We need an immediate change in our lifestyles: Sachin Tendulkar

The Codissia Grounds was packed to the rafters as early as 2 pm. The occasion was the grand finale of the annual edition of the rural sports meet - Isha Gramotsavam - held by a spiritual organisation in the city. The sports meet is a celebration of village life that showcases the essence of rural Tamil Nadu through a display of rural sports, art, drama, music and dance. And what made this edition a must-be-there event was the presence of the Master Blaster Sachin Tendulkar. The ground looked like a sea of Sachin fans that kept chanting his name and waited to catch a glimpse of the cricketing legend rather restlessly.

The arrival of Sudheer Kumar Choudhary, an ardent fan of Sachin, who has attended every home match the Indian team has played since 2003, made the crowd go berserk as they clamped around him to take selfies. Sudheer was more than happy to pose and did a few rounds of the ground waving the Indian flag. Soon, the clock struck four and it was Sachin's turn to make his appearance along with the spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev. There was no stopping the crowd after that. Cameras went on an overdrive and fans did everything they could to grab the attention of the former Team India cricketer.

Sachin kick-started the evening by serving the first ball of the final set of the volleyball match. He also watched the final leg of a women's throwball match. Buoyed by the competitive spirit of the participants, Sachin said, "I noticed a couple of matches here and I really appreciate the competitive spirit of the players. They paid heed to every decision of the referee and competed in the right spirit. Being a sportsman, I am happy to see that sports is being encouraged among villagers. Sports has taught me to be disciplined, focused and more organised. I wish events like these are taken to every village in the country, especially the one I have adopted in Nellore, Puttamraju Kandrika. The place is going through a difficult time and an event like this would bring the people there together."

The cricketer also expressed his concern over India's tag of being the diabetic capital of the world. "We need an immediate change in lifestyles and sports are all about that. We have to engage ourselves in outdoor activities. Not many know that I used to play volleyball in my apartment as a child before I started playing cricket. Sports has given me a reason to smile. And I must say that the participants here have won my heart by just taking part in the event. I urge all of you to start playing one sport for a healthier and happier life."

Jaggi Vasudev then added that a ball has the power to change the world. "Two generations of people have had the joy of watching Sachin play and he is a sporting phenomenon that has inspired a whole generation. I am glad that he has come to endorse the spirit of rural Tamil Nadu. We need more playfulness in adults and its time we made India a playful nation. "The event culminated with Jaggi throwing a ball at the Master Blaster and the cricketer hitting it up high towards the packed audience amidst a roar.