

HOWZAT KOVAI

RURAL SPIRIT AT ITS FULL COMES ALIVE

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COIMBATORE, SEPT. 4

The true spirit of rural Tamil Nadu came alive at Isha Gramotsavam in Codissia Grounds in Coimbatore on Friday as cricketer Sachin Tendulkar regaled Kovai with a vibrant *Vanakkam* and a lofty sixer.

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev of the Isha Yoga and cricketing legend Sachin Tendulkar kick-started the sports event held as part of the *Gramotsav*, hitting the first ball at the finals of hand ball and volley ball matches. About 60,000 people had converged at the Codissia grounds to witness the traditional village games, cultural programmes and village food festivals.

Cricketer Sachin Tendulkar arrived at the venue to a roaring reception to inaugurate the men's volleyball by 'serving' the first ball. In his power-packed speech starting with *Vanakkam* and ending with a *Namaskaram*, Sachin Tendulkar encouraged the people to take up some sports for overall well being and on the role played by sport in shaping his life.

In his speech, the Sadhguru pointed out the ability of a ball to change the world. "We



Sachin Tendulkar and Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev share the dias at Isha Gramotsavam in Coimbatore on Friday.

(Right) Sudhir Kumar Chaudhary, an ardent fan of Sachin Tendulkar enthralled the audience at the venue of Isha Gramotsavam.

— Vignesh.B

would become a lifeless nation, if we do not give an opportunity for people to play games," he said.

Thousands of people, mostly youngsters and ardent fans of Sachin poured in at the venue to get a glimpse of him. "I had seen him play cricket in television and I am glad to see him and hear his inspiring speech here. Cricket is one of my favourite sports. I take time every week-

end to play cricket to relieve my work stress and keep myself fit," said S Arun Kumar, a marketing executive from Singanallur.

A die-hard Sachin fan, Sudhir Kumar Chaudhary came with his entire torso and face painted green, white and saffron. He ran around with excitement with the national flag in his hand and enthralled the thousands of people in the

venue.

Isha Gramotsavam has brought transformation in villages by diminishing caste differences; addiction to liquor has come down and has regained the spirit of rural India, he said.

Isha Gramotsavam, is part of Action for Rural Rejuvenation (ARR), a rural revitalisation programme, which has so far reached over 4,600 villages and 42 lakh people.



In Kovai, Sachin bats for fit India

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"I would encourage sports for all in India," Sachin added. "Engaging in sports helps the community to come closer and stay tighter in difficult times. Sports teach you on team work, which can never fail. It teaches you to take care of one another, to sacrifice for your colleague and to back him up, when he is not doing well. And if you apply it in your day

to day life, most of the problems will be solved," he said.

Rising cases of diabetes in India are a cause of worry, the cricketer said. "India is becoming the diabetic capital of the world, which I am not really proud of. It's all because of our changing lifestyle. We need to change our habits and lifestyle by engaging in some sporting activities that takes care of your health.

He shared his experience on his childhood passion for sports and remarked, "I still remember, even as a child, my grandmother always told me to take care of my health as it is one's true wealth."

Inspiring the youth to take up sports activity, Sachin also shared his love for the game of volleyball since his childhood days. "I loved playing volleyball since childhood. And I continued playing volleyball

even while playing cricket for the nation," he revealed.

Emphasising the point, he said, "Sports taught me a lot of things in life. To be disciplined, to be focused and to have your routine organised. It's not always that I went out and succeeded. But there were a number of occasions when I couldn't do well, but sports taught me to get up on my feet again and compete in the right spirit," he said.