of a rapidly expanding city, it had to grow at a great speed. Today that hospital has become large enough to handle more than 1,000 patients daily.

It is not the service of one, but the service of many which has contributed to the rapid development of our hospital! A single flower cannot make a garland. All the people—the patients, doctors, workers—work in a spirit of harmony and unity. It is this sense of unity which contributes to purity, and this purity of heart secures divinity. This hospital is a direct proof of the presence of purity, unity and divinity. It is our fond hope that such purity, unity and divinity should prevail in other hospitals as well.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, January 1994

Both hospitals today have specialty units. The various departments in the general hospitals are:

- General Medicine
- Pediatrics
- General Surgery
- Orthopedic Surgery
- Plastic Surgery
- Urology
- ENT Surgery
- Ophthalmology
- Sri Sathya Sai Baba Eye Bank
- Obstetrics and Gynecology

These hospitals have made steady progress as institutions offering high-quality free service to poor villagers. The dedicated and selfless services of the full-time and visiting doctors have resulted in the phenomenal growth of these hospitals. The majority of patients, who come for treatment to the general hospitals and super-specialty hospitals, are from socially and economically weaker sections of society.

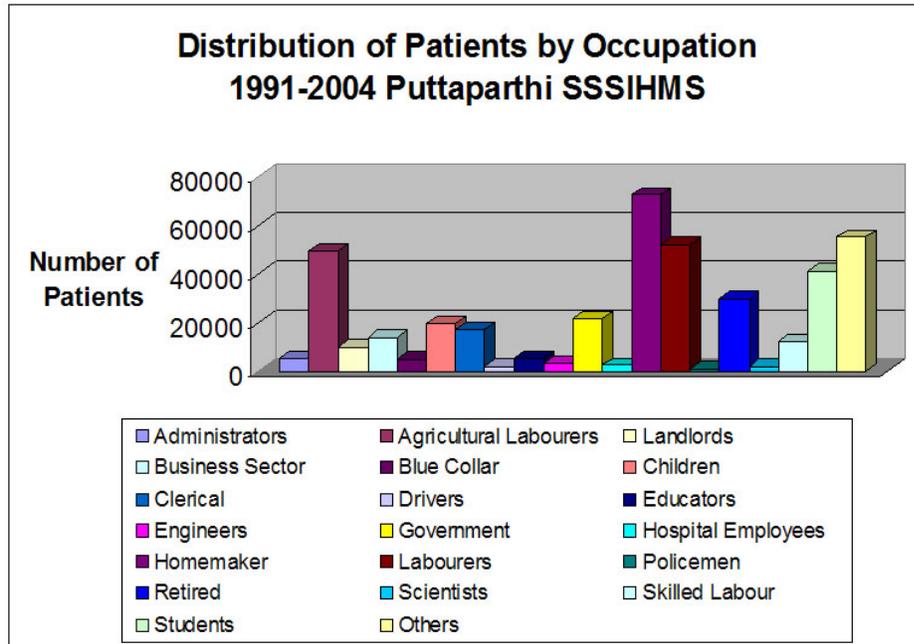
Tertiary Health Care (The Super-Specialty Hospitals)



The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Puttaparthi

The super-specialty hospitals are tertiary care hospitals within Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Healthcare Network. The hospitals provide excellent patient care facilities to everyone without discrimination of any kind. Expensive surgeries with state-of-the-art equipment are performed in several subspecialties including neurosurgery, cardio-thoracic surgery, ophthalmology, urology and orthopaedics entirely free of cost to the patient.

A free nursing school is also associated with the super-specialty hospital in Bangalore. Over a period of 14 years since its inception, the super-specialty hospital in Puttaparthi alone has carried out approximately 14,000 cardiac surgeries, 15,000 cardiac catheterizations, 24,000 urological surgeries and 24,000 ophthalmologic surgeries have been completed and over 500,000 outpatients seen. The distribution of patients seen is skewed towards those with low household incomes.



When any educational or medical institute is established, the sole aim is to make a business of it. There are few who are ready to set up institutions to provide free facilities for the poor. Therefore, from the start we decided to set up a hundred-crore hospital near Prasanthi Nilayam. Even as higher education is free here, 'higher medicine' will also be free....Whether it is heart bypass operation, brain surgery or eye surgery, everything will be done free. This has been decided upon from the very start of the project.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, November 1990



The Sri Sathya Sai Baba Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Bangalore

Disaster and Emergency Relief

The Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization has rendered timely medical assistance during natural disasters such as earthquakes and, more recently, the destructive tsunami. Teams of physicians were promptly dispatched to Sri Lanka to provide medical and social aid and work with devastated families. A total of 180 physicians and other volunteers were included in these teams, the scope of whose relief work spanned isolated areas of the country. The type of care not only included general medicine and surgery but also grief counselling and group psychiatric care.

The response to the call was rapid. A 14-member team of doctors, nurses and volunteers from the United States of America and Canada departed on January 29, 2005 to serve many villages near Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. Functioning as a unit of Sai Selfless workers, they provided comprehensive aid in the form of acute medical treatment, psychological counselling and socio-economic assistance to the survivors of the catastrophe. The team counselled more than 1,400 men, women and children. Medical clinics were conducted in tents, and the team treated 108 patients. The hallmark of all these activities was selfless service rendered with Love, compassion, empathy and humility. The service rendered was from Love, through Love, to Love, for Love. Not only were the villagers helped, but every member of the team was spiritually and emotionally touched.



A makeshift medical clinic in post-tsunami Sri Lanka

On February 10, 2005, another 10-member team of Sai devotees departed for one of the most devastated areas of tsunami-hit Sri Lanka. The team comprised physicians from Canada, the United States of America and Argentina. They took with them over 800 pounds of medical supplies, books, toys, clothes, knapsacks and food. With coordination and help from the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization of Sri Lanka, the team went to Aliyavalai in the northeast coast of Sri Lanka. This village was one of the worst-hit areas in the aftermath of the disaster. A medical camp clinic was set up, and 450 patients were seen with a range of conditions including skin lesions, wounds and respiratory tract infections. A well-baby clinic was also conducted, where over 150 children of ages 0-3 years were seen. Grief counselling was another crucial area addressed by the Sai team. A school was set up to resume educational activities for children, and classes were begun by local teachers and Sai volunteers. Water supply was brought to the village by installing a large tank with pumps to draw groundwater. Nurses from surrounding areas were gifted with bicycles so that they can visit the village and continue attending as needed. In July, a psychiatrist from the team along with help from the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization in Sri Lanka revisited the village of Aliyavalai to follow up on families that were most devastated.

From March 11-25, 2005, 152 Sai volunteers from the United Kingdom and Australia in collaboration with Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization of Sri Lanka served the people in the tsunami-affected areas in Sri Lanka. The relief mission comprised of eye and ENT specialists, neurosurgeons, general physicians, dental surgeons, paediatricians, gynaecologists, pharmacists, optometrists, nurses and other skilled individuals from various disciplines. They brought with them six tons of general and medical supplies that included medicines, antibiotics, vitamins, medical equipment, and also stationery, toys and clothes for children. The medical equipment included phaco-emulsification machines that are used for cataract surgery, slit lamps, optical microscopes, orthopaedic and neurosurgical equipment.

These volunteers worked as seven teams in different locations throughout their relief mission. The teams in the North, East and South of Sri Lanka provided the following medical services: eye examination, cataract surgery, neurosurgery, orthopaedic surgery, health check for school children, grief counselling, classes on dental hygiene for children, psychological support, and provision of medical equipment and supplies to the hospitals. They performed about 800 cataract surgeries and 200 dental surgeries, 22,000 consultations in various specialities, 2,000 dental consultations, and several hundred orthopaedic procedures. They disbursed around 7,000 pairs of eyeglasses. The doctors screened several thousand school children from 58 schools and updated their health report cards.

In Indonesia, members of the Sai Organization sprang into action by formulating immediate relief and rehabilitation plans for the tsunami victims in the devastated regions of Banda Aceh on December 27, 2004. Two task forces were formed. One was based at Medan, the closest city to Aceh, and the other in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. On December 30, 2004 the first task force

distributed emergency relief supplies such as food, water, medicines, clothes, blankets and other basic necessities. On December 31, 2004, the second team from Jakarta swiftly arranged the bulk of medical supplies that were urgently required by the only two hospitals in operation in Aceh.

On the January 1, 2005, a team of seven Sai devotees flew to Banda Aceh and personally hand carried life-saving medical supplies for thousands of the injured victims. On January 3, 2005, the Medan task force made their second trip bringing staple food and water. The team, assisted by professionals, set about making necessary arrangements for the installation of water purification units. On January 5, 2005, another trip was made to Banda Aceh. They carried with them fresh supplies of broad-based antibiotics, anti-depressants and urgent medicines as advised by the Ministry of Health in Jakarta. On January 9, 2005, doctors and Sai devotees from Medan also organized a two-day medical relief camp serving 1,487 refugees in six villages of North Aceh regency.

Several teams of medical personnel now stand by to provide such free, far-reaching assistance on short notice.



Medical Relief after Tsunami devastation in Sri Lanka, 2005

Thailand was another country that was devastated by the tsunami. In response to the disaster there, a team of Sai devotees from Bangkok travelled to the south on December 29, 2005. For their transportation, they used one of the Sathya Sai School buses and another vehicle. They distributed blankets, food and medicines. Again, on January 23, 2005, a medical camp was held in a school in Chengdau, a district 80 kms from Chengmai. In that camp, 262 people were seen by the medical team and medicines were given to patients. Clothes, quilts, slippers, eating utensils and toothbrushes were distributed to 300 people. Food was served to 720 people, and all felt uplifted. These medical teams are ready and experienced to help in the future and provide timely assistance.

Some doctors wonder how we are able to give free treatment, free operations and free meals to our patients. To be frank, there should not be any room for wonder in this regard. You can work wonders with purity of heart. Any work which is started with purity of heart is bound to succeed.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, January 1994

These are difficult times for the world as we see a decline in health and increasing concerns about health budgets, quality of healthcare and lack of universal access to healthcare. A call for radical changes in present healthcare management philosophies has been made in several countries. Healthcare reform has been on the political agenda of several governments. The timing is now perfect for a rebirth of humane medicine.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba has brought on social reform by his magnificent humanitarian works in the fields of education, healthcare and rural upliftment. His message to provide health services with selfless love, compassion and empathy has inspired thousands of healthcare professionals. This model of Sai Healthcare may indeed inspire ideal healthcare worldwide.

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Select Passages on Healthcare from Discourses by Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sri Sathya Sai Baba is a world teacher par excellence. He has delivered hundreds of discourses on various topics of social and spiritual interest. Among these, are a collection of discourses on healthcare of the individual, healthcare administration and healthcare delivery. He emphasizes the need to tend to the body, mind and spirit as a whole. Modern medicine delivered with love and compassion promotes disease prevention, speedy recovery from illness, and health maintenance.

The following excerpts from some of these discourses are presented to better understand Sathya Sai Baba's philosophy of healthcare.

Man suffers from two types of ills, physical and mental; the one caused by the disequilibrium of the three tempers of Vaatha, Pittha and Sleshma (wind, bile and phlegm) and the other caused by the dis-equilibrium of the three Gunas: Sathwa, Rajas and Thamas (qualities of serenity, passion and inertia). One peculiar fact about these two types of illnesses is that the cultivation of virtue cures both. Physical health is a prerequisite for mental health and mental health ensures physical health! An attitude of generosity, of fortitude in the presence of sorrow and loss, a spirit of enthusiasm to do good, to be of service to the best of one's capacity—these build up the mind as well as the body. The very joy derived from service reacts on the body and makes you free from disease. The body and the mind are closely interrelated.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, September 1959

You have all gathered here to celebrate the completion of four years in the life of this Sathya Sai Hospital. So I want to tell you that the best and the wisest things are to see that you do not fall ill. The doctor read out in the report that this year the number of out-patients as well as the number of operations was greater than last year, as if that is a sign of progress! But I do not think that speaks well of the people around and their sense of values. The hospital should radiate preventive measures also and try to educate the villagers in methods of avoiding illness. Develop self-reliance; that is the best tonic. By regulating your diet and avoiding certain bad habits, you can preserve health. Moderate food, and food of the Saathwik type, will promote mental poise and also physical happiness. Mitha-ahaara (moderation in food) is always to be welcomed. Many people consume more than the necessary quantity of rich food and such have to practise moderation. So too, if you do not smoke, you escape a number of illnesses that follow that Raajasik (passionate) practice. Any intoxicant or stimulant, because it disturbs nature's even trend, is harmful. Moderation in food, moderation in talk, and in desires and pursuits; contentment with what little can be got by honest labour, eagerness to serve others and to impart joy to all—these are the most powerful of all the tonics and health-preserves known to the science of health, the Sanaathana Aayur Veda, the Veda of the full life.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, September 1960

The greatest disease (or absence of ease) is the absence of Shaanthi; when the mind gets peace, the body also will have health. So, every one who craves for good health must pay attention to the emotions, feelings and motives that animate the individual. Just as you give clothes for a wash, you have to wash the mind free from dirt again and again; otherwise, if dirt accumulates and you form a 'habit,' it is difficult for the dhobi as well as harmful to the clothes.

It should be a daily process; you should see that no dirt settles upon the mind; that is to say, you should move about in such company that dirt is avoided. Falsehood, injustice, indiscipline, cruelty, hate—these form the dirt; Sathya, Dharma, Shaanthi, Prema (Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love)—these form the clean elements. If you inhale the pure air of these latter, your mind will be free from evil bacilli and you will be mentally sturdy and physically strong. As Swami Vivekaanandha used to say, you should have nerves of steel and muscles of iron. That is to say, you should have hope and joy and elation as an unshakeable resolution, not despair and dejection.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, September 1960

The Foundation Stone which I laid just now at the hospital for the Children's Ward will, under the care of the Health Minister who is here, soon become a source of solace for the suffering. The Prayer Hall which I am now proceeding to open will afford solace for the mind, and strength and steadfastness in all endeavours that require courage and faith in a Higher Power that rules the Universe. Spiritual health is preserved and promoted by attention to three Gunas: Sathwa, Rajas and Thamas. Health is preserved and promoted by attention to three humours: Vaatha (wind), Pittha (bile), and Kapha (phlegm). Thri-dosha has to be avoided, that is to say, the three humours must not get vitiated or unbalanced. A healthy body is the best container for a healthy mind; illness makes the mind agitated and anxious. The material and the spiritual are the two pans in the balance; they have to be attended to, in equal measure, at least until a certain stage of progress is attained in spiritual development.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, December 1967

Doctors agree that illness is caused through faulty food habits and foolish ways of spending leisure. But they do not seem to know that food is a word that connotes a wider variety of 'intakes.' Every experience that is drawn through any of the senses in 'food' has an effect on one's health. We say 'food for thought'; whatever we see or hear or smell or touch has an effect on the body, good or bad. The sight of blood makes some people faint; or, it may be some bad news, that administers a shock. Allergy is produced by unpleasant smells, or when something intrinsically unwelcome is contacted or tasted. A sound mind ensures a sound body; a sound body ensures a sound mind. The two are interdependent. Health is essential for happiness; happiness or a capacity to be happy, whatever may happen is essential for physical health, too.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, October 1974

Every activity of man is dependent on the energy he derives from the intake of food....

Food is generally looked down upon by ascetically minded saadhakas and seekers and treated as some thing which does not deserve attention. But since the body and the mind are mightily interdependent, no one can afford to neglect it. As the food, so the mind; as the mind so the thought; as the thought, so the

act. Food is an important factor which determines the alertness and sloth, the worry and calm, the brightness and dullness. The scriptures classify food as Saathwik, Raajasik and Thaamasik and relate these types to the three mental modes (gunas) of the same names.

Avoid Raajasik and Thaamasik food. Man is the only living being which dislikes raw food found in the natural state. All other animals eat things as they are—grain, grass, leaves, shoots, fruits. Man boils, fries, melts, mixes and adopts various methods of cooking in order to satisfy the cravings of the tongue, the eye and the nose. As a consequence, the food value of these articles are either reduced or destroyed. When the seeds are fried, they do not sprout; that is clear proof that the 'life-force' is eliminated. Therefore, uncooked, raw pulses just sprouting, are to be preferred. Also nuts and fruits. The coconut, offered to the Gods, is a good Saathwik (pure) food, having good percentage of protein besides fat, starch and minerals. Food having too much salt or pepper is Raajasik (passion-rousing) and should be avoided; so also too much fat and starch, which are Thaamasik (disposed to inactivity) in their effects on the body, should be avoided.

An intake of too much food is also harmful. Simply because tasty food is available and is being offered, one is tempted to overeat. We have air all around us but we do not breathe in more than we need. The lake is full but we drink only as much as the thirst craves for. But overeating has become a social evil, fashionable habit. The stomach cries out, 'Enough,' but the tongue insists on more, and man becomes the helpless target of disease. He suffers from corpulence, high blood pressure and diabetes. Moderate food is the best medicine to avoid bodily life. Do not rush to the hospital for every little upset. Too much drugging is also bad. Allow nature full scope to fight the disease and set you right.

There are four pollutions against which man has to be vigilant—of the body (removable by water); of the mind (removable by truthfulness), of reason (removable by correct knowledge) and of the self (removable by yearning for God). "Vaidhyo Naaraayano Harih," the Shruthis declare. God is the Doctor. Seek Him, rely on Him, you will be free from Disease.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, September 1979

If the doctor is full of love and compassion, God works through him. Doctors, therefore, have to endeavour to become the receptacles of Divine Power during their healing process. How can they heal, when they are themselves ill, either in body or mind? When their minds are innocent and contented, a smile will spontaneously shine in their faces and their words will be soft, sweet and tender—softer than any pharmaceutical balm. The manner and mien of the

physician are more effective in drawing out the latent sources of strength in the patient, than the most powerful drug. A prayerful atmosphere of humility and veneration will go a long way to help the cure. We may say that the behaviour, the voice, the mien of the doctor count for fifty per cent of the cure, the drugs and their efficacy manage the other half.

Doctors have to practise with devotion. Note that the science of medicine, practised by doctors in India is known by the sacred name of Ayurveda—the science of healthy longevity. Its source too is as divine as the source of the Vedas! It has to be studied with as much awe and veneration as the Vedas are learnt, at the feet of the guru. It has to be practised with as much devotion and dedication as Vedic ceremonies and recitations are fulfilled. The Veda or knowledge that confers Aayu (longevity) is Aayur-Veda. It can prolong life, preserve and protect life from hazards.

Ayurveda deals not only with the curing of illness, but it also deals with the prevention of disease. Absence of mental ease and equanimity leads to what we correctly call disease. One sacred duty of the doctor is to advise persons on how to preserve health and prevent disease. He has to be vigilant in society to discover and suppress every tendency in Aahaar and Vihaar (food habits and recreational activities) by which diseases are developed. The dress worn by humans, the houses where they live and the areas where they are situated, have to be tidy and clean. The food that is taken has to supply all elements needed to keep the body strong enough to resist illness. Even if it falls short a little in this respect, health can be maintained if it is unpolluted, pure and holy. The atmosphere breathed in, the water taken in, the ground lived on, the animals and plants that surround—all have maleficent microbes that may cause illness, if the mind and body are not equipped with powerful resistance armour. Exercise, bathing, washing, cleaning, etc., are prescribed for this purpose. The body is the boat on which we voyage across the ocean of samsaara (worldly life) and it has to be kept trim and sea-worthy. The voyager too has to be strong, confident and courageous.

The current belief is that medicine is to be valued for its use during illness. But this point of view has to change. Medicine is used to see that one does not fall ill, just as the purpose of truth is to so live that one is not subjected to birth again.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, September 1980

With a view to setting an example to the authorities, to the community and to every individual, Swami is undertaking activities, small and big, in various spheres. This hamlet of Puttaparthi had a population of barely 800. To conceive of a University for such a village was a fantastic dream. Another amazing

phenomenon is the construction of an aerodrome near such a village, when there are no aerodromes even at district headquarters. Puttaparthi has become the cynosure of all eyes in the world. Above all, you should enquire why a highly sophisticated and most modern hospital, which should be located in a well-developed metropolis, has been set up in this rural area. The wealthy can go anywhere and get medical relief with their abundant resources. But the rural poor cannot go far from their villages for treatment. It is for the sake of such poor folk that this hospital has been established. I told our doctors to examine the heart ailments of the villagers around here. Today an auspicious announcement has to be made. Within fifteen minutes of the inauguration of the hospital by our Prime Minister, the first operation was begun in the hospital. Within three hours four operations were performed. One was a very complicated case. There was a hole in the heart of the patient. All the operations were performed successfully and all the patients are doing well. The hospital will provide relief to villagers. You should know how this hospital came up. Nowhere else was such enthusiasm and zeal displayed by workers engaged in the construction as in this hospital. Even the smallest worker did the work of ten persons with zeal and joy. All workers performed their jobs with enthusiasm and devotion. Work on the hospital began in May after my return from Kodaikanal. Within five months from May to November, work has been done which would have taken five years. This is a gigantic project. It is intended to benefit people for a thousand years. Our purpose is to provide for cardiac cases in the first phase. Then, it will be the lungs. The third wing will be concerned with kidneys. The fourth will be the neurology wing.

This hospital has been set up to provide relief to villagers suffering from these four kinds of ailments. No distinction is made, however, between villages and cities. Diseases do not afflict only villagers. They make no territorial distinctions. Likewise, there will be no differentiation in providing relief. Our intention is to provide relief to all comers.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, November 1991

For achieving anything in the world, a sound body is essential. The body is the primary requisite for the pursuit of Dharma (righteousness). The body has to be in good health. Even for the realisation of the four goals of human life—Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha—sound health is essential. Having regard to the basic importance of health for all purposes, Swami had launched such medical institutions.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, November 1991

It is easy for doctors to perform operations. The real difficulty is in taking care of the patients after the operations. It is easy to slice vegetables. But, to prepare a tasty dish out of that is very difficult. This task of "cooking" is done by the nurses. If there is no good nursing, even the operation may be a failure.

Therefore in order to train a good hard band of nursing personnel, training facilities are being provided... The entire training is free... Only, we want persons with pure hearts to join the course.

Today we have quite a large number of people working in our hospital. But, there is more work to be done because of the ever-growing number of patients seeking relief. Hence, we need many more nursing personnel...It is not easy to make available such facilities for people in remote and isolated villages. Because in this village this magnificent hospital has been established, it has been possible to provide relief to a very large number of poor villagers.

Many are not aware of the genesis of this Institution. What counts is only action and not advertisement. When a heart operation is performed, the patient has generally to stay in the hospital for at least a month. It is no exaggeration to state, with reference to our hospital, that within a day after the operation, the patient starts eating on his bed the very next morning. On the third day, he starts moving about. On the fifth day, the sutures are removed. On the seventh day, the patients are discharged fully recovered.

If a person is in good health, he can accomplish anything. There are now a very large number of people enjoying good health after undergoing an operation in the hospital. What is happening in the hospital is not for today or tomorrow. It is an example to the whole world.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, July 1992

If we change our vision, we will experience peace. When people view the world with the vision of love, they will have peace. All diseases will be cured. Most diseases have their origin in the mind. Everything has a psychological basis. When a person feels that something is wrong with him, he develops an illness. A healthy mind is needed for a healthy body. But it is not enough to be physically healthy. Man needs Dhaivaanugraham (God's grace) also. To acquire God's grace you have to cultivate the love of God. Love has become today a kind of show. Genuine love should emanate from the heart. Start the day with love, spend the day with love, end the day with love, that is the way to God. If you develop love, disease will not come near you.

I am seventy years now. I can see even an ant that is far away. It is not due to divine power. It is physical power. What is the reason? It is diet control. My weight has remained the same for over sixty years—108 lbs only. Proper balance must be maintained throughout life. There must be balance in respect of knowledge and several other things. Students pollute their knowledge by seeing bad things, listening to bad things and by bad thoughts. Their minds are perverted by addiction to films. They should learn to lead pure lives. Only then will they experience bliss and health.

Self-restraint is essential to maintain health. Regulate your habits and develop good manners, which are the mark of a true man. Similarly the good devotee is one who does his duty. Duty is God. Everyone has to develop the manners required in daily life. The manners should be such that they confer self-satisfaction. You should conduct yourself properly not for the sake of others but for your own sake. When there is self-satisfaction there will be self-realisation. For all these you must have self-confidence. Most people today have no confidence in themselves and are perpetually racked by doubts. In Jesus's time there was one 'Doubting Thomas.' But today all are 'Doubting Thomases.' Everyone doubts every other.

For every man two things are essential: Arogya (good health) and Ananda (Happiness). Health is for the body and bliss is for the spirit. With these two wings you can soar to any height. You need both the things, for which you must secure God's grace. To get God's grace, you have to engage yourself in sacred action. Bear in mind the three P's—Purity, Patience and Perseverance. With these three you are bound to acquire good health and bliss.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, June 1995

The Whitefield hospital which began in a single room, has now grown into a big complex. The doctors have to meet the growing demands on their services. The numbers of patients coming to the hospital are growing all the time. All services are totally free. Not a paise is collected from the patients. Such free medical treatment is not given anywhere in the world. This applies to the Super Speciality hospital in Prashanthi-gram. Elsewhere hospitals have become big business. In fact, in every sphere commercialisation is rampant. Education is a business, music is a business and health is a business. The whole world has become a market place. Welfare services should be free for all. There are numerous people who cannot afford the costs of medical treatment. Doctors should render free service to such persons. My words should not be misunderstood. Even in the earning of incomes there should be a limit. Many doctors lack determination.

They join a hospital on a good salary. But after a month or so, when another hospital offers a higher salary, they go over to the new hospital. How long are you likely to stay in the other hospital? When you go like this, you forfeit the confidence of hospital managements. Even workers behave in this way. They shift from place to place. The right thing is to stick to a job for three or four years. Then your work will secure automatic recognition.

Doctors should inspire confidence in patients. Doctors are obsessed with salaries. They should be more concerned about patients. When they concentrate on their patients, they will develop into excellent doctors. Inspire confidence in the patients. Then any medicine you give will work wonders. The patients will hail such a doctor as a "good doctor." A "good doctor" in due course becomes a "God doctor." "Vaidhyo Naaraayano harih," it is said. The doctor is Divinity itself. Doctors should render service in this spirit. Service is God.

Very good work is being done in our hospital as well as elsewhere. Bharath would not be what it is without good people. Without meritorious people can the world experience light? There are good and bad people in the world. All should become good and develop into Godly men. The same Aatma is present in everyone.

Doctors should look after the patients with the same care they would show to their kith and kin. Then all would experience equal happiness.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, June 1995

Doctors should serve the poor with spirit of sacrifice. There is no greater service than this. God is the sole refuge of the destitute and the forlorn. As man is the embodiment of God, it is his primary duty to help the destitute and the forlorn. Medicine should not be commercialised. It is meant to promote heart to heart and love to love relationship between doctor and patient. A true doctor is one who realises this truth and conducts himself accordingly. One with commercial outlook is not a doctor at all. In fact, he is a patient himself! Spirit of sacrifice is the hallmark of a true doctor...Only through service, can one become the recipient of Divine Grace. Life is meaningless if one does not participate in service activities. The best way to love God is to serve God. You should aspire for the welfare of all and follow the path of Love and Service. Only then will your life find fulfilment.

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba, July 2003

People should not suffer from ailments of any kind. Regard these hospitals as yours. They are not mine. They exist for your sake. Anyone is free to come to these hospitals and seek relief and lead an ideal life thereafter. This is my benediction on all of you.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, July 1992



