



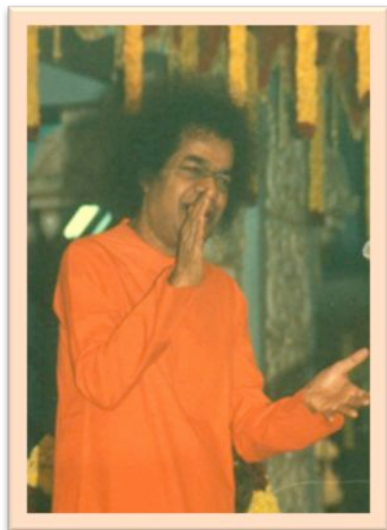
SAI

Computer Literacy And Professional Skills

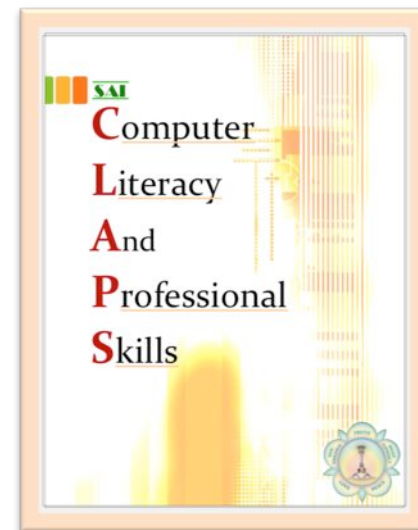
Report

**A humble offering at the lotus feet of our beloved
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

With Love
Sai Centers of Northern California & Nevada, USA



- WHO:** Region 7 Sai Centers of Northern California and Nevada
- WHEN:** Saturdays, 9 AM - 12 PM, January 12 – May 18, 2013
- WHERE:** Project Pride, Oakland, CA
- WHAT:** Teach Computer Literacy and Professional Skills
- WHY:** Empower women, build long-term self-confidence and self-sufficiency



Project Pride is a residential facility in Northern California, providing supportive services, family focused treatment, and housing to pregnant and parenting mothers with substance use and mental health challenges. Residents receive training to improve socialization, communication and life skills, including vocational components.

MOTIVATION

The motivation to start this project is best said in the words of the Project Manager at Project Pride, "Now we face a new future, one where technology will influence not just the women, but their children as well. It is no longer an option to be unable to type or browse the web. But with these new challenges, come new opportunities". With this program officially integrated into the resident's rehabilitation plan; Sai CLAPS began on Jan 12, 2013.

CREATING a LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

As Project Pride's facility lacked any classroom infrastructure, the volunteer team with the help of Sai centers across the region, procured all the required equipment including new laptops, USB flash drives and class room stationery. These materials helped transform the residents' dining hall into a makeshift classroom.

"Thank you for all your time and money you all gave to us at project pride you not only gave me skills I can use for the rest of my life but you gave me something inside, I have pride in myself now. I would never have been able to pay for the things I know now. You all are wonderful people. You guys inspired me to want to give back to my community too"- Student

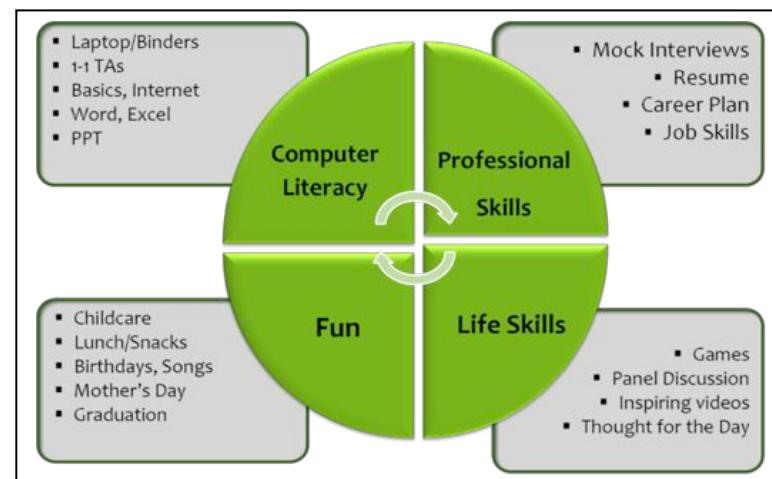


Six months of effort went into designing a program that could empower women. To achieve this goal, the team took a holistic approach by incorporating human value centric activities such as thought-provoking games, songs, panel discussions, into the computer and professional skills curriculum. A pre-course student survey, feedback from project pride staff and past experience from similar projects in the region helped immensely to finalize the 18-week program.

“Thank you for helping me help myself, one day I will help more people too. Thanks a million. You are all Amazing!!! I really appreciate the opportunity and I will pray and/or chant for you in all your future endeavors” - Student

SALIENT FEATURES

- One-on-One Teaching Assistants (1-1 TAs):** Each student was matched with a unique TA for the entire 18 weeks. This enabled the student to feel comfortable enough to open up about difficulties and get immediate help. It also helped volunteers to closely assess the student and help them keep pace with the class.
- Hands-on Learning:** Teachers alternated 20-minute lectures with 10 minutes of lab time, allowing students to understand and apply what they learned and ask questions. The teachers also brought in real-life examples and relatable analogies to hold students' interest and make learning fun.
- Homework and Quiz:** Homework (value based and computer topics) was given every week. An online graded quiz (using Moodle) was administered at the end of every topic.
- Computer Lab:** Laptops were made available to the students on a loan basis every day. This enabled them to practice new lessons and homework outside of class time.
- Name Tags:** Nametags decorated with inspiring quotes were used through out the course to make the residents feel comfortable addressing the volunteers.
- Continuous Monitoring:** The counselors at project pride were kept updated about the student progress and attendance on a weekly basis.



CLASS SCHEDULE

08:30 - 09:15 (35 min)	Class Setup, Child care
09:15 - 09:20 (05 min)	Class begins, silent sitting
09:20 - 10:30 (70 min)	Topic 1
10:30 - 10:40 (10 min)	Break (snacks)
10:40 - 10:50 (10 min)	Life Skills (stories, songs, games)
10:50 - 12:00 (70 min)	Topic 2
12:00	Class ends, clean up, lunch

Number of Students: 18

Number of Volunteers: 40+

Student Attendance (over 18 weeks): 92%

Website: www.region7saicenters.org/saiprojectpride

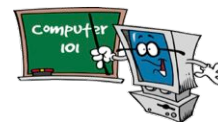
PAY it FORWARD

“It’s the old saying: ‘Give a man a fish, feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime.’ But this time, the women not only walk away empowered but will encourage their children to lead fulfilling lives.”- Volunteer



- Laptop/Binders
- 1-1 TAs
- Basics, Internet
- Word, Excel
- PPT

Computer Literacy



INTRODUCTION to COMPUTERS (Weeks 1 – 4)

Average Score:

87%

Sai CLAPS began its 18-week journey with the goal of equipping every student with a solid foundation in computer basics along with forming lasting relationships. The main focus here was on using mouse and keyboard, understanding software and hardware, basic navigation & troubleshooting.



"Things started off a little rocky. I was the first teacher and I was teaching the most basic subject--Introduction to Computers. For my section, there were a ton of variables, as I didn't know how these women were as students. Each was at a different level and pace. This section definitely began as an experiment! I was very unsure as to how to teach such a unique group. In time, I saw the power of analogies, lab-time (time for the teacher to stop lecturing and the students to actually work on the computer), and most importantly--caring about the students. Learning their names, complimenting them, supporting them were factors that helped both me (as a teacher) and my students grow together!" – Teacher Volunteer

"When you don't know something, it can be embarrassing, so I think it was great that we went over the basics so thoroughly as some of us never used computers before. The teacher was always encouraging us and kept the whole group interested by making it fun." - Student

INTERNET (Weeks 4 – 9)

Average Score:

76%

In this section, lessons focused on the practical applications of the Internet. Students learned to perform job searches, use email to connect with friends and potential employers, build websites and backup important files on Google drive.



"The teacher was very willing to help and make sure that I understood the information before moving forward. Once I got the content, I had the chance to try new things, and worked with my TA to create my own website." - Student



MICROSOFT WORD (Weeks 4 – 9)



Average Score:

86%

In this module, students learned text formatting methods that allowed them to design a variety of documents such as fliers, brochures etc. Then, they used these skills in the Career Building part of the program to create resumes and customizable cover letters.



"I didn't know you could do so much with Word. My resume now looks amazing (with the help of my TA), and I'll be using these cool templates to make invitations for my kids' birthday parties!" - Student

- Laptop/Binders
- 1-1 TAs
- Basics, Internet
- Word, Excel
- PPT

Computer Literacy

"PowerPoint was my favorite part of the entire class! The instructor really knew her material! She was extremely knowledgeable about the many different aspects of PowerPoint and I was able to learn a lot." - Student

TOUGH LOVE

"The one-on-one TA interaction was so beneficial for the students. I was very strict with my student--I caught her when she told a lie; but I also applauded her when she accomplished something. She knew someone cared about her and held her accountable. Then I saw a total shift in her; she started working on her assignments proactively, finishing her projects early, and excelling in the end."- Volunteer



MICROSOFT POWERPOINT (Week 10)

Average Score:

93%

This class fostered the computer skills needed to create a slideshow and the professional skills required to present it. This served as the foundation for their final class project.



MICROSOFT EXCEL (Week 11 – 16)

Average Score:

84%

This segment began with a quick overview of the tools that Excel offered and then delved deeper into building specific skills. Students were able to utilize these skills to create monthly budgets and charts, which were then included in their final projects.

One of the students, who began this course saying, *"I don't even know how to turn a computer on"* was exclaiming at the graduation, *"I excelled at Excel!"*



Professional Skills

- Final Project
- Mock Interviews
 - Resume
 - Career Plan
 - Job Skills

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS (Week 11-18):



The objective with this segment was to prepare each student to move forward after their stay at Project Pride. To achieve this, each student was given a unique career plan based on their input regarding educational background, work experience and future

career goals. Then, students worked on creating a polished resume and modifiable cover letter that could be used for job applications in their chosen field. At the same time, students were also taught other relevant

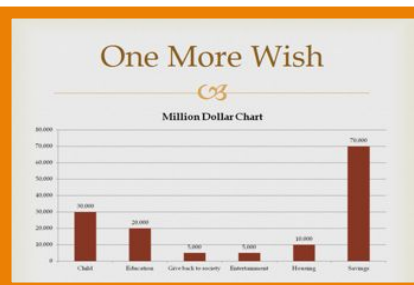
professional skills such as interview etiquette and answers to frequently asked interview questions. Finally, the resumes were used to set up individualized mock interviews where students could gain exposure to the interview process and practice new skills. Six managerial level Sai volunteers handled the mock interviews.

"The fresh positivity that they all took their time and resources to volunteer their time week after week to prepare us for the "real world". I think this has been invaluable to most of us. It gave a real picture to what we are going to need when we leave the program." - Student



FINAL PROJECT

As the final project, students were required to create a PowerPoint presentation that integrated the different skills they had learned during the course. They were given the opportunity to talk about their career goals, personal dreams, family and express their wishes for the question –“If an angel appeared before you and granted you with 3 wishes, what would it be?” All the students presented to the class, and the top four among them were selected to present at the graduation ceremony.

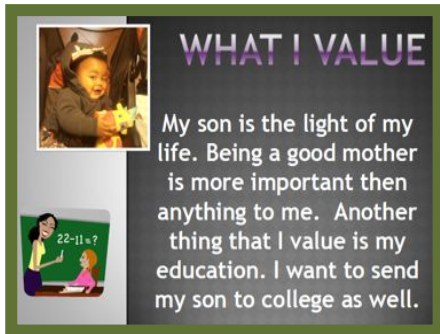


Life Skills

- Games
- Panel Discussion
- Inspiring videos
- Thought for the Day

GAMES

With the goal of instilling self-confidence and self-appreciation in every student, human values were integrated into every class through the Life Skills segment. Every week, students saw inspirational videos about inner strength or played games that cultivated teamwork. The students proudly displayed their “Life Skills” in their final projects with slides on “What I Value,” as depicted below.



“TAs helped more than anything, I wanted to learn all that I could. How patient they were with me, and always had smiles, they are the nicest, patient, comforting possible. The positivity of the instructor the way she explained everything and went back over it if i did not get, thank you for that. They were all very patient and took time to explain anything we were unsure of to make sure we really got it.” - Student

PANEL DISCUSSION

The Life Skills segment also included a discussion session with an all-women panel consisting of professionals, community leaders, teachers and mothers. The panel allowed the students to address the different life challenges they faced such as balancing motherhood and work. The students found this to be both an informative and emotionally healing session, as topics such as overcoming discouragement and self-acceptance were explored.



INNER STRENGTH “In trying to instill confidence and love in these women, I was able to see that same confidence and love in myself. I realized that all women have issues and emotions just like me, be it with family, career, or education. We’re all the same!” - Volunteer



- Childcare
- Lunch/Snacks
- Birthdays, Songs
- Mother's Day
- Graduation

MUSIC

Some days, the students learned inspiring songs such as “This Little Light of Mine” or “Smile Smile Smile”. They enthusiastically participated in singing and dancing along with the volunteers. They even practiced and performed these songs at their graduation ceremony.

FOOD

In order to allow every student to participate in the course, snacks and lunch were provided every week. Lunch was always a trip around the world, including food from Mexico, the Mediterranean, Italy, Thailand, and India. The students loved this part of the program and often, the volunteers, students, and children dined together.



BIRTHDAYS



Sai CLAPS also celebrated each student's birthday with a cake or pastries. Many of the team even picked up on a new version of 'Happy Birthday': 'Hold on, wait a minute! Happy Birthday, Hap-Hap-Happy Birthday!'

IT'S the LITTLE THINGS *“The students were shocked when we surprised them with birthday cake and roses for Mother's Day. They had so much happiness in their eyes and opened up to us because they knew all we wanted was to share love!” - Volunteer*

CHILDCARE



Childcare was a crucial aspect of the program, since it enabled all the mothers to attend the class. Several volunteers, including SSE Group 4 students, assisted with 11 children, ranging from 8 months to 8 years. For the babies, childcare consisted of feeding, playing, napping, and diaper changing. The older children were kept engaged with various activities. They especially enjoyed face painting, blowing bubbles, jumping rope, and using chalk to create masterpieces on the sidewalk.

“All the volunteers had a very down to earth approach. I think your sincerity and commitment was inspirational. All were very knowledgeable and fun to work with. I got so much from the computer program and I have already started to use my new skills in my life. I enjoyed being exposed to food I had not previously been exposed to.” - Student





The students of the Sai CLAPS program graduated on May 18,



Over 70 people attended, including students' families, Sai volunteers, the directors, staff, and counselors of Project Pride.



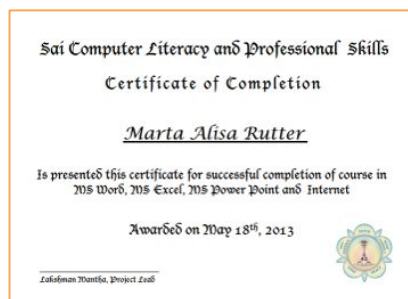
The Commencement speaker, Mr. Michael McCarty, inspired the students with tales of courage and perseverance.



The students received gifts (their wish list), including a mug with their names and a custom CD with the lessons, final project, career plan, and video recordings of their presentations and mock interviews.



Four students offered their final projects to a cheering audience. These students applied 18 weeks of computer and career building skills to create PowerPoint presentations that reflected both professionalism and confidence.



During the awards ceremony, the students received their certificates from Mr. McCarty. As they walked across the stage, a few personalized words and anecdotes were shared about each of them.



The team was caught off guard when the students presented Sai CLAPS with a binder full of 'thank you' notes.



Student's Musical presentation



Challenge / Concern	Solution/ Evaluation/ Future Approach
Homework was rarely completed every week, as the students were juggling many other commitments.	Extra time was provided at the beginning of every class for students to complete homework and get help from their TA's. However, the given time was often not enough. Students were also encouraged to form homework groups so that they could help each other. However, only some students took advantage of this.
Each student learned at a different pace and had varying levels of computer experience. In addition, many students did not feel comfortable in a traditional classroom setting.	Having the 1:1 TA to student ratio worked wonders. The students felt a deep connection with their TAs and were comfortable asking them questions. This one-on-one aspect also allowed students to move at their own pace.
Most of the mothers could not part with their children, particularly the babies, and held them throughout class.	In time, the mothers were better able to balance their roles as both caregivers and students, entrusting their children with the Sai CLAPS childcare team.
The course moved too fast. Slowing down helped the students, but many topics were not covered due to a lack of time.	Increase the overall time of the course and keep a slow pace.
Losing the acquired computer skills once the CLAPS course is completed.	Beginner students require more time to solidify their computer skills. Also, they need guidance as they apply for jobs.
The students needed more lab time.	Lab time allowed students to put skills to use. After class, students found it difficult to find help if they had questions. Incorporate more hands-on lab time, especially with the 1:1 TA to student ratio.
Other Suggestions: - Have a daily agenda projected or posted up - Split the class into two groups – those who want to acquire skills for a job/career and those who just need the basics for personal use. - This was a great trial run. Everything was an experiment and it got better as we continued along this 18-week journey! At first, we didn't have a chance to really enforce homework, attendance, or behavior. We were very nice–too nice–nice enough to be taken advantage of! But eventually the students knew that we were very serious and only wanted to help them help themselves! - Maybe better ways to make sure students are on top of their homework – incorporate some sort of incentive/motivation; find other ways to test these skills; weekly or biweekly practical exams.	

A SOURCE of INSPIRATION

“These students had so much going on, many were fighting to gain custody of their children while recovering from addiction. I saw my student’s confidence progress from day one, when she was unsure of how to even turn a computer on, to plotting complex Excel charts. I’ve learnt so much from them. Their perseverance and determination is commendable.” - Volunteer



OVERALL IMPRESSION

“Sai CLAPS is an incredibly unique program. I loved that we focused on EMPOWERING women and gave them tools to stand on their OWN two feet. With computer literacy, resume/cover letter workshops, and a lot of support and love, these women--these mothers--know that they CAN provide for themselves AND their children.”

“I liked that the program over all makes the women empowered and gives a boost to their morale. For me, it taught me to be more compassionate and I was showed that all women go through several common issues/emotions just like myself, be it family, children, education, career, financial /emotional/ physical security, parents, society.”



MOST SATISFYING ASPECT

“It gave me joy & satisfaction to be in the team to help these women to realize their inner strength. Indeed a wonderful experience and great learning. Played a very small role, received a heart-felt satisfaction. It is like" Buy ONE and Get TEN in return”

“It gave me an assurance that all the children on our planet will have a safer, peaceful future as we worked with the mothers. I realized that they are many like me (volunteers) playing their parts carefully, lovingly in every part of the society making it a beautiful abundance filled place slowly and steadily. The impact will be seen very soon, perhaps by the end of this decade.”

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE with a RECIPIENT

“When we celebrated a student's Birthday! The surprise, happiness and tears in her eyes! The spontaneous hug and the way she said -- it is her first Birthday and she will ever and never forget it in her life, because nobody ever celebrated her birthday. It happened to be my Birthday too! And it was a real special day to share the joy of her and I can never forget her words. I am Glad I was a part of her happiness and no doubt it was a memorable experience”

“My consistent tough love for my student provoked the best in her. I told my student I will catch her every single time she lied but applauded her every single time she did good, taught her to plan for future and work towards it, one step at a time. This gave her a sense of security someone cares for her and she did not want to disappoint me. After 12 weeks into the 18-week program, my student started working on her assignments proactively, finished her projects, and excelled in the end. To me the precious time away from my 3-yr old was worth it as I live (&love) in a hope that another mother & her two children will do well with their future.”





“After teaching the first part of our course, I became a TA. Now, I was assigned to a new resident at Project Pride. She was the youngest of our students and the most strong-willed. At first, I found it difficult because I too have a strong-will. This student had just finished high school and was pretty savvy with computers; so much of the class did not interest her as she was familiar with word, Internet, and PowerPoint. She even had a resume completed. So, it was her will against mine. Much of the time, I let her do her own thing--explore the Internet, make posters on word, create a PowerPoint presentation of her own. I'd show her what was explained in class, she'd nod and keep working on her own creations. And then, something changed. I learned more about her--more about her family, about her dreams. And She became incredibly attached to me. It became quite humorous--if I'd try to help another student, she'd say (to the whole class): *"That's my TA! I love my TA. Go get your own TA."* And I noticed that when I asked her with love and patience to put away her phone or pay attention to the lecturer--she did! She worked hard on all her quizzes and proudly showed me her best scores (and hid the not-so-great ones from me). She even cared that I didn't get in trouble for letting her take short cuts here and there! And when she gave her final presentation, it hit me--she wasn't this strong-willed, impatient teenager that I had assumed she'd be. She was full of creativity, passion, and sensitivity. In the end, we both learned to depend and appreciate the love from each other!”



TRANSFORMATION in PERSONAL/WORK LIFE



“Yes! Seeing and working with these women, talking to some of them, listening to their problems, worries depressions of staying away from their children and families and health & treatment tensions. I realized all of us are blessed with so many aspects of comfortable homes, families to care, and many material luxuries etc. But still we do have some complaint or other. We are not happy and always look for something else. These women directly or indirectly helped me to come out of my frustration and anxiety of my attachment to Physical proximity of My Beloved Swami who is My Teacher, Father, Guide and Friend. After working with these ladies I am able to relive the wonderful moments with Swami. I am able to take my SSE classes again. I could see the changed person of me. I learned my lesson of life + some computer skills.”

“This project broke down my own assumptions and prejudices--we were going to serve a group of people who were in a substance-abuse rehabilitation program--in Oakland. I can't even describe the vast amount of stereotypes and assumptions that came to my mind when we began this project. But Swami opened my eyes and my heart--the women we worked with are INCREDIBLE! They are full of life, compassion, and sincerity. Talk about seeing the unity in diversity! On a personal level, I came to a better understanding of myself and the judgments I make. In trying to instill confidence and love in these women, I was able to instill that same confidence and love in myself.”





"I prayed Swami, I am incapable of enduring physical stress and heavy-duty service projects, but please allow me to serve. This project came along, I had absolutely no idea of what my work involved. This project has tested boundaries of physical capability managing career, motherhood, building our new home project, plus all the numerous hours spent in structuring the classes and program. As I worked more, I healed more. I don't feel physical/energetic limitations anymore. Many skills I acquired to have a career and a peaceful life that I have today, were beautifully used in this program. I felt all that came to me and the way it did had a higher purpose."

"Personally I feel very blessed to have so much support in my life, and have realized that most people are good but have made choices because of a lack of support and very challenging life circumstances."



"Yes definitely! i really love teaching, and this was a great experience for me to practice those skills. Seeing these women week after week has also really changed my perspective in life. I developed more patience and appreciated more of what i have, which some times i take for granted."

"Personally, I've learnt so much from these women. Their perseverance and determination is commendable. They have inspired me to see that I can do so many more things in the same amount of time I have."

"Never in my entire life did I see MOTHERS like this. ALL of them take care of each other's children like their own! Where do you see people that self-less? Spending time with the young kids was very memorable"

"I appreciate numerous hours of selfless love and patience put into this program from more than 35+ volunteers. Our work will impact all of us and our fellow beings on the planet in the years to come. We have much work to do!"

"I still can't believe that we got this class for free. If there is anything that i could do for you all just let me know. You were all awesome. Couldn't have asked for a more caring, sincere, generous, intelligent group of people." - Student



“I like the innocence of the instructors and TA's. It was very nice to learn in a non-judgmental, non-critical environment. You all seem to view me and respect me as a real person. Thank you very much and please continue to see people through those helpful eyes of yours.” - Student

This four-pronged project required an incredible amount of people-power. Over 40 volunteers—adults, young adults, and SSE children rallied together to contribute laptops, prepare student material, teach, cook and serve food, provide childcare, and plan graduation. The entire Region of Northern California and Nevada truly came together for this project.

We are eternally grateful for this incredible opportunity. Each and every one of us was not only touched, but also transformed by this project. Throughout the program, we experienced the Lord's love everywhere. There were numerous circumstances, which came up unexpectedly, and all we could do was pray – and it just worked! This reminded us about Swami's emphasis on surrender - not having expectations and not being upset if the outcome of events is different than anticipated.



Dear Swami,

Thank you for bringing us all together to work towards this wonderful cause.

We pray to you Swami, to shower your infinite grace on the families of Project Pride. May these women continue to blossom into confident, self-sufficient individuals, so they can provide for themselves and their children. Please bless the children to continue to grow into healthy, happy and good role models for the community.

We pray to you to give us more strength and confidence and guide us to serve more people in need.

We humbly dedicate this offering at your lotus feet.

Jai Sairam
Sai CLAPS team

