

**Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas, Sai Spiritual  
Education, Sathya Sai Education in  
Human Values**

*Special Issue*



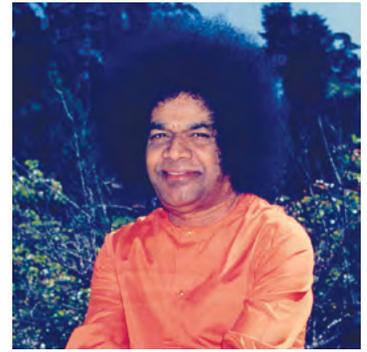
**Sanathana Sarathi**

**NOVEMBER 2017**



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“The Mahabharata provides wonderful ideals of life. In the constant struggle between good and bad forces in the world, God always stands by the good. Krishna is Parthasarathi. Who is Partha? Partha is the son of earth. So, God is the charioteer of all people on earth. He leads everyone from within. All are the sparks of the Divine.”

# RECONSTRUCTING HUMAN SOCIETY ON HUMAN VALUES

## EDITORIAL

**I**T WAS IN THE YEAR 1969 THAT BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI Baba, while addressing Mahila Vibhag (Ladies Wing), said, “Run a Bal Vihar (later changed to Bal Vikas) for your children, where they will listen to stories from the scriptures, the epics and the lives of saints belonging to all religions. Teach children to sing Bhajans and introduce them to Dhyana and Japa...” Accordingly, some ladies started a few Bal Vikas classes. This was the beginning of a great movement to reconstruct human society on the firm foundation of human values of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa. There are now lakhs of Bal Vikas / Sai Spiritual Education children, a number of Sathya Sai Schools, Institutes of Sathya Sai Education and human values centres all over the world. Thus, the seed of human values sown by Bhagavan in 1960’s has now become a gigantic tree. The silent value revolution set in motion by Bhagavan by His Divine Sankalpa has assumed worldwide dimensions.

But it is not the number of Sai educational institutions set up in the world that is important. What is more important is the quality of their education which sets them apart from other educational institutions. In the modern educational scenario of the world where educational institutions are beset with the problems of indiscipline, unrest and violence, Sathya Sai Schools and institutions are a real marvel where an environment of love, service, integrity, honesty, truthfulness and righteousness prevails. It is no wonder that more and more countries and their governments are getting their teachers trained by the Institutes of Sathya Sai Education, and many parents specially move their residence in the neighbourhood of Sathya Sai Schools to get their children admitted in these schools.

At a time when the monsters of consumerism, materialism and commercialisation are bringing about widespread depletion of moral values in society and causing havoc in the life of man, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has given a unique values-based system of education to the world which can restore the moral fibre of society and which is universally acceptable to people of all cultures, faiths and ethnicities.

This issue of Sanathana Sarathi is dedicated at the Lotus Feet of this Divine World Teacher with the hope that He will bless more and more people to become part of His Divine Mission to reconstruct human society on the firm foundation of human values.

– Editor



# MAKE GOD THE CHARIOTEER OF YOUR LIFE

*Bereft of truth, righteousness, peace and love,*

*the value of all your education is zero;*

*Bereft of truth, righteousness, peace and love,*

*the benefit of all your acts of charity and kindness is zero;*

*Bereft of truth, righteousness, peace and love,*

*the utility of all your positions of power is zero;*

*Bereft of truth, righteousness, peace and love*

*the result of all your good deeds is zero.*

*Truth, righteousness, peace and love are the very foundation of human life.*

*What else is there to be conveyed to this assembly of noble souls?*

(Telugu Poem)

## YOU CAN ACHIEVE EVERYTHING BY GOD'S GRACE

### *Embodiments of Love!*

**H**UMAN LIFE IS endowed with great divine power. Some people perform noble and sacred deeds and earn great name and fame in society. On the other hand, some others earn bad name by their unsacred and evil deeds, even if they might be possessing glittering riches and all comforts of life. Through good deeds, one's name, fame and credibility gets enhanced in society. The contrasting causes and effects pertaining to these two categories of people



have been beautifully depicted in the great epic, the Mahabharata.

### **Good and Bad Coexist in the World**

It is said, *Yanna Bharate, Thanna Bharata* (what is not there in Bharat cannot be found anywhere else).

The Pandavas performed noble deeds and earned great fame by adhering to sacred and righteous path of life; whereas the Kauravas took to evil path and indulged in unrighteous, unjust and wicked deeds.

In fact, the Kauravas became unwittingly instrumental in enhancing Pandava's fame.

It is said, *Na Sukhat Labhate Sukham* (one cannot derive happiness out of happiness). When sorrow is mitigated, one gets happiness. *Pleasure is an interval between two pains*. Could the Pandavas be reckoned for the righteousness in the absence of contrasting wicked deeds of the Kauravas? One's good qualities are highlighted when juxtaposed to the negative qualities of others. The Kauravas were beset with evil qualities of lust for power, ostentation and jealousy due to which they were destroyed. By being in proximate contrast, the salubrious qualities of the Pandavas have been described by people as glorious. There can be no distinction for light when there is no darkness. Happiness and sorrow follow each other in the rigmarole of life.

Many people today lack humanness. However, there are some very good people also in the world. But their goodness does not become visible because of their shortcomings. This is a matchbox. If you dip it in water and try to strike a matchstick, will it produce fire? You may use it only after drying it in the sun. Man has the fire of Jnana (knowledge), the fire of divinity and the fire of sacredness in him. With constant practice or Sadhana, this sacred fire has to be made manifest.

### **Sadhana without Renunciation is Useless**

People do meditation, Bhajans, Satsanga, etc., and read sacred texts like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata, etc. In spite of all this, why does not their inherent divine power become manifest? The reason is that their mind is mired in the transient objects of the world.

*God is in you, around you, above you, below you and He is everywhere. Antarbahischa Tatsarvam Vyapya Narayana Sthita (That all-pervasive God is present within and without). You need not extend any special invitation to Him to visit you. He Himself will come to you when you develop love for Him in your heart. When the flower blossoms, it does not invite bees; the bees gather on their own in order to enjoy its nectar. Heart is the flower. Fill it with the nectar of Divinity.*

In this condition of the mind, however much one may pray, there cannot be any use. It is like striking a wet matchstick on a matchbox. When the matchstick is kept in brilliant sunshine of renunciation, then only will the fire be produced. Without renunciation, all spiritual practices will give only temporary satisfaction, not the bliss of eternal truth. External prayers and practices will not yield positive results as long as the mind is craving for temporary worldly joys. The Vedas say, *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amrutatthwamanasu* (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth; it is attained only by sacrifice). Without cultivating the spirit of renunciation, no one can attain peace and spiritual effulgence. After eating food if you do not discard the waste, your health will be spoiled. After inhaling air, if you do not exhale, your lungs will be spoiled. You should renounce all that you accumulate; otherwise, you will lose peace of mind.



## All Powers are Useless without Divine Power

Karna was endowed with great strength and valour, but he lacked the grace of God. Despite being so mighty, what was the fate of Karna at the end? This is the truth I am explaining. You must try to understand the power of humanness. Duryodhana wielded great power, enjoyed great wealth and ruled over a vast kingdom. All mighty warriors like Bhishmacharya, Dronacharya, Kripacharya and Aswatthama were on his side; and Karna was also with him. What was the use of all Acharyas when Krishna, the Acharya of all Acharyas, was on the other side? What is the use of so many Acharyas bereft of God's grace? What is the use of other switches when the main switch is put off? This is what happened in the Mahabharata war.

When both Duryodhana and Arjuna approached Krishna to seek His support in the war that became inevitable, Krishna enacted as if He was asleep. Krishna, despite being the playful director of the drama of the world, having donned the vesture of human body, enacted the role of a kingmaker. He never desired to be a king even though he had great influence and support from all people. The Upanishads describe Him as Puranam (ancient), Anusaasitam (having the absolute power of ruling), Aditya Varnam (having effulgence like the sun) and Thamasah Parastaat (beyond the realm of darkness). Krishna had come to crown good people as kings and to destroy the wicked. So, Krishna easily grasped the respective intentions of these two relatives. He laid himself on the bed pretending sleep. Duryodhana entered the room first. With all his pomp and arrogance, he thought it below his dignity to sit near the feet of Krishna. So,

he pulled himself a chair and sat near the head of Krishna. Meanwhile, Arjuna came, and reverentially bowed to sleeping Krishna and sat in a chair at the feet of Krishna. What was Krishna doing? He was pretending as if in deep sleep. Krishna was neither in sleep nor in a state of wakefulness; but in a state that was in between. Can anyone awaken Him in such a condition? This was what the Gopikas said about Him.

After a while, Krishna got up and naturally looked at Arjuna first because he was sitting near His feet. Duryodhana felt angry because Krishna did not look at him. While Krishna was conversing with Arjuna intimately, Duryodhana's anger grew plus plus and plus. It is said, *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati* (as are the feelings, so is the result).

Mind alone is witness to the mind. It is a constant witness to the body as well as thoughts. So, Duryodhana's foolish mind became a foolish witness. At last Krishna turned towards him. After hearing Duryodhana's plea for help, Krishna asked him to choose either Him as standing alone, or His entire army. Foolish Duryodhana was happy to choose Krishna's army as a support in war. And Arjuna insisted that he needed nobody other than Krishna and His grace. God is like the engine to the train, while all other forces are like compartments. What is the use of so many compartments without an engine?

Krishna told Arjuna what was going to happen in future. He said, out of the hundred sons of Dhritarashtra, none of them would survive to perform his last rites because the Kauravas were after wealth, pomp and pelf, forgetting God and Dharma totally. Krishna said to Arjuna, "Righteousness would be the winner. All mundane objects are nothing



but reaction, reflection and resound; there is only one reality, that is God. When God is on your side, you can achieve anything. So, be courageous and go”.

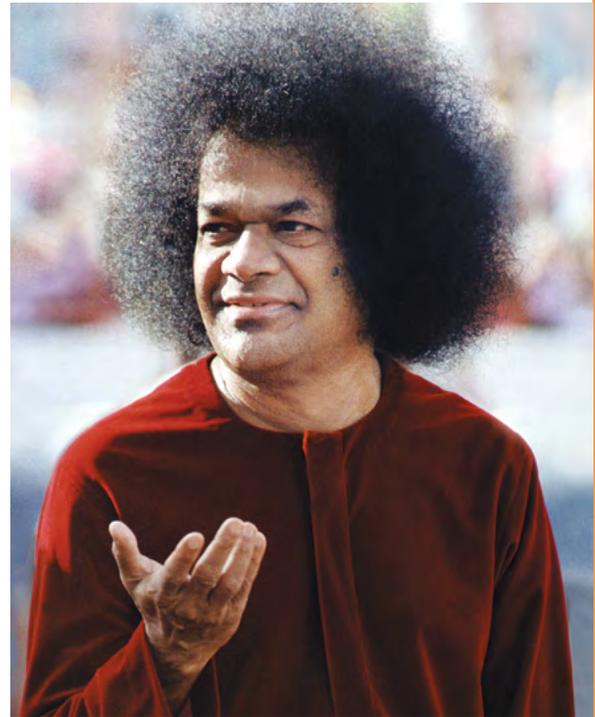
The Mahabharata provides wonderful ideals of life. In the constant struggle between good and bad forces in the world, God always stands by the good. Krishna is Parthasarathi. Who is Partha? Partha is the son of earth. So, God is the charioteer of all people on earth. He leads everyone from within. All are the sparks of the Divine.

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### Develop Love for God in your Heart

*Ekam Sath Viprah Bahudha Vadanti* (truth is one, but the wise refer to it by various names). *Isvara Sarva Bhutanam* (God is the indweller of all beings). *Isavasyam Idam Sarvam* (the entire universe is permeated by God). When the Lord of universe is with you, why do you crave for worldly objects of no value? Food, shelter, etc., are no doubt basic necessities of life. But if you develop faith in God, will He not look after you? Oh

man! You crave for comforts from dawn to dusk. But what is it that you have achieved? Man has the responsibility to sanctify his body and time. But, unfortunately, people today are fighting for rights, forgetting their responsibilities. Rights and responsibilities are like two wheels of a vehicle. *Kartavyam Yogamuchyate* (performing your duty properly is indeed yoga). After performing his family duties, will any son demand wages from his father? He who works for wages is a servant. The one who serves



with a feeling of responsibility is the master. The master has right over the valuables of the house, and a servant has no right.

*Ekatma Sarva Bhutantaratma* (one Atma dwells in all beings). You must endeavour to become a master. When you understand the truth, you will realise your true nature. Then there would be no need to search for God. Does anybody search for himself outside? God is in you, around you, above you, below



you and He is everywhere. *Antarbahischa Tatsarvam Vyapya Narayana Sthita* (That all-pervasive God is present within and without). You need not extend any special invitation to Him to visit you. He Himself will come to you when you develop love for Him in your heart. When the flower blossoms, it does not invite bees; the bees gather on their own in order to enjoy its nectar. Heart is the flower. Fill it with the nectar of Divinity. The Gopikas expressed their feeling to Krishna, saying,

*Were You a tree, growing upwards,  
I would cling to You like a creeper;  
Were You a blossoming flower,  
I would hover over You like a bee;  
Were You the mountain Meru,  
I would cascade like a river;  
Were You the boundless sky,  
I would be in You like a star.*

(Telugu Poem)

This is how the Gopikas expressed their feelings of unity with God, who appears in diverse forms. They said, "You and I are one, we and we are one". God is there in rivers, in oceans, in mountains, in trees and everywhere. *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi* (the knower of Brahman becomes verily Brahman himself). The Gopikas were the living examples of this Vedic dictum. This is the quality of total surrender that was naturally displayed by the Gopikas. That is unity in diversity. But today devotees say, "You are You and I am I". Then how can you realise unity? We should say, "You and I are we; we and we are one". Here, there, everywhere only One exists.

Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Yamuna, Saraswati – all rivers flow with different names and forms. Ultimately, they merge in the ocean. Having merged in the ocean,

where is Godavari? Where is Kaveri water? Where is Ganga? Where is Saraswati? Everything becomes ocean water. Everything becomes one. It will have the form of the ocean, the name of the ocean and the taste of the ocean. First, we have to sacrifice our name and form. We should merge in that divine form and name. That is true enquiry. However, we have to discharge our duties. Whatever you do, say, I am doing for God's sake. Go to office, do business, do your duty, do many actions. No need to stop. Whatever you do, take it as Lord's action. Then work will be transformed into worship. Swami never said, 'leave your work and go to the forest'. What is it you get there in the forest? That is not forest, it is for – rest. Do your duty sincerely. Rest is rust and dust. Divinity is shining all the time in every human being. Therefore, think of the Lord all the time. Offer all your actions to please Him. Have the feeling that God is everywhere with you.

Always engage yourself in reciting God's Name. The radio waves emanating from Delhi station are reaching Kodaikanal instantly. That is sound. That is *Sabda Brahman* (Brahman in the form of sound). God is called *Sabda Brahmamayi, Characharamayi, Jyotirmayi, Vangmayi, Nityanandamayi, Paratparamayi, Mayamayi and Sreemayi* (embodiment of sound, mobility and immobility, light, speech, eternal bliss, perfection, delusion and wealth). God has all these eight Aiswaryas (wealth). All these divine powers are present everywhere. Do your duty sincerely and offer all to God. He will take care of all your responsibilities.

*continued on page 13...*



# SPIRITUALITY AND SACREDNESS MARK DASARA CELEBRATIONS

**D**EVI NAVARATRI AND DASARA festivals were celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam as per the valuable tradition set by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The main events of celebrations were the worship of the Divine Mother, performance of the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna and Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha programmes which included erudite talks and music and cultural presentations.

## VEDA PURUSHA SAPTAHA JNANA YAJNA

The worship of the Divine Mother began in Bhajan Mandir on 21st September 2017, on the first day of Navaratri with offering of Kumkum on the sacred Kalasha. Kumkumarchana of the Kalasha continued in this sacred manner by the Mandir priest from 21st to 23rd September 2017. The Kalasha was then taken to Poornachandra Auditorium in a ceremonial procession on 24th September 2017 amidst full-throated Vedic incantations by the Ritwiks and students. After the priests and students were seated on the beautifully decorated Yajnachala, the sacred process of Agni Manthan (lighting of fire by friction) was started by the priests by churning one piece of wood over the other. After producing the fire in this sacred manner, it was placed in Yajna Kunda (sacrificial pit) marking the commencement of the Yajna. As four priests sitting on the periphery of sacrificial

pit started offering oblations in it, four other priests starting chanting Krishna Yajur Veda, a priest and his wife started Kalasha Puja, one priest started Surya Namaskar and three elders started the Parayanam of the sacred texts. The entire Auditorium reverberated with sacred Vedic Mantras which a huge gathering of devotees listened with great devotion. The performance of the Yajna continued in this sacred manner for seven days and concluded with Poornahuti on Vijaya Dasami day on 30th September 2017. The auditorium on this day was full to its seams with devotees who came to witness this grand spectacle. The



*Poornahuti of Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna.*

proceedings of Poornahuti started when the priests brought the precious material for Poornahuti along with a silver Dharani after their sacred bath. A silver chair was placed for Bhagavan near the Yajna Kunda. With Veda Purusha Bhagavan Baba thus presiding over the Yajna, the final oblations were offered in the sacred fire by the priests amidst loud chanting of Vedic Mantras and



auspicious notes of Nadaswaram music at 8.15 a.m. The sacred Kalasha water was then sprinkled on the devotees in the entire length and breadth of the Auditorium. Arati to Bhagavan at 10.00 a.m. marked the conclusion of the Yajna.

## PRASANTHI VIDWAN MAHASABHA

### Talks by Eminent Speakers

The seven-day long proceedings of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha began on 24th September 2017 with the talk of Sri Ruchir Desai, a faculty member of Brindavan Campus of the Institute. Referring to Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna which also began on 24th September 2017 in Poornachandra Auditorium, the learned speaker observed that the Yajna became Jnana Yajna only when man sacrificed his desires since sacrifice was the essence of life.

In the second session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha held on 25th September 2017, Sri K.M. Ganesh, a Research Scholar of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of the Institute was the speaker. Referring to celebration of Dasara, the speaker observed that Dasara signified the victory of good over evil. But the real victory of man was the victory over the ten senses, he added.

On the third day of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, a renowned Telugu scholar from Guntur, Dr. D.N. Dixit addressed the gathering. In his talk in chaste Telugu embellished with Sanskrit verses and Telugu poems, the learned speaker dwelt upon Bhagavan's teachings of Seva and Namasmarana and emphasised their importance to achieve the goal of life. Navaratri, he said, was the sacred period to connect with the Divine.

The speaker on 27th September 2017 was Sri Shailesh Srivastava, a faculty member of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus who narrated his experiences with Bhagavan and underlined the value of love and concern for others as exemplified by Bhagavan in His life.

A noted Telugu and Sanskrit scholar, Dr. Medasani Mohan, gave an erudite talk on the topic "Saraswati Tattvam and Sai Tattvam Samanvayam" (uniformity of Saraswati and Sai principle) on 28th September 2017. Elucidating the spiritual lessons contained in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the learned speaker exhorted one and all to develop spiritual wisdom, which was the real meaning of worshipping Saraswati.

In the penultimate session of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha on 29th September 2017, Dr. Suma Rao, a faculty member of Anantapur Campus of the Institute, spoke on "Unbounded Love of the Supreme Mother Divine". Narrating her experiences of Bhagavan's limitless love, she said that a heart full of love was the repository of all virtues; evil qualities would not enter it.

In the final session of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha held on 30th September 2017, Sri Sidhartha Raju, a faculty member of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of the Institute presented a summary of the proceedings of the seven-day long Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha. Alluding to the lesson of sacrifice taught by the recently concluded Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna, the speaker urged the august assembly to develop the spirit of sacrifice to attain immortality.

### Divine Discourses

Each talk of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha was followed by a Divine



Discourse of Bhagavan, a video clip of which was screened for the benefit of the devotees. In His Discourses, Bhagavan exhorted man to manifest his inherent divine qualities and realise his divinity. Man's consciousness would become divine when he associated it with the Atma, said Bhagavan. Man today, Bhagavan elucidated, was developing duality and thereby distancing himself from bliss. He therefore exhorted one and all to develop love more and more considering everyone as the embodiment of Divinity. Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara do not live in separate colonies like man; they are the indwellers of man's heart, explained Bhagavan. Man, Bhagavan added, should attain total purity by harmonising his head, heart and hand to realise this unity as Divinity is reflected only in a pure heart.

Referring to widespread unhappiness in the world, Bhagavan remarked that this was due to man's seeking happiness in changing objects of the world and his desire to find joy in gratification of his senses. Rather, man should look within and seek happiness in the Atma, which is the source of permanent happiness. In His concluding Discourse on 30th September 2017, Bhagavan explained the meaning and importance of five Yamas (restraints), namely, Ahimsa, Sathya, Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (constant remembrance of Brahman), Aparigraha (non-covetousness) in the life of man. Observance of these five restraints endows man with nobility and spirituality, said Bhagavan.

## Music and Cultural Programmes

Besides the illuminating talks of students and staff of the Institute and distinguished guests, music and cultural programmes formed part of the proceedings of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha.



*Musical offering by the students of Muddenahalli Campus.*

The first musical offering was made by the students of Muddenahalli Campus of the Institute on 24th September 2017. Beginning their soulful presentation with "Sri Viswanatham Bhaje", they next sang a song dedicated to the Divine Mother "Mata Bhawani" and followed it with two popular songs, "Love is My Form" and "Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam". They concluded their programme with a beautiful Qawali "Parvadigar-e-Alam" (Oh the saviour of the world).



*Devotional music by Brindavan Campus students.*

In the second session of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, on 25th September 2017, the students of Brindavan Campus presented their music programme on the central theme of the Divine Mother. Their songs included “Jai Hey Jai Hey Maa” (hail mother), “Jai Jai Sai Maa”, “Jai Jai Jai Mahishasura Mardini”. They concluded their enrapturing presentation with a beautiful musical ensemble.

A lively and vibrant devotional music presentation was made by the students of Anantapur Campus on 27th September



*Devotional music presentation by Anantapur Campus students.*

2017. Their songs included “Sankari Dukha Harini” (Siva, the remover of sorrow), “Durga Maa” and a couple of classical compositions.



*“Jagat Janani”, a dance presentation by the students of Bhagavan’s educational institutions.*

In the session on 29th September 2017, the students of Bhagavan’s educational institutions made a scintillating dance presentation titled “Jagat Janani” portraying the Divine Mother in the form of Durga who ultimately slays the terrible demon Mahishasura.

The final devotional music presentation of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha was a sumptuous musical treat “The Sacred Chants” by two renowned Carnatic musicians Smt. Vinaya Karthik Rajan and Smt. Saindhavi. Beginning with Ganesh Vandana, the accomplished singers presented a series of Stotras which included “Medha Suktam”, “Lingashtakam”, “Siva Panchakshri Stotram”, to name a few.

*...continued from page 9*

Chitti Babu said, “You are everywhere. You make me speak. You make me listen. You make me think. Everything is You”. But, he said, “The good and bad to You, not to me. Bad also goes to You. Even good also goes to You”. When anyone comes to that stage of evolution, God will take care of everything. But today that sincerity and devotion are not to be found. If man achieves

success, he will credit himself for it. When he has failure, he attributes it to God. No! Consider success and failure, good and bad as equal. To reach that state of equanimity, sense control is needed. Sense control is possible only by love. Think of the Lord with love.

**– Bhagavan’s Discourse in Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 24th April 1993.**



From our Archives

# I HAVE COME FOR YOUR SAKE

PRAY FOR THE WELFARE OF ALL COUNTRIES

*Embodiments of Love!*

**D**O NOT BE DELUDED BY THE belief that life has been given to you for eating and drinking and enjoying other physical pleasures. This is not the reason for human birth, which is a rare



blessing. What is the difference between a human being and the animals? It is qualities like kindness, compassion, forbearance and sympathy which differentiate human beings from animals. But man tends to forget these inherent qualities out of absorption in selfish, mundane desires.

Those wearing the glass of selfishness can only see selfishness all around them. A defective vision produces an apparent defect in creation. There is nothing wrong with Srishti (creation). Every defect is related to the defective Drishti (vision).

**“Be” “Do” and “Speak” what is Good**

All of you are embodiments of the Atma. You are all the manifestations of the Divine. The indwelling Atma is one and the same in all beings irrespective of their external differences, like the current that illumines bulbs of different wattage and colour. Fill your hearts with love. Then you can experience real bliss. With a narrow mind and heart, if you indulge in magniloquent words, no one will care to listen to you. First of all “Be” – be good yourself. Then you “Do” – act likewise. Then “Speak” – tell others about what is good. Only thus will you be setting an ideal example.

Do not entertain bad feelings about anyone. They do you more harm than to others. As the saying in a Telugu poem goes:

*Anger is one's enemy, peace is the protective shield, compassion is the true relation, happiness is verily the heaven and misery is the hell.*

Develop sacred and pure feelings. We claim to celebrate the birthdays of people. But the birthday is truly celebrated when there is the birth of pure ideas in one.



You celebrate the Birthday of Bhagavan. But do you follow the teachings? You will experience the fruits of celebrating the Birthday only when you follow the teachings. Jesus said: "Love everyone". Christmas is celebrated, but how far does one practise love? Not at all.

There is love in everyone's heart. Share it at least with ten persons everyday. This is seldom done. People are more keen on receiving than on giving. They are willing to give away only things which they do not relish. There is no sacrifice in this.

You should not be concerned with how many have come for Swami's Birthday but how many are following Swami's teachings. If every devotee is able to influence two persons, soon the whole world will be reformed.

### **Pray for the Welfare of all Countries**

*Embodiments of Love!*

There is only one thing you have to offer to Me today. Pray that people in all countries, nay the entire humanity, should be happy and at peace. *Samasta Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the worlds be happy!). Then alone will there be real unity. Do not pray for the peace and prosperity of India alone. Pray for the welfare of all countries. All are our brothers, whether they are in Pakistan or America or elsewhere.

Whether you believe it or not, realise that I am able to attract people from so many countries because of my all-embracing love.

If every person observes three things, he will be one with Swami. You will experience the Divine in you. As the following three are in Me, I can declare firmly about them. They are three P's: Purity, Patience and Perseverance. These three are in Me and around Me. Anyone with these three

qualities will be unafraid wherever he may be.

I am beyond all attributes. Believe it or not, I am bliss personified. If you think otherwise, the defect lies in you. Whatever I do is for your own good, for your welfare and for your happiness. Lead a blissful and unblemished life. That is what I desire from you. I have no worries or suffering at any point of time. Why should I worry when I have everything? I have no desires. Whatever I tell, whatever I do is good for you, not for Me. I have come for your sake. Hence, make full use of Me. I am always ready, provided you develop sacred thoughts. Lead a divine life.

*Embodiments of Love!*

Welcome your guests and give them due respect. Give your love to all. Feed the hungry. Only then can you have peace of mind. Harmonise your thought, word, and deed. There is no greater wisdom than this. Practise Ritam (that which is changeless in the three periods of time – past, present, and future). This is the path of Tarakam (liberation). If you waver from time to time, you are the most unfortunate one. Waywardness is the nature of a monkey mind. You belong to mankind. Having been born as a human being, you should develop steadiness of mind. Mankind symbolises Tarakam. Monkey mind stands for Marakam (bondage).

*Embodiments of Love!*

On this Birthday, you have to learn something very important: do not waste your time in idle talk. Time once lost cannot be regained. Consider truth as God. *Sathyannasti Paro Dharma* (There is no Dharma greater than adherence to truth). Hence, follow the path of truth and practise righteousness.

– Excerpted from **Bhagavan's Birthday Discourses.**



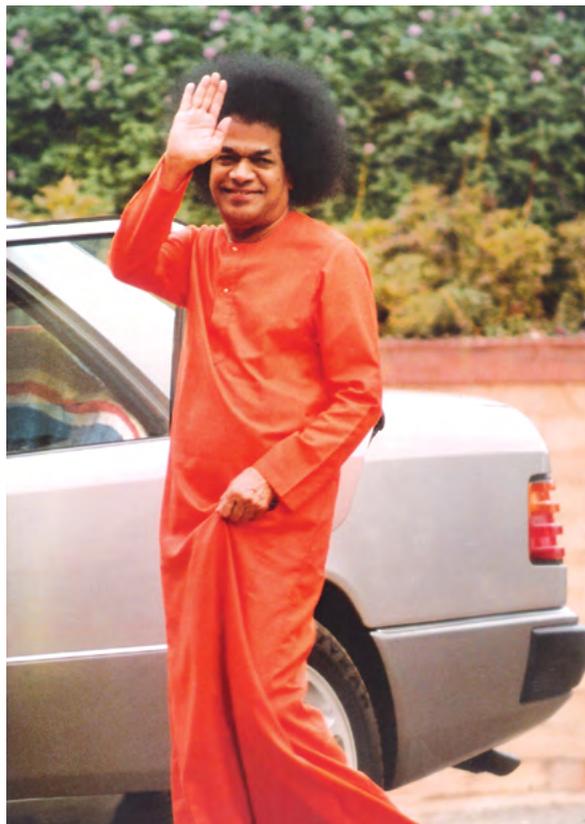
# SWAMI IS ALWAYS WITH US

R.J. Rathnakar

**T**HE 92ND BIRTHDAY OF BHAGAVAN has arrived, suffusing all of us with joy and jubilation. But how can we consider a particular day as Birthday or the day of Aradhana Mahotsavam for the One who has neither a beginning nor an end? No doubt, Swami transcends such limitations of time and space. But, being mortals as we are, it is most imperative for us to celebrate the Birthdays and conduct Aradhana Mahotsavams of Divine Personalities, with diligence and devotion because these events lend mankind an opportunity to remember their glorious lives and derive inspiration from them. These yearly festivities are a source of motivation for us to mould our lives in the light of their teachings.

## Swami is not Limited to His Body

23rd November marks the Birthday of Bhagavan. However, His true Birthday is the day when we fill our hearts with His divine love making our lives sweet and sublime. Our Beloved Swami, who sanctified this planet by the touch of His Divine Lotus Feet for 85 glorious years, continues to be always with us as the Eternal Supreme Consciousness, in and around! Without Siva (Supreme Lord), we become Shava (corpse). Devoid of Consciousness, we become inert. The term Jiva (individual soul) has a meaning and significance only when there is Deva (Cosmic Divinity). Without Deva, there is neither a Jiva nor Jivamu (life) itself. It is only the physical frame of



the Lord that has become invisible but let us always remember that it is He who inspires all noble feelings and aspirations that throb in our hearts.

Many a time Swami declared, "I am the Dehi (Indweller), not the Deha (body)". He made Prasanthi Nilayam as His divine abode, while He was in His physical frame. Nevertheless, He carried on His divine mission worldwide effortlessly and dauntlessly, transcending the limitations of the physical body. As the Antaryami (Indweller) and the Sarvantaryami (All-pervasive Consciousness), He gave ample evidence of His Divine Presence all over the world. He gave an assurance to His devotees that wherever and whenever they call out to Him saying "Sai" with love, He



would at once respond to them saying “Oyi” (Here I am). True to His divine assurance, He looked after the welfare and well-being of His devotees all over the world, who sought refuge at His Lotus Feet, casting the burden of their problems on Him. That is why He is extolled thus:

*Though Puttaparthi is Your dwelling place*

*The Pudami (Earth) in its entirety is Yours.*

*Whatever be the trials and tribulations we face,*

*We seek shelter under the umbrella of Your divine grace.*

How could all this be possible if He was bound by the shackles of human frame? How could He go to the rescue of devotees in America and Africa while residing in Puttaparthi? That is why, even today, devotees all over the world pour out their innermost feelings and prayers in front of Swami’s portraits in their homes and Mandirs, as they firmly believe that Bhagavan is very much with them, though He has shed His mortal coil. Swami responds and fulfils their deep-seated wishes and desires, in accordance with their faith, devotion and yearning.

“None can set foot in Prasanthi Nilayam without My permission,” Bhagavan had declared. How true is this declaration! It is impossible to come to Prasanthi Nilayam without His grace and permission. If we watch the growing number of devotees who come to Prasanthi Nilayam even after six years of Swami’s Maha Samadhi, it dawns upon us as to how Swami continues to inspire the devotees, directing them Godwards.

It is astonishing to note that nearly half the number of devotees who visit Prasanthi Nilayam these days are those who have never seen Swami before and are coming here for the first time. As Bhagavan continues to attract and bless the devotees in large numbers, we are filled with a sense of courage and conviction that He is very much with us, guiding and guarding us.

After Bhagavan’s Maha Samadhi in 2011, a sense of gloom and despair descended on us as we felt orphaned and abandoned. Future appeared very bleak and uncertain. It was a very frightening situation. We pined for His Darshan, but He was not to be seen. We were desperate to pour out our problems and worries, but He was not in our midst anymore. It was not possible for us to get any doubt clarified, as He had given up His physical frame. Even as I was beset with intense agony and anguish that the bond of love with Bhagavan was broken, Swami was filling my heart with courage and conviction, reassuring me all the while, “I am with you”. This bond of love has been growing stronger day by day, leading me forward. As the days rolled by, it became unmistakably evident that Swami continues to guide and lead every activity, big or small, in Prasanthi Nilayam. In a very short time, Swami made me realise that He indeed is the Doer of every activity, and we are but instruments in His Divine Hands. Once this realisation dawned on me, there was no room for despair and desolation anymore; it was Ananda (bliss) all the way. The sun may be beating down mercilessly, but where is the need to worry when we have the protection of our all-merciful Lord, providing us with the cool shade of His divine umbrella? In this regard, there are innumerable experiences



and manifold revelations. Here are a couple of incidents for you...

On the auspicious occasion of His Birthday on 23rd November every year, Bhagavan used to bless the students of all campuses with clothes. It was a sort of a tradition that He followed. That was the time of 90th Birthday celebrations. There were about 3,000 students (girls and boys) in all the campuses and as per the tradition, we wanted to distribute clothes to all of them. When I made an enquiry about the stock of clothes in the Mandir store, I was informed that enough stock was not available. I called the authorities in charge of stores and spoke to them. They informed me there was no option other than buying clothes from an outside agency. The estimated cost to place the order and buy clothes was ₹ 12 lakhs. How to get such a huge amount! Nevertheless, I resolved to do my bit in order to continue Bhagavan's tradition, come what may! Immediately, I told the authorities to make arrangements for getting clothes for all the students. Though I proceeded with the stubborn faith that Swami is there to take care of everything, the thought how I would be able to get such a huge amount was lurking in my heart, causing some anxiety.

It is my practice every day to bow down before Maha Samadhi and mentally submit to Swami about various activities of the day. Accordingly, that evening also I submitted to Swami about the order placed for procurement of clothes for students. Having made my submission at His Lotus Feet, I went home with a light heart, leaving behind the worry and anxiety.

When I went to my office the following day, I found a person waiting for me with

***It is astonishing to note that nearly half the number of devotees who visit Prasanthi Nilayam these days are those who have never seen Swami before and are coming here for the first time. As Bhagavan continues to attract and bless the devotees in large numbers, we are filled with a sense of courage and conviction that He is very much with us, guiding and guarding us.***

whom I had no prior acquaintance. I called him inside and spoke to him. He informed me that he wished to donate some amount as a humble offering on his part towards Birthday celebrations. He said that the amount may be utilised for any activity. When I enquired how much money he wanted to contribute, he said he would like to donate ₹ 12 lakhs! I was stunned and speechless for a few moments, wondering whether it was all a dream or a reality. Swami, in His infinite mercy, arranged for funds in less than twenty-four hours of my submission to Him regarding the purchase of clothes. The amount was duly deposited in the organisation's account in three days time.

During the course of his conversation with me, the gentleman told me another significant thing. It seems it was his long-cherished desire to contribute 12 lakhs for the 90th Birthday celebrations and therefore, he had been saving money quite for some time. It all boils down to the fact



that Bhagavan had His master-plan in place long ago for the distribution of clothes on the occasion of His 90th Birthday! It is Swami's work that is being executed and the one who executes the work is also Swami. All the activities are going on smoothly without any hindrance. As these thoughts flooded my mind, I felt ecstatic.

Here is another extraordinary experience of His Presence. It is well known to all that, as part of Dasara Celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam, Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna is performed for the peace and prosperity of the world, every year. We had some trepidation for undertaking this glorious Yajna after the Maha Samadhi. At times, we even felt it would be a misadventure on our part to undertake this Maha Yajna, when the Avatar was not with us in His physical frame. However, we decided to continue this event with the firm conviction that Swami would take care of it. With Bhagavan's grace and blessings, this Maha Yajna is being continued for the past seven years successfully without any obstacle.

This year also the Yajna was performed with all its glory and magnificence. As I mentioned earlier, before undertaking any activity, I bow down before Maha Samadhi and pray for Swami's blessings. In the same manner, a day before the commencement of the Yajna, I prayed to Bhagavan for its successful performance and continuation. During the course of the Yajna, I felt deep within me that Swami's invisible assuring hand was leading us forward, holding our hand at every step. I felt immensely happy when people expressed their joy and satisfaction at the successful completion of Yajna. After the Poornahuti, I gratefully

submitted to Swami at Maha Samadhi that the Yajna concluded successfully and prayed, "Swami, please forgive us if there were any shortcomings".

I had a wonderful dream that night with Swami standing in front of me, flashing beautiful smiles. I fell at His Lotus Feet in all ecstasy and submitted to Him, "Swami, the Yajna was performed with great splendour by Your grace and blessings".

Bhagavan replied, "Telusu Bangaru, Manchidi (I know it dear, good)".

Then I prayed, "Swami, please forgive us if there were any shortcomings".

Immediately, Swami said, "When I am the Doer, how can there be any shortcomings"?

My body tingles with ecstasy whenever I reflect on this wonderful revelation of Swami.

We have to bear two things in mind in this context.

Firstly, we can spend our earnings for our needs and enjoyments but we will find fulfilment only when we spend at least a part of our earnings on spiritual and service activities.

Secondly, in Prasanthi Nilayam, it is Swami who is the Doer of any activity, the objective of any activity and the activity itself (Karta, Karma, Kriya)! Everything happens by His Will and Grace. We should never forget this truth.

Praying for the blessings of Swami on all devotees, all the time...

*Samasta Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the worlds be happy!)

– **The author is a Trustee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.**



# SWAMI, THE DIVINE TEACHER

S.S. Naganand

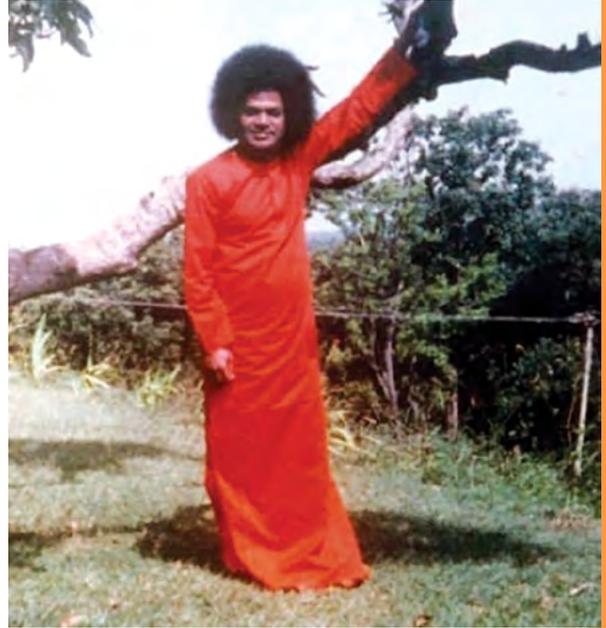
**H**UMAN BIRTH IS THE RESULT of many good deeds that one has done over many past births.

In the first verse of Viveka Chudamani, Sri Adi Sankaracharya refers to three things which are very difficult to get and can only be obtained by Divine grace. The first of three things that he refers to is human birth. The second is deliverance or Moksha and the third is the company or blessings of great personalities. In Swami, we readily got the third of these rare gifts of God. Good company leads to good deeds which in turn helps you to acquire Punya or merit, which is like the bank balance for the future.

## **The Five Cardinal Values are Universal**

In the case of mammals, the young one is completely dependent on the mother for bodily nourishment, for a fairly long period of time after birth. Without such nourishment, it is not possible for the offspring to survive and attain adulthood. Nourishment of body is essential for proper development of human being. But nourishment for the body alone is sometimes counter-productive. The power of the mind, the process of thinking and the ability to discriminate between good and bad is the exclusive domain of the human race. No other species is endowed with such abilities and qualities.

Mother is the first teacher. Even birds and animals have the maternal instincts which are required for survival. They also have skills and ability to face obstacles and difficulties and to overcome them for survival. Development of the mind is only possible



with the assistance of a teacher or Guru. Right from young age after learning from the biological mother, the child is inquisitive and willing to learn. The child is then sent to a school and the teacher becomes the next Guru. The children learn from the words, actions, visual expressions and speech.

Recognising the need to nurture young minds, Swami realised the importance of good environment in schools. Therefore, He decided to set up ideal schools and achieved this by providing a nice environment in the school, a clean study area, most importantly an ideal teacher. It was emphasised that good human values which are latent in every human being can be nurtured from young age with right emphasis on the overall development of the body and mind of the child. The five cardinal human values identified by Swami for special emphasis are



universal in application. All religions accept these human values. In fact, the little voice which we all hear prompting us from inside is completely aware of these human values. When one is sensitised to these values, they will become a part of one's psyche and way of life. The human values are: Sathya (truth), Dharma, (righteousness) Santhi (peace), Prema (love) and Ahimsa (non-violence).

The greatness of Swami can never be over-emphasised when it comes to the way in which Swami taught us the importance of these values and the need to always bear these in mind in all our actions, thoughts and words. The concepts are not abstract and Swami illustrated them in a very simple but profound manner. The concept of truth is that there is God and He exists everywhere. There is only one truth and that is divinity. Swami often said that faith and devotion were the two sides of the same coin. If one has to realise the truth, one must use the coin which has both the above faces. Swami used the simple illustrations and coined phrases which capture one's attention, e.g., there is only one God and He is omnipresent. Swami also emphasised on another facet of truth which is, being truthful and avoiding lies. He often used to illustrate this teaching with a simple phrase in Sanskrit which says, speak truth, speak that which is pleasant to speak but do not speak truth which is not pleasing.

In innumerable Discourses, Swami referred to the need to follow the right path. In Sri Adi Sankaracharya's poetic work called Prashnottara Ratna Malika, a question is posed as to what is most ideal in life, and the answer given is following the path of Dharma or righteousness. How is it possible to follow that path? Swami explained that it

was only possible to do so if we got rid of six obstacles, namely, Kama (lust), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), Moha (delusion), Madha (pride) and Matsarya (jealousy). Each one of these obstacles has to be tackled and dealt with firmly. This is possible by being conscious of desires which arise in the mind. Swami forcefully exhorts that one must place a ceiling on desires.

The next concept is Santhi (peace). It is well known that anger destroys equanimity of mind. It leads to many actions which one would regret later. Santhi is not a passive concept but it postulates that one should have a sense of contentment. Dealing with the concept of Prema (love), Swami expounds that compassion and the desire for the welfare of all beings is the very foundation of love. In the Vishnu Shatpadi Stotra, Sri Adi Sankaracharya prays to God to take away his ego, pacify the animal desires in him and expand his compassion for all living beings. Bhagavan graphically describes this in this way:

The flower of compassion to all living beings (*Sarvabhuta Daya Pushpam*) is very dear to God. From the seed of Divinity grows the tree of creation. In this tree, the fruits are human beings who are Jivatma. In each of these human fruits, Divinity is present as a seed. In Bhagavadgita, Lord Krishna said, *Beejam Maam Sarva Bhutanam* (I am the seed in all living beings in the form of Atma, the soul). Recognising the truth that God is present in the form of Atma in all living beings, being compassionate to all is what God expects from you everyday. God loves the flower of forbearance (Kshama) very much. It is truly the highest quality of a human being. Often you develop narrow ideas, thinking of 'I', 'my family', and treat others as different from 'me'. When you truly



love, you develop patience and forbearance. Expand your love to encompass all living beings, that will fructify as forbearance.”

The last human value of Ahimsa is illustrated by the need for compassion for the poor and meek and the absence of violence in thought, word and deed. In His innumerable parables, which adorn Swami's Discourses and start abruptly in the course of His exuberant Discourses, there is a sudden pause followed by the words “Oka Chinna Katha” (one small story), Swami adds a deep significance to the particular aspect He has highlighted.

### **Bal Vikas is the Divine Gift of Bhagavan to Children**

In order to reach out to the entire world, Swami guided the Sathya Sai Organisation to include a programme called “Bal Vikas”. In this programme, young children undergo a structured programme of learning which includes Bhajans, group activities, storytelling and exposure to great epics and cultural traditions and most importantly to the divine message of Baba. This is a special gift by Swami to children all over the world.

Noticing that the modern school curriculum is laying emphasis only on rote learning and on mere academic pursuit not coupled with development of human values, Swami coined the word ‘educare’ and often compared it with the word ‘education’. He explained that education is for earning a living but educare is for life. We go to educational institutions to learn various subjects, obtain educational qualifications to help us to earn a living but what good is education which does not allow the mind to flower and work towards spiritual uplift. Swami reminded us that true education is that which leads to immortality. The end

of education is character. This is what is emphasised in the programme of Education in Human Values (EHV). For this purpose, Swami took personal interest in guiding the devotees, instructing the Heads of Sai Organisations at the International, National, State, District and Samithi levels. He infused into Mahila Vibhag (Ladies Wing) of the Sai Organisation, a sense of commitment and dedication to undertake these programmes and introduce them in as many educational institutions as possible. Over 108 Sai Schools all over India and a large number of them in overseas countries have EHV as a part of the curriculum. Not stopping with that, Swami guided and nurtured training institutes to train teachers from all over the country, in a formal way, to equip them to undertake the task of implementing the EHV programme.

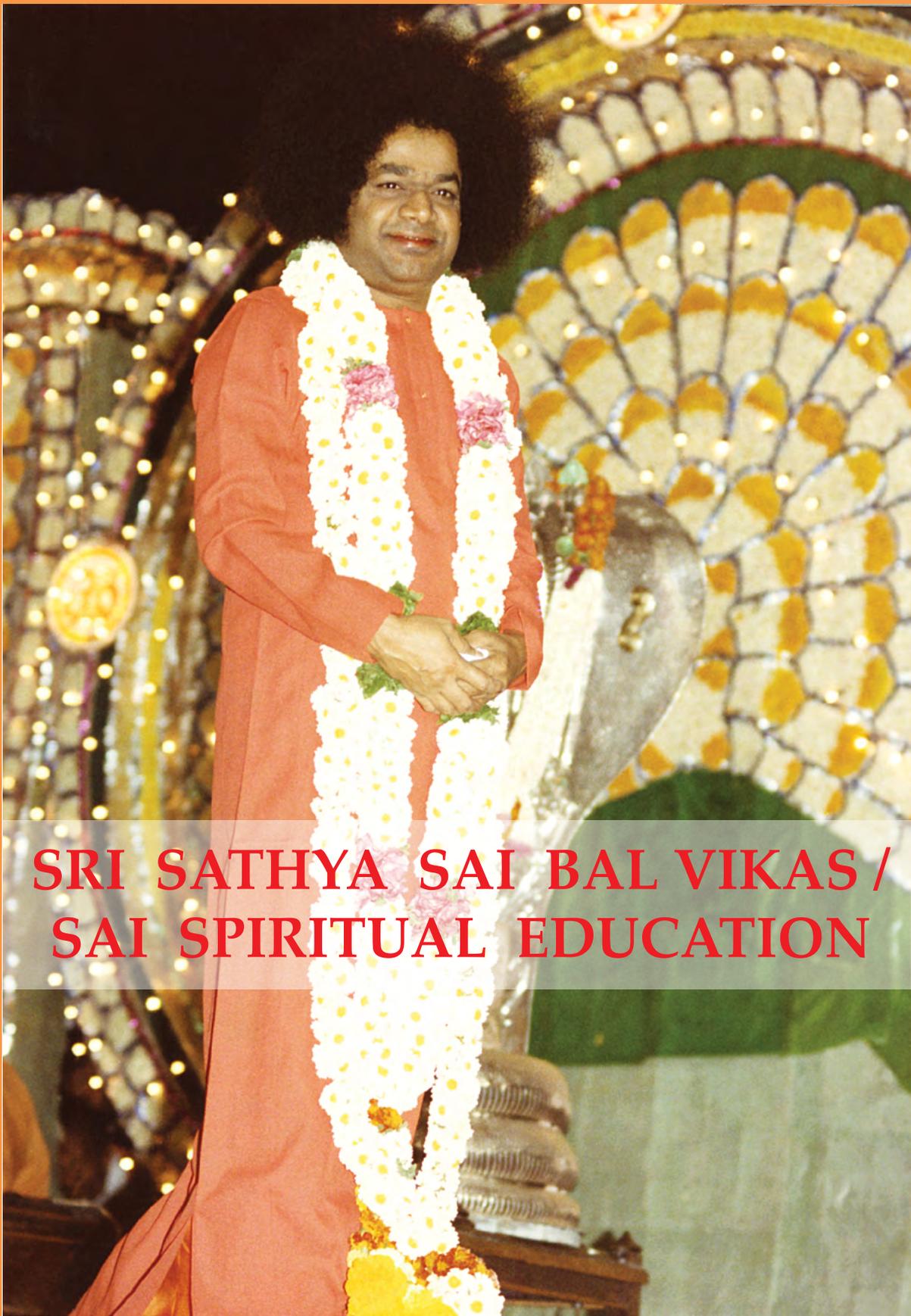
All this indicates the motherly instinct of Swami to teach good values to all His devotees as a great blessing for humanity. Those of us who were privileged to see Swami's involvement in the propagation of the Bal Vikas and EHV programmes can never forget His intense involvement in every aspect and the love that He showered on the teachers and the taught. This special issue of Sanathana Sarathi attempts to bring together a series of articles relating to the subject.

We can only express our gratitude to Swami by following His instructions and by doing everything possible to nurture the programmes as their objective is the welfare of the world. It is in keeping with universal prayer in all Swami's Institutions:

*Samasta Loka Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the worlds be happy!).

– **The author is a Trustee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.**





**SRI SATHYA SAI BAL VIKAS /  
SAI SPIRITUAL EDUCATION**



# SAI SPIRITUAL EDUCATION (SSE)

Dr. Narendranath Reddy

*“We are today concerned with education in human values. In my view, the cultivation of human values alone is education. Whoever tries to understand the human values of Truth, Righteous Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence properly, who practises these values and propagates them with zeal and sincerity can alone be described as a truly educated person.”*

*– Sathya Sai Baba, 9th March 1986*

**L**ORD KRISHNA SAYS IN THE Bhagavadgita, *Adhyatmavidya Vidyanam* (of all types of knowledge, I am the supreme knowledge of the Self). The scriptures proclaim, *Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye* (true education is that which liberates). The resulting freedom from bondage, grief and ignorance leads to bliss. True education, Baba says, is the practice of the human values which are inherent in all of us – Educare, which brings out and manifests these innate human values.

## **Bal Vikas (Sai Spiritual Education)**

Swami exhorts us to start practising these human values early in life and move forward with perseverance and patience until we realise our innate divinity. Accordingly, Bhagavan started the Bal Vikas movement in 1968. Subsequently, it became an important part of the Sathya Sai Organisation, as per His divine command.

Swami gave utmost importance to the Bal Vikas movement and said that the very name implied the blossoming of human excellence. This movement, which has spread worldwide, is known today as Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) in countries outside India. Although the name may have changed, the original goal and the pursuit



of truth as taught by Lord Sai, remains unchanged.

In the last five decades, the SSE movement in India and many countries outside India has transformed the character of children, making them exemplary citizens and noble leaders, thus promoting global peace and harmony. The dedicated teachers, parents and students play a pivotal role in this movement. The Sathya Sai International Organisation, to which He lent His sacred name, is functioning in more than 120 countries and has approximately 2,000 Sathya Sai Centres and Groups. The members study and practise Sathya Sai teachings on human values and many Sathya Sai Centres around the world have active SSE programmes.

Ideal Sai Spiritual Education involves the active participation of the ideal student, the ideal teacher and ideal parents – the three pillars of the SSE programme.

### **Ideal Teacher**

*A loving teacher dedicating his life to his profession becomes the model for his admiring students. A teacher can make or mar the future of the student for he is the hero whom the student desires to emulate and imitate in dress, habit, style of living and thinking.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 22nd May 1982

Bhagavan says that it is a great blessing and sign of divine grace to become an SSE teacher, since the teaching of SSE children is a greater Sadhana than any other spiritual practice. He says that SSE children (*Prema Putras*) are more important to the teacher than their own biological children (*Kama Putras*), since they are entrusted by God to the teacher's care. He emphasises that the

role of the SSE teacher is very important, as one bad teacher can spoil thousands of students, while a bad student can only cause harm to himself or herself. Swami compares the teachers to a large water tank, and the students to taps connected to the tank. If the tank is filled with pure water, every tap connected to it will deliver pure water. But, if it is filled with dirty water, the taps will deliver dirty water. Similarly, if the teacher is filled with love and compassion, the students will also exhibit the same qualities; on the other hand, if the teacher is filled with negative qualities, the students too will exhibit the same. Therefore, it is important for teachers to possess noble and exemplary character. He exhorts an ideal teacher to teach with love for love's sake.

### **Ideal Parents**

*First and foremost, the parents should put the human values into practice in their own life and then encourage their children to develop these values. The parents should guide their children on the right path by their own example.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 21st July 2008

Most SSE students spend only an hour or two in the SSE class, whereas many hours are spent at home. It is therefore important that parents support, nurture and reiterate the human values learnt in the SSE classes while at home. Parents should also actively support the SSE programmes by their attendance and encouragement. It is noteworthy that Bhagavan started the Bal Vikas movement in the homes of devotees. Swami says the mother is the first teacher and in His Divine Discourses, Swami often talks about the mothers of Lord Rama, Shivaji, Gandhiji and also Mother Easwaramma – ideal mothers who gave the



world exemplary leaders and noble sons who inspired millions of people.

At one time, our eldest daughter and son-in-law found it difficult to take their children to SSE classes due to a four-hour long commute and they prayed to Swami for guidance. Baba then advised them to hold SSE classes at home, with themselves as SSE teachers. He advises that parents can become good SSE teachers by practising human values and setting good examples. Where SSE programmes are not accessible due to long distances, SSIO offers online programmes in some countries.

### Ideal Student

*“Your first task is to cultivate control over the senses... Only the student who has mastery over the senses can be heroic in his life and be strong and effulgent as a diamond. The one who is a slave of the senses will be a slave of the world. Self-control must be the primary aim of education.”*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 21st May 1992

The third important aspect of SSE is the role of the student. Bhagavan says education confers humility, and the Lord showers His grace on the humble. Parents and teachers should teach the students to lead simple and humble lives and emphasise the practice of lessons they learn in the classes. Swami emphasises talking softly and sweetly, and the practice of silence as a spiritual practice – as the voice of God can be heard only in the depth of silence. Swami exhorted students to treat their parents and teachers with love and respect.

He often narrated a story from the Srimad Bhagavatam concerning Prahlada, a great devotee who exemplified the principles of Educare. Prahlada mastered

his senses and was a mastermind. He had pure, pristine and unsullied love for God and love and compassion for all. By contrast, his father Hiranyakasipu had mastered all the sciences but not his senses and mind. Swami says he was the greatest scientist. He travelled not only to the moon but also to various planetary regions. He conquered the three worlds and all the five elements were under his control. But Hiranyakasipu did not conquer himself and was a slave to his senses and to his inner enemies, which led to his perdition. Swami proclaimed that education without character, science without humanity and commerce without morality are not only useless, but positively dangerous. Love and compassion are the hallmarks of real education. Prahlada, an exemplary student, had these qualities.

### SSE Philosophy and Pedagogy

SSE philosophy is based on the following *Mahavakyas* (great aphorisms) on Educare:

*“The End of Education is Character.”*

Swami emphasises character development and transformation of the heart in addition to academic excellence. He often declared: “The end of education is character” and “Education is for life, not only for earning a livelihood”. To that end, Swami encourages the student to aspire for the highest degree “Amritasya Putra” – Child of Immortality – rather than to aspire for degrees like B.A., M.A., M.D. and Ph.D. Only spiritual knowledge confers this highest degree.

*“The Essence of Education is Concentration.”*

Lord Krishna says in the Gita that the cultured mind is one-pointed in contrast to the scattered mind of the uncultured.



*“The Purpose of Education is to Serve Humanity.”*

Bhagavan encourages students and faculty in His educational institutions and members of the Sathya Sai Organisation to involve themselves actively in selfless service to the needy, to become good citizens and attain purity. Therefore, service activities should be a major focus area of the SSE curriculum.

*“The Aim of Education is to Realise one’s Innate Divinity.”*

This goal is achieved by the practice of EHV – education in human values. Swami emphasises that EHV is 3HV which is integration of head, heart and hand – to have the head of Adi Sankara (wisdom), the heart of Buddha (love and compassion), and the hands of Janaka (selfless service).

Swami has introduced many programmes like practice of ceiling on desires, harmony of religions and unity of faiths to realise unity in diversity – which is the essence of all scriptures.

Bhagavan emphasises “ceiling on desires” as a spiritual practice. Instead of catering to the outgoing senses and worldly pleasures, Baba wants students to go inward. Instead of surfing the Internet,

He advises us to turn to the “innernet”- the inward path, and sanctify the inner faculties.

It is common knowledge that today students are addicted to electronic devices, games and gadgets that attract their attention, thus wasting their time and energy. This cyber abuse has become a major deterrent for spiritual progress of children and adolescents. Children and youth need proper guidance and supervision by parents and teachers regarding the appropriate use of electronic gadgets.

Baba emphasises that children should be taught that all religions and all faiths are facets of the same universal truth adoring and glorifying the one and only God who is best worshipped through love. This realisation helps us experience unity in diversity.

*From the most impressionable years, the children should be taught to cultivate love for all. Love leads to unity. Unity promotes purity. Purity leads to Divinity.*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 21st January 1986

*Samasta Loka Sukhino Bhavantu!* (May All the Worlds be Happy!)

– **The author is the Chairman, Prasanthi Council, Sathya Sai International Organisation.**

*We call the human values as Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa (truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence). In fact, love is the fundamental basis for truth and righteousness. Love is God, truth is God, righteousness is God. One bereft of these principles is verily a living corpse. The five human values can be compared to five Pranas (life principles) present in us.*

– Baba

# INTERNATIONAL SSE PROGRAMME

Dr. Srinivas Raghavan

**T**HE SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL Organisation (SSIO) has been blessed by Swami to enjoy a vibrant and strong Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) programme across the world. At present, there are over 30,000 SSE students with



over 3,000 teachers. By Swami's grace and with the help of Prasanthi Council, an International SSE conference was organised from 1st to 3rd August 2015 to deliberate on the present state of the SSE programme, learn about the desired state, and develop the future framework for SSE worldwide. Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust,

senior leaders of the Prasanthi Council, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, the SSIO, SSE and SSEHV educators, National and Regional education coordinators, teachers, trainers and Sathya Sai Youth involved in the SSE programmes, came from over 50 countries to attend. Following up on the recommendations of a successful conference, we have been piloting the International SSE platform and framework. We have conducted SSE Enrichment Workshops for teachers and coordinators and provided tools for teachers, parents and students. Based on the learning from this pilot initiative we have been improving our International SSE platform and framework.

The strength of the SSIO SSE programme lies in its rich diversity from around the world. On the other hand, the very same diversity poses challenges in being able to come together. Therefore, our singular goal and focus is to unite the global SSE family, so that we can come together, strengthen our faith and devotion to Swami, and help to shape the character of each and every international SSE student. Presently, SSE programmes around the world have been developed and adapted from the original Indian Bal Vikas programme. The SSE programme has wide diversity based on varying cultures, religions, languages and ethnicities represented in the various zones of the SSIO. The aspiration of the parents for character education rather than belief in Swami as Avatar has also influenced



the content of the SSE programmes. Furthermore, while not all the Indian diaspora who send their children for SSE are devotees of Sathya Sai Baba, they do see the value in sending their children to the Sathya Sai Centres for SSE. In many cases, this has had the effect of modifying the SSE towards SSEHV. Thus, there is a need to unite our global SSE programmes to work with the varying needs of the present and future SSE families.

Swami (SAI) is at the centre of the Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) programme. Swami in His Divine Discourse discussed the expansion of the word SAI as S - Service, A - Adoration, and I - Illumination:

- Service (Swami / God embodied in one and all)
- Adoration (Swami / God embodied in Form)
- Illumination (Swami / God embodied in His teachings)

The SSE programme emphasises all three aspects of S (Service), A (Adoration) and I (Illumination) and aims at giving students an all-round training including the devotional aspect (adoration of the Form of Swami). On the other hand, the SSEHV programme does not emphasise adoration of the Form of Swami.

The original SSE programme used to have children mainly from devotee families. In recent times, we have a mix of devotee families, and community multi-faith families in the programme. The community multi-faith families may not be Sai devotees but they have faith in God and may be of various religious or spiritual backgrounds. Some of these parents may bring their children with the understanding about the

SSE programme while others may send them for basic cultural and spiritual training. In some cases, the teachers avoid the devotional aspect and cover an SSEHV type of programme. Yet in other cases, the teachers mainly focus on Indian culture and spirituality. Therefore, it is important that teachers and coordinators know how to differentiate between Bal Vikas (India), SSE (SSIO Sai centres), and SSEHV (SSIO community) programmes and clearly communicate to the parents about which programme they are enrolling their children. All families must understand that the SSE programme is dedicated to all three aspects of S-A-I and the children will be given an all-round education beyond Indian culture and spirituality.

The SSE programme is focused around Swami, His life and teachings. Coordinators and teachers who deliver the SSE programme must understand and maintain this focus. While maintaining this focus, we refer interchangeably between Swami and God since the programme is offered to both devotee families (devoted to Swami and His teachings) and community multi-faith families (devoted to God). Although all participants (parents, students) must understand the programme's focus, it is expected there will be varied buy-in to these elements. Therefore, it is important for the coordinators and teachers to put together a suitably blended programme to work with their local culture and context to empower the participants to bring forth their innate Divinity.

By Swami's grace, we are blessed with a great treasure house of knowledge and experience worldwide. The International SSE Framework uses multiple dimensions,

*continued on page 31...*





# SSE Teacher Training in Australia

Krish Naidoo

**W**E ARE VERY BLESSED TO have been given the opportunity by our Beloved Bhagavan to be involved in the spiritual education of children through the Sai Spiritual Education



(SSE) programme. In order for the SSE programme to be most effective, the teachers must be adequately trained. In fact, they must become Gurus, and practise before teaching. In Australia, we have been most fortunate to have been personally trained by senior teachers like Dr. Pal Dhall and learn the various aspects of Sathya Sai Education.

In 2014, the responsibility of training SSE teachers was given to the National Council of the Sathya Sai International

Organisation (SSIO) of Australia. The National SSE teacher training programme was initiated with the creation of a SSE teacher training committee. It consisted of the National Council Chair, the National Education Coordinator and a National SSE teacher Trainer and was subsequently extended to five members. A set of SSE Teacher Training manuals were developed and pilot training programmes were conducted in Melbourne and Sydney. The training included seven days of face-to-face workshops / seminars followed by an intensive mentoring programme. It was then modified to five days face-to-face delivery and a flexible mentoring programme.

In order to expedite the training of SSE teachers and to create a sustainable model, a two tier training system was developed:

1. Train-the-trainer and
2. SSE teacher training.

In the Train-the-trainer segment, the main focus centred on the differences between pedagogy and andragogy. The requirement to be a trainer was that one had to first be a trained SSE teacher. The methodology used to train trainers had to be very distinct from that used in SSE classes. Training teams were created in the major States in Australia and were entrusted with the responsibility to conduct SSE teacher training on a needs basis. Two coordinators were appointed for each of the state teams, one for the administration duties and the other responsible for the delivery of the



training. Nationally, there are approximately 50 teacher trainers.

The main areas covered in the SSE teacher training programme are: Life and Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the concept of “Educare” followed by introduction to the Five Human Values which ends with an overview of the characteristics of a child.

The Teaching Strategies employed in Sai Spiritual Education in Australia are discussed during day two. The participants are provided with the opportunity to develop lesson plans for the different groups and to prepare lesson presentations during days three and four. The last day covers Parental involvement in SSE, Classroom

Management, Cultural Sensitivities and Expectations of a SSE Teacher.

The SSE Teacher Training programme also includes a mentoring component for trainee teachers. The purpose of this component is to provide the trainee teachers with the opportunity to practise and to gain practical teaching skills with the aid of a mentor. The duration of the mentorship varies and is dependent upon the ability and confidence of each trainee teacher.

The term of the SSE Teacher Training Committee is three years. This ensures that the programme will be continually revised and improved.

– **The author is the Principal of the Sathya Sai High School, Australia.**

...continued from page 29

offering an integrative approach to the SSE programme leading to well-rounded development of the students, parents, teachers and coordinators. In addition, the framework elements can be developed individually or combined across dimensions to create effective modules for the programme.

Students in our programme go through a process of raising awareness to being inspired enough to experience and share their innate Divinity.

Today there are three kinds of teachers. The first type consists of teachers who revel in “complaints.” They are the teachers with grouses of one kind or another. The second type consists of teachers who “explain”. They “explain” what the students have to learn. To the third type belong teachers who “inspire.” This category of teachers arouses the enthusiasm of students and inspires them to take deep interest in their studies. Such teachers are becoming rare these days.

– Sathya Sai Speaks v16:13

SSE Classes should expand beyond Awareness lessons to include all class types (see Figure 1)

Teachers should raise the awareness of students and inspire them through

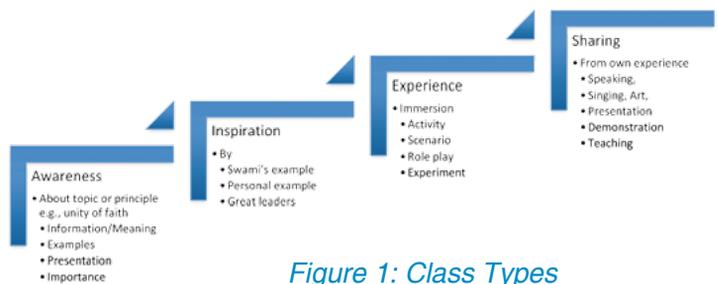


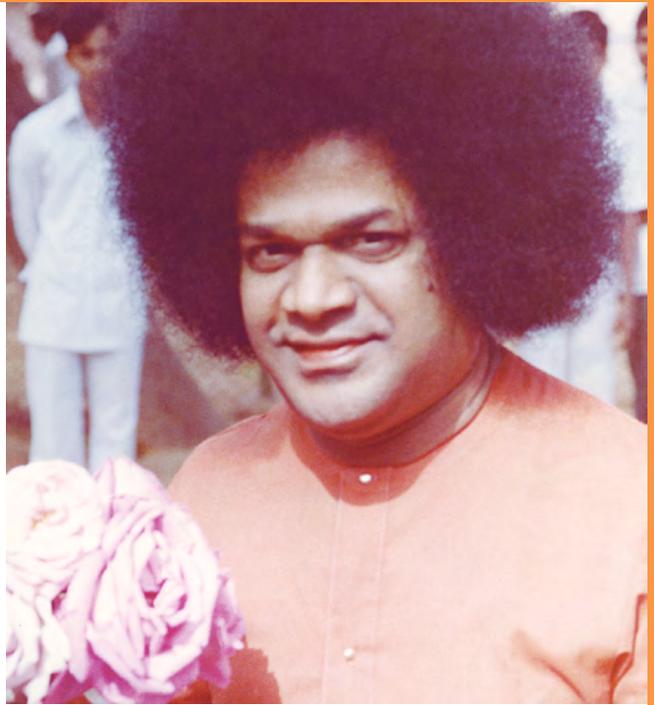
Figure 1: Class Types

stories from Swami's life, the life of great leaders, and their own personal example. By Swami's grace, students can gain their own personal experience through their own effort. Allowing the students to share their own personal experience builds a strong foundation of self-confidence for their life.

– **The author is a Member of the Education Committee of the SSIO / SSWF and National SSE Coordinator, USA.**

**T**HE UNITED STATES OF America is a country with a vast land mass and fewer people inhabiting it when compared to a nation like India. With a highly scattered population, it sometimes becomes very difficult to access Sai Centres as it may involve hours of travel.

The National Online SSE programme had its beginning in the year 2012 when Dr. Srinivas Raghavan met a Sai devotee family from New Mexico State. Their three children were deprived of Swami's SSE programme as there was no Sai Centre nearby. Being a computer professional with an innovative and a helping personality, Dr. Raghavan,



*Faranak Baria Khandadia*

## **THE NATIONAL ONLINE SSE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

with the support of the then National SSE Coordinator, Berniece Mead, took the initiative of teaching the children online. With such a humble beginning and Swami's blessings, this led to the development of a full-fledged National Online SSE programme with enrolment of children who could not travel to Sai Centres due to the extreme distance or there being no SSE classes taught at their nearby Sai Centres.

With our Beloved Bhagavan's Sankalpa, the National Online SSE programme now has international students from USA, U.K.,

Canada and the Caribbean Islands. This gives an additional boost to our children who interact with their peers and learn how to practise Swami's teaching of Universal Love!

The programme offers weekend SSE classes from Group I to Group IV and even one-on-one classes for our Special Needs children, with specially trained Special Needs SSE teachers. The programme is presented in trimesters and the students are given the option to select the trimesters where they would be able to attend the programme. This specially helps in keeping



our teens in the programme. With a massive load of high school commitments, we see many of them leaving the SSE programme at the Sai Centres. The online facility keeps these youth in Swami's programme and then gradually prepares them to transition to the Sai Organisation as SSE alumni.

The programme uses various interesting online techniques, workshops, offline group projects, creating audio plays, and many more. Lessons are based on the five values and the emphasis is always on Walking in Swami's Footsteps, making our lives His message. The goal of the lessons is to move the children from Information → Awareness → and through Inspiration → Experience → Sharing. One of the projects we have done in the past called Trees of Love is documented online ([www.treesoflove.org](http://www.treesoflove.org)).

Service and practical application of Swami's teachings make the crux of the programme. Children are guided to practise Sai teachings in different environment, viz., home, school, community and even work, spreading Baba's message of ever-expanding love.

There is plenty of sharing and interaction amongst the children at the inter-class levels. Students visit different SSE groups online and share about their service projects or any other interesting programme that they have participated in which would inspire others. We have had students sharing about service to animals where they have cleaned tiger and other wild animal cages and fed

animals and worked in an animal rescue shelter, or some who have visited other countries and worked for the betterment of the needy.

Parents, who are the child's first Gurus, play a very involved and vital role in the National Online SSE programme. Teachers and parents constantly work together through WhatsApp study groups to understand and practise Swami's teachings. This creates a spiritually-conducive home environment for our children with good role models to emulate. Parents many times attend classes and assist with many interesting projects.

There are parents' meetings every trimester where the programme coordinator invites prominent Sai devotees to conduct workshops or present a talk which can enrich the parents and teachers in their spiritual progress towards Sai. There is a great feeling of unity and closeness amongst the teachers, parents and students in the Online Programme. It is one big, happy Sai family where everyone consciously follows and practises Swami's teachings of Help Ever, Hurt Never and Love All, Serve All.

To sum it all, the programme is directed to follow Swami's loving dictum: "Guide them to love all and serve all. In short, help them grow into worthy citizens to serve the world, identifying the divinity present in all".

– **The author is National Online SSE Coordinator, Sathya Sai International Organisation.**

*Human values are essential not for students alone. Everyone has to practise human values as a mark of a true human being.*

– Baba

# *The History and Evolution of the Bal Vikas Movement – A Blueprint for the Blossoming of Human Excellence*

Roshan E. Fanibunda

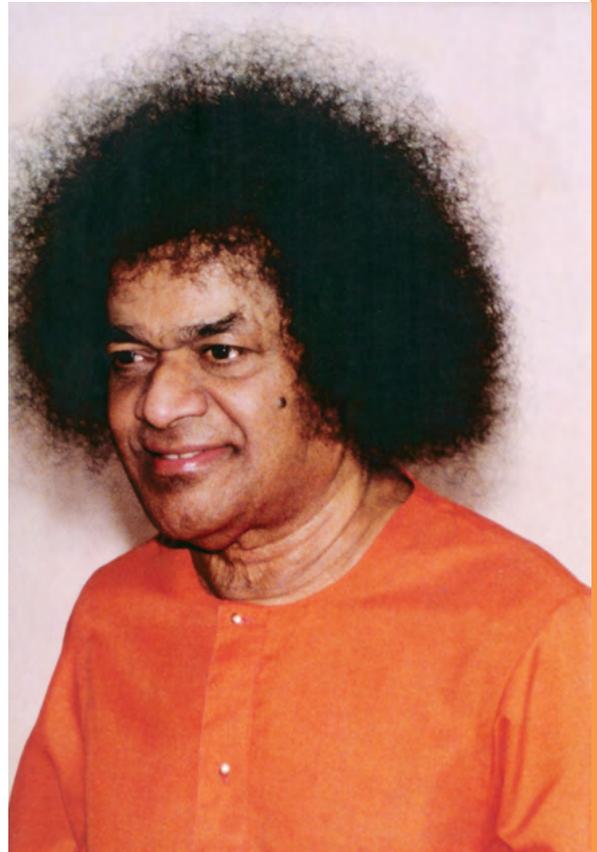
*When one receives education that is based on truth and eternal values, one will be able to achieve liberation without having to go through the process of submergence in Samsara. Therefore, come forward to get the benefit of such education.*

(Divine Discourse 21st July 1994; Bal Vikas Conference)

## **The Genesis of Bal Vikas**

**N**EVER IN THE HISTORY OF mankind have the children of the world received such a unique boon as the Bal Vikas movement.

Bal Vikas is the primary basis of the great movement to restore Dharma in the world. Bal Vikas was born in 1968, when Bhagavan Baba expressed the need for providing children with facilities for imbibing their rich spiritual and cultural heritage. Addressing the Mahila Vibhag in 1969, Baba directed, “Run a Bal Vihar for your children, where they will listen to stories from the scriptures, the epics and the lives of saints belonging to all religions. Teach children to sing Bhajans and introduce them to Dhyana and Japa. Let that habit be inculcated even at this age. Five minutes of prayer and another five minutes of Dhyana will be a good exercise, whose taste itself will persuade the children to make it a habit. The tender mind has to be fed with tenderness”. Thus, at the very outset, Baba introduced the various components that have formed the composite course for Bal Vikas that we have today.



While speaking to the teachers in 1970, Baba exhorted them to recognise that there is great potential in young children which is not possessed by grown-ups. Baba said,



“Take the example of this small boy who just recited four Slokas from the Bhagavadgita and explained their meaning. His speech was short but the content of it was sufficient food for anyone to ruminate on for life. How many of you are aware of the Sai Krishna residing in his heart, but I know. His Daiva Bhakti came out in the form of tears rolling down his cheeks. Keep that child as a model and train your children”.

In May 1971, at the first All India Bal Vihar Teachers’ Conference in Mumbai, Baba changed the word ‘Vihar’ to ‘Vikas’. He said, “The name Bal Vikas is more meaningful because what has to be done is to encourage the true, the beautiful and the good in the child to blossom, express itself and expand”.

A landmark event was the release of the first issue of the ‘Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas’ magazine in 1971, edited by Smt. Sarla Shah. The following is an extract from the Divine Message in the inaugural issue:

“Dear Children! The life of childhood is like that of a tender flower creeper. Only if it is tended and made to grow properly will it blossom forth and shine in beauty and splendour. Culture and character are the true marks and worth of a man. Progress well in your studies and enshrine in your heart the scriptural decrees *Matru Devo Bhava* (let mother be your God), *Pitru Devo Bhava* (let father be your God). You should light the lamp of morality and righteousness that was the tradition of Bharat. You have to make it shine in all brilliance to illumine the world – let this be your vow, let this be your creed and religion; then only will peace and auspiciousness dawn and reign in the world in full glory.” Thus, the Divine Gardener conveyed His aspirations to the young, blossoming boys and girls of this country.

Another milestone – It was at the second All India Conference held at Rajahmundry (now Rajamahendravaram) in 1974 that Baba said, “The word ‘teacher’ does not convey the task that the teachers of the Bal Vikas have to perform. Therefore, the word ‘teacher’ should be replaced by the word ‘Guru’”. Swami went on to say, “Be conscious of the sacred significance of the name ‘Guru’. The Guru has to illumine the mind of the child and remove the ignorance that is obstructing his full development. Like Guru Brahma, you have to plant the seeds of virtue in the child’s heart. As Guru Vishnu, you must foster these, and then as Guru Maheswara, you have to root out the weeds – the unhealthy habits that are crowding around these good saplings”. Swami reminds the Gurus, “As Gurus, you too have a Guru guiding you and overseeing your Seva. So, you too are pupils (Sadhakas), and you too learn lessons of equality, equanimity and selfless love while acting as Gurus”. At the third Bal Vikas Gurus Conference held at Prasanthi Nilayam in 1975, Swami stressed upon personal Sadhana for Gurus leading to synchronisation between one’s thought, word and deed. He always directed the Gurus ‘Be, Do and Tell’ for only then would they acquire the moral authority to influence children.

In this way, the Bal Vikas programme took shape with the Divine Master’s direct guidelines to students and teachers alike.

### The Early Years

Gradually came the need for training programmes. Swami said that appropriate training must be given to enable the Gurus to handle tender, young children and impart values in an efficient and effective manner. From 1971 onwards, there have been



several training programmes at the district and state levels and also at the national level in the Divine Presence, both at Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan. Perhaps one of the most memorable was the Central Training Camp held at Brindavan (1978). Here the participants had the rare good fortune of not only receiving the Divine directives and guidelines but also the opportunity to put questions to Swami. It was also here that the Gayatri Mantra was introduced into the syllabus.

In 1975, a scientific study was published by the Department of Applied Psychology, University of Mumbai, which stated, "The Bal Vikas programme is consistent with the general psychological principles of learning and the beneficiaries exhibited a significant increase in moral development". Another study was conducted by the Department of Educational Technology, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla (1985) to assess 'moral judgement' as a readout of value development. Here again the Bal Vikas children scored significantly higher than their non-Bal Vikas counterparts.

'Sai Colony' Bal Vikas classes commenced when in 1975 Swami said, "Visit small groups of people living in villages or in slums in big cities. Teach them cleanliness and hygiene and help them to reform their way of living". 1975 also saw the expansion of Bal Vikas to other countries.

Since 1977, Easwamma Day has been engraved in the pages of history as 'Mothers' Day'. It is one of the most significant days in a Bal Vikas child's calendar. It marks the culmination of a weeklong festival of children the world over, wherein they participate in various programmes, Seva activities, Nagar Sankirtan and most importantly recite

the prayer-cum-pledge of obedience and gratitude to their mothers – a fitting tribute to Mother Easwamma, the Crown of Motherhood.

Over the years, Bhagavan showered His blessings through several national and international conferences, each a memorable milestone, that spurred the growth of the Bal Vikas movement. Many would recall an incident which took place at the International Bal Vikas Conference in 1983, wherein Bal Vikas students gave everyone a glimpse of the sterling qualities they are capable of. A cyclone hit Puttaparthi and a sudden gale in the middle of the night brought down the Shamiana (tent) where the Bal Vikas children were housed, and they were trapped beneath the tent. However, the only words that escaped their lips were "Sai Ram". Unlike the elders who panicked, they began singing Bhajans calmly. Bhagavan pointed out that it was their Bal Vikas training that enabled them to face such ordeals with courage and faith.

### **The Course Crystallises and Evolves**

Swami says, "Spiritual education comes from the depths of one's heart and is always associated with love". Thus, Bal Vikas is truly a heart-to-heart programme. Today the course has evolved into an efficient instrument for the propagation of 'educare' – the core message of Sai's philosophy of true education. The aim of the course is transformation of the child – fostering in him a keen sense of discrimination, the ability to satisfy his conscience and an awareness of his inherent divinity. The fabric of the Bal Vikas course has been woven out of the five basic human values of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa, which are the essence of all religions. These values are



elicited from within, through the five teaching techniques of: prayers – Stotras and Slokas; Bhajans – group singing; stories; Japa and Dhyana – silent sitting; and various group activities like spiritual games and role plays. A composite blend of all these is used in every class. The course crystallised into a nine-year, non-formal education system designed to fulfil the needs of children between 5-14 years, and leading to the award of ‘Diploma in Sathya Sai Education’, which was instituted in 1977. The project work at the end of Group III affords an experience of the activities conducted by the organisation.

In 1980, the ‘Ceiling on Desires’ programme became an integral part of the Bal Vikas course. The children fill up a spiritual diary in which they record their progress and lapses (in the practice of not wasting food, money, energy and time) thus making the programme a way of life. How much the world stands to gain from the practice of ceiling on desires can be gauged from Swami’s words: “Ceiling on desires is civilisation”!

Today, the course has many new additions such as ‘Veda chanting’ and the ‘sanctity of the elements’. In keeping with digitisation: Uncle Lion’s value cartoons, Golden History episodes, value posters and pictorial representations of young Sathya’s life are much valued contributions from Radio Sai.

### Parenting

Parenting is an inseparable part of the Bal Vikas programme. It is the fulfilment of a sacred bond of trusteeship between God and two human beings; for as Swami emphasises children come into this world through parents, not from parents. Swami

in His own inimitable way has compared the holistic process of child development to a bicycle which the child is riding. The front wheel is the Bal Vikas Guru and the rear wheel, the parents. If the rear wheel does not move, the bicycle will not move! Thus, parents and Gurus have to work hand in hand, blending love with discipline, to achieve their objectives. Parenting workshops have been widely conducted, notable among them being the workshops held at Prasanthi Nilayam in 1998, 2007 and 2012. Swami’s aspiration was, “I hope to see that every home becomes a Bal Vikas centre and every mother a Bal Vikas Guru”.

### Divine Opportunities

Bal Vikas offers ample opportunities for the blossoming of talents, and thousands of children were blessed with the opportunity to participate in several rallies, dramas and dance ballets in Bhagavan’s Divine Presence. Notable among these were the all-India rallies in 1975 and 1980, ‘The Cosmos’ in 1983, and in later years, ‘The Children’s Festival of Joy’ in 2005 and ‘Sri Sathya Sai Satcharita’ in 2012, to name a few. The alumni meets in 2005 and 2010 and the annual Bal Vikas Convocation (cum convention) being held at Prasanthi Nilayam since 2014 are sweet homecomings for the ex-Bal Vikas students.

### A Quick Leap Forward

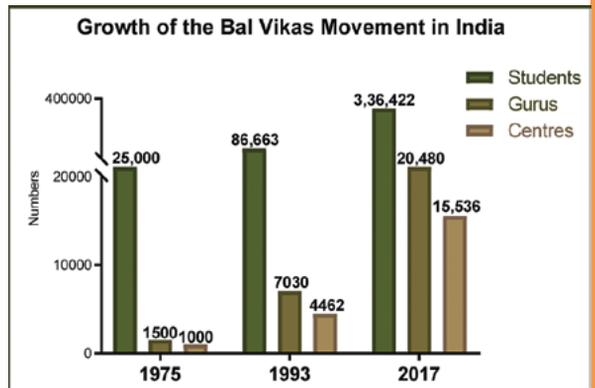
In keeping with the times, the Bal Vikas magazine has now taken on a new look, with its variety of value content, made colourful! The year 2016 saw the introduction of three new features. The first is the month of ‘Giving and Forgiving’ connected with the ‘Aradhana Mahotsava’, for ‘giving’ was the hallmark of the Sathya Sai Avatar. During this month, activities are organised for the



children to experience the joy of giving. Next is the 'Swachhta Se Divyata Tak' programme wherein outer cleanliness and purity of mind are emphasised and practised nationwide by the children. And the third is the celebration of Swami's Birthday with a 'United Family Sadhana'. Swami has said, "The day I am born in you as Love, that day is My Birthday and in fact your real birthday too". So, in keeping with Swami's teachings of love, service and sacrifice, it is envisaged that the whole family harmoniously engages in activities of selfless love. In 2016, a new study utilising the Rokeach Value Survey analysed the impact of Bal Vikas Education on character development in children across India, both rural and urban. Overall, the study proved that Bal Vikas students, Gurus, parents and alumni have indeed imbibed Bal Vikas values which they ranked higher than societal pleasures.

### The Impact of Bal Vikas

The tiny stream of Bal Vikas which emerged between 1968 and 1971 with a few classes and children, grew steadily to 1500 centres in 1975, expanding to 4662 classes in 1993 and has now gathered great momentum with 3,36,422 children and 15,536 classes in 2017. This stream symbolises Bhagavan's love to give children the requisite basis of values and culture which will form the bedrock for a successful, divine life. Alumni of the Bal Vikas



programme are self-confident young men and women equipped to be the harbingers of change in a society devoid of love and moral values. Most importantly, the alumni have the desire to please Bhagavan and live for Him with faith and equanimity. On the professional front too, alumni have excelled and made a mark in their respective fields.

This river of the Bal Vikas movement will flow perennially to quench the thirst of the young of the land with the cool, sweet waters of spirituality – irrespective of religion, nationality, caste or creed – for generations to come!

– **The author is a long-standing devotee of Bhagavan Baba, and wife of late Dr. E. Fanibunda, author of the book, 'Vision of the Divine'. She has been a Bal Vikas Guru since the early seventies; and was fortunate to receive her Bal Vikas Guru's certificate from the Divine Hands. Passionate about Swami's teachings, she is actively involved in conducting study circles and Bal Vikas classes.**

*Bhakti and Jnana are like the pair of bullocks for the cart; both have to pull in unison. Each must keep pace with the other and help to drag weight quicker. Jnana has to help the increase of Bhakti; Bhakti has to contribute to the growth of Jnana.*

– Baba

*Dr. B.G. Pitre*

## SRI SATHYA SAI EDUCARE

### Role of the Avatar

**A**N AVATAR COMES TO FULFIL A pre-determined purpose, Sankalpa. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba came amongst us as an Avatar with full divine powers and Awareness. He lived a life of virtuosity practising the values which He



preached. He shared His bliss with one and all during His sojourn on earth. His life was His Message. Once, during a visit to Delhi, Swami addressed a group of intellectuals in Vigyan Bhavan. It is told that at the end of His Discourse, a scientist asked: “Swami, You can do anything. There is an acute shortage of oil nowadays; can You not help

us”? Swami replied: “Yes, of course. I can even convert the sea water into oil. But a foolish man will come, light a cigarette and throw the glowing matchstick into the sea”. Obviously, Swami had come not to dole out favours or material conveniences. Verily, Swami had said, “I give you what you want, but I am waiting for you to ask that for which I have come”. And He has been waiting!

Swami discouraged us from merely acquiring all kinds of information or knowledge without understanding. He gave us more than what we deserved, but He expected us to earn what we deserve. The story is told that once Swami gave Padanamaskar to a person in the Darshan line. When Swami returned in front of the line, this person stretched himself forward for another opportunity. Swami promptly asked him, “Have you digested the first one”? What is it that He expected us to ask from Him? Have we failed to identify the purpose of divine incarnation? Sri Krishna did not Himself fight the Mahabharata war; He empowered Arjuna with the insight and skill of the supreme Yoga and motivated him to fight the battle of righteousness, Dharmayuddha. How did Swami motivate us to reach our objectives?

During the First World Conference in 1968, Swami had said: “My acts are the foundations on which I am building my work – the task for which I have come – going among the masses, counselling them, guiding them, consoling them, uplifting them, directing them along the path of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema”. He set standards, benchmarks and goals for us to aspire and attain. He showed the way, but we have to travel on the path ourselves.

On 14th January 1982, Swami blessed the Charter of Sri Sathya Sai Seva



Organisation. Swami has given in the Charter the Objectives for every individual member to strive for and fulfil, which are as under:

- a) To awaken the awareness of inherent divinity
- b) To practise the basic principles of human values in daily life; and
- c) Thereby to experience love, peace, harmony and joy.

We need to internalise the message, understand it authentically and then we need to put it into practice. Swami's strategy has always been that we practise His Teachings, gain experience, introspect and then act. He encouraged us to awaken the divine nature in us through practise of the human values, and thereby experience peace, joy and harmony. First "*Be, then Do and then Tell*". Thus, the philosophy of universal consciousness, and the methodology of Experiential Learning were the two pillars of Swami's eternal message.

### **Education and Educare**

Education nowadays means that process by which we acquire information of the external world. Swami had all along disagreed with the way it is being promoted in modern times. To quote Dr. S.N. Saraf: "*On 20th October 1940, at the tender age of 14 years, Swami threw away his books after returning from school. That was a symbolic expression of his utter dissatisfaction with the contemporary education system which was completely based on alien thoughts, materialistic foundation and purposeless objectives*". Today's education emphasises academic achievement and physical skills to the exclusion of developing human beings of noble character. This has led to decline in integrity of family life, waning of respect for

parents and teachers, destructive behaviour in educational and social institutions, lack of purpose and direction among the youth leading to permissiveness, and conflict in public life. Students are taught to qualify for merely earning a living, which results in an attitude of acquisition and self-interest. This is not true education.

We breed and encourage teachers who are 'experts' in their own subject; they teach the subject, not the students. It may help a person to be a bread-winner, but it fails to discipline his emotions, to discriminate between the real and the unreal. When Swami spoke of "good education" or "true education", did we understand Him correctly? We only reinforced the present system with greater efficiency. We went all out to improve the exam results. We focused more on academic gains. We even introduced textbooks on Value Education to be read and memorised. Our approach in teaching has been for a short-term memory and results. We strived to be successful, but created 'success-fools'. We were more concerned with 'education for a living' when Swami wanted us to prepare students for life. This was teacher-centred education, while Swami wanted children to experience the joy of learning. No wonder, after 70 years attempting to promote 'True Education', Swami coined a new word – Educare – to avoid any confusion in our mind!



Since children learn what we teach, we must teach what we want our children to learn. Teaching must reflect the goals of learning, rather than the other way round. Vinoba Bhave had said once: "There are no two words like 'teaching' and 'learning' in any Indian languages". In India, Vidya was always an integrated teaching-learning process. But teaching and learning have become divorced from each other over the past few hundred years in the contemporary education system. The emphasis now is on teaching. Swami's emphasis has been on learning. Modern education lays emphasis on information; Educare aims to promote transformation. In the context of education, Swami integrated ancient wisdom and modern knowledge into a coherent pedagogy of Experiential Learning. His life on earth has been a synthesis of spiritual thought and practice. Unfolding the divinity within was His true message to all mankind.

### The Transformation

Let me take an example. We plant a seed of mango and provide it the best ingredients of air, water, soil, temperature and sunshine. In due course, it will develop into a sapling and grow into a tree. What was a few grams of matter, the seed, now is a huge tree which weighs many tonnes. All the matter and energy has been taken from the surroundings; yet the fruit has all the essential characteristics of the mango. In turn, the tree provides food, fodder, firewood, oxygen, shade and sustenance to millions of bacteria and microbes. Nature maintains such a beautiful balance between the inside and the outside. The Bible says: 'For it is in giving that we receive. It is in Loving that we are loved'. Divinity is the core of our Being. We all have values latent in us; the process of bringing them out in

our behaviour is Educare. To live in this world, we need to learn and acquire many things; this process is Education. The two complement each other when a balance is maintained. Swami says, "Educare and Education are like two wings of a bird. Maintaining a balance between them, the bird soars high into the sky".



Objects in Nature have temporary existence and utility. Attachment with those objects provides temporary satisfaction. Any unfulfilled desire or withdrawal of pleasure gives rise to unrest in the mind. This creates negative feelings of anger, jealousy, etc. Hence, the mind should be tuned inwards, towards our conscience. It should establish bond with the spiritual Heart. Where Love is evident, it means that a channel has been found for the inner divinity to express itself. It is the undercurrent, the common denominator, which can transform our thoughts, emotions and actions and purify



them. This brings harmony in our thought, word and deed, Trikarana Shuddhi. This is the process of Educare. It makes our life His message.

### The First Step

A few words of caution need to be added. The u-turn of the mind from external Preyas Marg (worldly path) to internal Sreyas Marg (spiritual path), is almost an insurmountable challenge for most to overcome. Desires are strong and the will power is weak. Swami warned on 20th October 1940: *Dustara Bhavasagara Taranam* (it is difficult to cross the ocean of worldliness). The only way out is consistent Sadhana – daily meditation, prayers, Namasmarana, reading spiritual literature and Seva. With gradual increase in devotion, discrimination, discipline and determination, even the impregnable resistance of the mind can break down. This is a slow process. However, it is the only process; there is no short-cut method.

Some encouraging words can be added. Once in a while even the hardest mind can melt down. Almost everyone would have experienced that in exceptional circumstances, particularly during Seva, we are overcome with joy and shed a tear or two; this is an occasion when just for that moment divinity has taken charge. Tears

are an evidence of selfless love, which are divine property. That is why we give credit of Seva to Bhagavan Baba and we place it at the Divine Lotus Feet. This is when in reality *Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam*.

Bhagavan Baba had promised that He would live here for 96 years; we tend to think, He left the mortal coil almost 10 years too early. Actually, He gave us all that we required to attain our goals in life; the only difference is that He installed Himself in our Heart instead of speaking to us in the physical form. We can speak to Him in our prayers, and He responds in our depth of silence (meditation). This is exactly what Educare is all about.

Every 'change' is an 'exchange'; we have to give up something to get something else. Swami has given us our goal: 'awakening to the inner reality'. He has granted us the knowledge and the means: Sri Sathya Sai Educare. To raise oneself to a higher rung on the ladder of consciousness, we must take the quantum jump. It is mandatory in the evolutionary process. And, Swami is waiting!

In all humility, I pray for our awakening, a task He left for all of us to complete.

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*Man should become the very embodiment of love. When he is filled with love, the entire world will be transformed into a love-filled world. As long as he is filled with hate, the world will appear as a hate-filled world. It is only when love is developed that the dualism of good and evil can be transcended and the joy of oneness with the Divine experienced.*

– Baba

# SRI SATHYA SAI BAL VIKAS – A RAY OF HOPE FOR MANKIND

*Rama Sampath*

IT IS SAID THAT WE ONLY know the present, but God knows our past and future also. It is with this vision of the future that Bhagavan Baba has blessed mankind with this unique programme called “Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas” that aims at the blossoming of human excellence. This is His greatest legacy to mankind. In fact, Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Programme is Sathya Sai’s Ark of chosen children who will be the torch-bearers of tomorrow to usher in the Golden Era. Its relevance in today’s time is even more, given the fact that the world is heading towards extinction of human values. This programme has been designed for regeneration of mankind, placing man on the fast lane to Divinity. It has a three-pronged approach, bringing in its fold the Bal Vikas child, the parents and the Guru.

Keeping in tune with the motto “Transforming Self to transform the world” Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Programme is a journey to perfection. And perfection is Divinity. Bal Vikas Gurus, true to their image, have to be shining exemplars of “Be Do Tell” to inspire the children by their very presence. Parents are the custodians of the children given to them by God. It is their prime responsibility to offer these children as blossoming flowers at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. For this, parents have to be ideal role models for the children.



Once when a group of Bal Vikas students from the Andheri-Bandra Samithi visited Puttaparthi in 1990, they were called for a private audience with Baba. One of the teachers asked Baba, “How do we bring about transformation in the children, Baba”? Baba replied, “Inspire the children, tell them stories from the lives of great men...You don’t worry about transformation, that is My job”. How very true! We all have to play our parts to perfection for this world to be a better place to live in.

The five teaching techniques of Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Programme designed by the Divine Master facilitate this journey to perfection. The five techniques are: Prayers, Story Telling, Group Singing, Group Activities and Silent Sitting.

Prayer helps in bonding with the Creator. It enables the children to rely on God and make Him a friend for life. Children who are in the habit of praying everyday do not need a psychiatrist or a counsellor. They know whom to turn to whenever they are



beset with problems. Adversities cannot puncture their spirit since prayer fills them with self-confidence to meet challenges. Prayer makes them recipients of positive energy and helps them see the invisible and achieve the impossible.

Prayers from all faiths help children experience the unity of faiths. They trigger a feeling of oneness and respect for all religions. At the macro level, prayer contributes to harmony in society and peace in the world. When the children pray at home along with their family members, it strengthens family ties and brings them under the canopy of Divine Grace and protection. And when this prayer *Samasta Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the worlds be happy!) is extended to encompass all beings in the universe, it paves the path to actualise *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the whole world is one family).

Stories are the greatest source of inspiration for both young and old. They leave indelible impression on the young minds and can raise a drooping spirit. The story of Harishchandra inspired Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to abide by Truth. Today children are being exposed to trash on the internet and electronic media. They are succumbing to dangerous play games that control their mind and lead them to ruin. Stories from the epics and lives of great men, be it poets, sportsmen, scientists, patriots have the power to rejuvenate young minds and set them in the right direction. Jesus Christ inspired mankind with parables and Bhagavan Baba's "Chinna Kathas" are as relevant today as never before. Stories from the lives of saints reveal that everything that comes to us is either a blessing or a test. Sometimes when we wonder why we can't hear God's voice during our trials, these

stories remind us that the teacher is always quiet during a test.

Group singing brings about harmony of body, mind and soul. Transcending barriers of caste, creed and language, group singing paves the path to Unity, Purity and Divinity. How does it happen? Singing in unison keeps at bay the six enemies (Shadripus) of desire / lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. It soothes the nerves of a stressed child and uplifts his spirit. It aids in the management of breath resulting in good health and peace.

Group activities sow the seeds of sportsmanship and togetherness. They promote brotherhood and prepare the children to be a part of society. They ignite the spark of service before self. They are all the more apt for today's family where being the only child makes him incogitant and insensitive. Years ago, Bhagavan Baba rolled out a blueprint to save the world from disaster in the form of "Ceiling on Desires" to conserve energy, water, money, time and knowledge. Group activities gear the children to assume significant roles to make this world a better place to live in. It instils in them a sense of responsibility and accountability to society, Nature and God.

Silent Sitting is the crowning glory of all the techniques. It aids in management of thought, breath and time. By reducing the flow of thoughts, Silent Sitting is an exercise to master the mind to become a Mastermind. It kindles the spark of intuition and awakens the dormant potential in a child. At the physical level, tuning within begins with improving power of concentration, memory and retention capacity and being at peace

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*Kamala Pandya*

## DO YOUR DUTY

**T**HE BHAGAVADGITA EMPHASISES the importance of duty through the immortal words of Lord Krishna to Arjuna. It says, “Your right is to work only, but never crave for the fruit thereof. Let not the fruit of action be your object, nor let your attachment be to inaction”. Again, Lord Krishna exhorts, “O Arjuna, perform your duties dwelling in yoga, relinquishing attachment, and indifferent to success and failure; equanimity is called yoga”. (Chapter II).

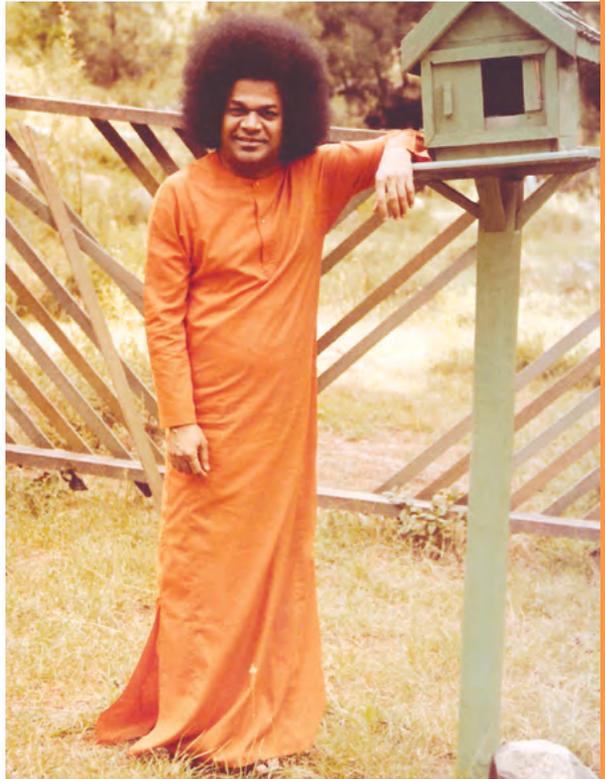
### **Duty is an Essential Aspect of Character**

Each one of us has a duty to perform depending on our age and status in life. Duty is what we owe to every person with whom we come across in our lives. It is an obligation, a debt – which we can discharge only by voluntary effort and firm action in the affairs of our lives.

We have to perform duty right from childhood. Just like charity which begins at home, duty also starts only from home, where parents owe duty towards their children and children owe their duty towards their parents. Likewise, there are the respective duties of siblings, teachers and students, spouses, masters and servants. Thus, duty covers all our life from the moment we enter into it until our last breath – duty towards superiors, subordinates, equals and finally duty towards God.

Sense of duty is the main part of character. Without it, the individual totters

and falls before the first puff of adversity or temptation; whereas inspired by it, the weakest becomes strong and courageous. “Duty is the cement which binds the whole moral fabric without which all power, goodness, intellect, truth, happiness, love itself, can have no permanence; but all the fabric of existence crumbles away from under us, and leaves us at last sitting in the midst of a ruin, astonished at our own desolation.”



A cobbler stitching shoes is pursuing as worthily an occupation as a Prime Minister governing the country. Therefore, everyone has to do his duty properly. There is no high or low in this. To each person, his occupation is a matter of pride. Hence, we must do our duty sincerely. We should do our job well without any lapse or defect. When everyone does his duty in this spirit, the well-being



of the whole world will be automatically ensured.

## **Conscience is the Guiding Force of Duty**

Duty is based upon a sense of justice – justice inspired by love, which is the most perfect form of goodness. Duty is not a sentiment, but a principle pervading our lives and it exhibits itself in our conduct and in our acts, which are mainly determined by our conscience and will power.

Our conscience plays a great part in performing our duties. In doing our duties, the conscience regulates and influences our actions without which we may possibly go astray. Conscience is the moral governor of the heart – governor of right action, of right thought, of right faith, of right life and only through its dominating influence can our character be fully developed.

Conscience guides us to do the right action or the right duty. If someone has failed in doing his duty, his conscience will continue to prick him and the guilt feeling will always remain. To abide by the right action and follow right course of duty, will power is also needed. The will is free to choose between the right course and the wrong course.

If the sense of duty is strong and the course of action or duty is clear, the courage, upheld by the conscience, will enable the person to bravely accomplish his purpose in the face of all opposition and difficulty. In case he fails in his purpose, at least he will have the satisfaction that it has been in the cause of duty.

Men of principles often sacrifice all that they esteem and love rather than fail in their duty. St. Paul inspired by duty and faith, declared himself as not only “ready to be

bound, but to die at Jerusalem”. Robertson of Brighton has truly said, “Not that everyone shall seek his own glory – but that every man shall do his own duty”.

The chief motive power in the life of George Washington was the spirit of duty. Duty was the regal and commanding element in his character. When he clearly saw his duty before him, he did it at all hazards, with inflexible integrity. He did not do it for glory or fame or for rewards, but for the right thing to be done and the best way of doing it.

Wellington’s watchword, like Washington’s was duty and no man could be more loyal to it than he was. “There is little or nothing,” he once seemed to have said, “in this life worth living for; but we can all of us go straight forward and do our duty”. This ideal of duty seemed to be the governing principle of Wellington’s character.

Likewise, there are many instances in our epics and Puranas where men and women have abided by the path of duty and become famous for the same. Shraavan Kumar, Pundarika, Prahlada are shining examples of those who did their duty sincerely. When Lakshmana pleaded with Rama not to go to exile as commanded by his father Dasaratha, Rama replied that it was his duty to obey his father and carry out his wish.

Thus, we should do our duty without craving for the fruit of action as stated in the Gita. Bhagavan Baba says, “Full effort is full victory”. We must try our level best in whatever ventures we undertake, not worrying about the fruits of our actions. Especially, students should make all efforts in their exams to do good and leave the results alone. In whatever work we do, even if we fail we shall have the consolation that we have done our duty and tried our best.



## No Duty is High or Low

Whatever be the profession, be it intellectual or menial, duty stands above all. The story goes that once a Sannyasi meditated under a tree for a long period. One day birds above the tree disturb him by dropping the leaves on his head. The Sannyasi gets angry and looks up. As he looks up, a flash of fire bursts out from his eyes – and burns the birds to ashes. He is overjoyed that he has developed yogic powers and that at a glance he can burn the birds to ashes. He then goes to the town to beg for his alms. He reaches one house and calls out “Bhiksham Dehi, Maa”. But the woman tells him to wait. The Sannyasi gets offended and thinks how dare she ask him to wait, ‘does she not know my yogic power?’ While he was thinking thus, the voice came again, “Boy, don’t be thinking too much of yourself. Here there are no birds for you to burn”. The Sannyasi is astonished and when the woman comes out falls at her feet and asks how she knew about it.

The woman replies that she did not know yoga or Sadhana and that she is only a common woman who is doing her duty of nursing her ailing husband, because of which she asked him to wait. When he questions the woman to reveal the secret of her powers, she sends him to a butcher.

When he goes to the butcher, he asks the Sannyasi whether the woman has sent him. The Sannyasi is amazed as to how he knew this.

The butcher after completing his business takes him home. Then the Sannyasi sees him doing his duties towards his parents after which the butcher asks him what he could do for him. The Sannyasi next learns from the butcher the highest metaphysics, a lecture which is a very celebrated book in India, called the “Vyadha Gita”.

He told the Sannyasi “No duty is ugly or impure. I am unattached and I try to do my duty well – as a householder. I neither know yoga nor have I become a Sannyasi. I never went out of the world, nor any forest. But all this has come to me through doing my duty”.

As such, Duty is an important D amongst the 5 D’s of Duty, Devotion, Discipline, Discrimination and Determination for progress on spiritual path as taught by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It comes foremost in our lives whatever be our circumstances or birth. As Gandhiji said: “Infinite striving to be the best is man’s duty; it is its own reward; everything else is in God’s hands”.

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with oneself. At the mental level, it endows the child with the power of discrimination by strengthening his conscience. A successful life is all about exercising the right choice. The practice of silent sitting aids in right decision making. At the spiritual level, it is the dawn of understanding of Oneness and Cosmic Connectivity.

Thus, Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Programme is a package designed by the

Divine Master for preparing the children to be aboard the Sathya Sai Ark on its voyage to Divinity. Needless to say, this ark cannot be complete without the Gurus and the parents who comprise the rudder and stern. This Sathya Sai Ark is undoubtedly the only ray of hope to salvage mankind from the brink of disaster.

– **The author is a Bal Vikas Guru from Mumbai, Maharashtra.**

# Five Teaching Techniques of Bal Vikas

Neeta Khanna

**B**HAGAVAN BABA IN HIS INFINITE grace designed the Bal Vikas curriculum and gave to the Bal Vikas Gurus a powerful tool in the form of five teaching techniques to inculcate good habits and to draw out the innate values in each child. The methodology adopted for the accomplishment of this task is by synchronising the five teaching techniques, viz., Silent Sitting, Prayer, Story Telling, Group Singing and Group Activities. These have to be integrated judiciously in a classroom by the Bal Vikas Guru to get the desired results. In Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Programme, perfect synthesis has been evolved to develop linkages of the five human values with their counterpart traits of human personality and ideals of education through suitable instructional material, adequate teaching techniques and exemplary behaviour of Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Gurus who are the kingpins of the programme. Naturally, these techniques have been found very effective and suitable. A brief review of these techniques follows.

## **Silent Sitting**

Silent sitting is the process of tuning in. Swami once said, "It is in the depth of silence that the voice of God can be heard". We need to filter out all other disturbances to be able to hear the voice of the conscience (God within us to guide us on the right path.) Silent sitting is the most effective means of communication, for it enables an individual to communicate with his own inner self and

know his strength and potentials better. It is only in solitude that the most important things happen, decisions taken, discoveries made and novelties perceived. It is often said that, 'a strong man is strongest when he is alone.' Newton discovered the laws of gravity while sitting silently under an apple tree, not when he was working in his laboratory.

In the classroom, it is advisable to start silent sitting with young children for only a minute or two and gradually build up. What is required is to help them to make their minds calm and free from agitation. Bhagavan has likened human body to a tumbler, and mind to the water content in the tumbler. When the tumbler shakes, the water gets disturbed and even spills out. It is not possible to accomplish anything when the mind is in such a state and therefore the tumbler that is the body, has also to be in a perfect state of calmness. Children are required to sit in a good posture, close their eyes and think and feel good. Guru uses guided visualisation to create a vivid and detailed imagery to focus and calm their mind. This spectrum of imagination could include all such things that children love and admire. The Guru should strive to engage all the five senses of the children. Sometimes, instrumental music can be played to heighten the effect. Silent sitting should be practised regularly by children even during holidays. As they go to Group II and III of Bal Vikas, they are taught Jyoti Meditation. This is also recommended for a



Bal Vikas Guru in her personal life because then alone it carries the authenticity of first-hand experience.

It is perceived on receiving feedback that many children do not want to open their eyes at the end of silent sitting. Some see Divine Light in silence and experience deep bliss and peace. Observations show that many restless students in the beginning become peaceful, attentive and happier after regular silent sitting sessions. Intuitive faculty, creative arts as well as verbal and written skills of the children improve at all levels. Some of the old students confess that it is a good tool for self-analysis and reduces their stress and tension in their day-to-day life.

Parents and teachers too are delighted to see a remarkable improvement in children. Quality and fineness of their work at home and school improves. There is good concentration, grasping power and receptivity. Emotions specially anger, stress and greed are diminished. Parents get convinced that going to Bal Vikas class by their children is not time wasted but time gained.

### Prayer

“The distance between us and Siva is just the distance that our call will reach; believe in Him and call on Him. He will answer, ‘I am here I am with you.’” (Sathyam Sivam Sundaram Part I). It is with this conviction that Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Guru instils in the children the fervour and importance of prayer. Prayers which are usually sung and chanted in the Bal Vikas classes combine Stuti, Stotras, Parthana. The prayers also dwell on the sweetness and splendour of the Divine name. Children are made to understand that by invoking the name of God they draw out His Grace for their well-being and protection. The kitten mews and

the mother cat comes out running to pick it up and escort it out of danger. Draupadi called out to Krishna from the court hall of Hastinapur and He rushed out instantly all the way from Dwaraka to protect her honour.

In an amazing incident in Sai Kulwant Hall in Prasanthi Nilayam, after the Bal Vikas function was over, Bhagavan went inside the Mandir with no hope of coming out again. On the gents side, a Bal Vikas child was sitting with his Guru. Suddenly, the child began crying loudly and on asking said, he wanted materialised Vibhuti from Bhagavan’s own hands. Lest they be thrown out of the hall due to loud crying, the Guru pacified the child to sit quietly, close his eyes and pray. “Swami will come,” saying this, the Guru forgot about it. Lo and behold, most unexpectedly Swami came gliding out of the Mandir directly towards them. The Guru was elated thinking Bhagavan had come to bless him for the just performed excellent Bal Vikas function. Instead, Swami stood near the boy. The Guru had to shake him to open his eyes only to see the Divine Himself materialising Vibhuti into the child’s outstretched hands. Bhagavan then looked at the Guru and said, “You do not have faith. The child has faith in his prayer”. Thus, Swami certified that whosoever calls out to Him with sincere and pure devotion, He appears to comfort and support.

Bhagavan Baba insisted that in a Bal Vikas Class, the Guru should help the children to begin the day with prayer, do all their duties with prayer, even go through their Ahara and Vihara (food and recreation) with prayer and end the day with prayer so that they live in constant integrated awareness of the Lord. Prayer should eventually become a constant habit. As we sing the glories of God, taking His Name, we go on imbibing



His Divine qualities, shedding and casting off our animal traits. Prayer is thus a means of ascent from human to divine.

Teaching Slokas and prayers of all religions creates awareness and respect for other religions too. The children then understand the underlying dictum of Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man. It is imperative that the Guru should be well versed in Baba's philosophy; only then can she breathe in new life into Stotras, Prayers, Gita Slokas, Gayatri Mantra included in the curriculum.

Creative teaching aids must be employed by Gurus to teach prayers and Slokas. Posters, pictorial charts, word puzzles, animation videos and PowerPoint presentations can be used to make learning interesting and effective. A feedback from the Gurus stated that children now call upon the Lord for guidance and assistance especially when they are faced with so much of negativity all around. Bhagavan's saying 'Why fear when I am here' has made them fearless. They have developed self-confidence, become wise, healthy and happy. They have learnt to attribute their success and failure to the Lord. Families now pray before each meal and attend Bhajan and other activities of the Sai Organisation. Rightly said, "Family that prays together stays together".

### Story Telling

Story telling has always been the most fascinating medium of instruction and enlightenment. It very effectively imparts the values in a subtle way, provides answers to many queries, guides, motivates and helps children at their impressionable age to learn many important lessons of life. It is the easiest and the most effective instrument for inculcating values, instilling good habits and

developing good character. All good stories have a universal appeal and the impact is everlasting. It is like a sugar coated tablet which the children swallow innocently. Story telling as an art requires skill, inspiration and an appeal to our emotions. It is a spontaneous overflow of feelings from one heart to another. As science it deals with the scientific requirements of man, the study of man's mind, i.e., psychology.

For centuries people all over the world have passed on rich tradition of stories, folklore and legends which have shaped our lives. Today nobody has time to tell stories. The price that we are paying for the digitalisation of our lives is the loss of innocent childhood of our children, and the element of missing creativity and imagination in their lives. Hence, stories have been made an essential part of the Bal Vikas syllabus.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has often emphasised on this technique by sharing innumerable short stories in His Divine Discourses. "Oka Chinna Katha" as Swami would lovingly say these beautiful words, all devotees and students would suddenly straighten up to listen. Swami's treasure house of stories called Chinna Katha is an invaluable teaching aid to instil values in children. The Bal Vikas Guru has to use her ability and energy to present a story in such an inspiring way that it leaves a perennial impression on the impressionable mind of children.

Planning, preparation and presentation of a story are very important. Preparation must be thorough which would include dialogue and teaching aids. Visuals easily capture the attention of children. Presentation has to be dramatic. Even a dull and drab subject can be made thrilling if the narrator has the art to make it so. Movements, gestures,



modulation in speech pattern, interaction style, oral-visual switching are some of the components which the Guru must keep in mind. Besides stories from our scriptures, we can consider Panchatantra, Jataka tales and also incidents from the lives of saints, freedom fighters and famous personalities which can inspire and motivate children. They must have bearing on day-to-day life.

For the purpose of selection, the audience, the occasion and purpose has also to be taken into consideration. Exploring the depths of inner meaning within the story will help children to grasp and identify the values for themselves. The stories should always end on an optimistic note. Use of visual aids, hand puppets animation makes the story interesting. Role plays can bring out the latent talent in the children. Today's generation looks for logical reasoning. They imbibe and grasp the essence of the story once they are fully convinced.

Many Gurus share their experiences of shaping the life of their children just by narrating simple stories. Accordingly, to many parents who are raising the children in nuclear families, Bal Vikas takes care of an important component of a child's life, that is, session of story telling by a loving and caring Guru. They are overjoyed to see their shy and reticent children open up and participate in elocution, drama and essay competition in schools. Children show team spirit and their speech skills and diction improve. They try to emulate great personalities. Specific transformation has been noticed in children over a period of time.

### Group Singing

Music and group singing are the most powerful weapons to put the human system into harmony and rhythm. Children enjoy

singing together with oneness of purpose. Volumes of lectures may fail to make an impact, while a single melodious song may melt the most stubborn heart and have the desired effect on the mind. It wards off the evil effects of pollution by creating fresh sound vibrations which are resonant with purity and joy. Singing together brings a feeling of unity and togetherness in children and petty differences are forgotten. When a child sings in a group, his individuality is lost and so he sheds off the nervousness and shyness that he feels while leading the songs. It strengthens character and constructive behaviour.

The main components of devotional group singing are Bhava, Raga and Tala (feeling, tune and beat) which are the basic aspects of Indian Culture and what the name stands for. The meaning and inner significance of the words of the song should be made clear to the children so that the concentration and memorisation of the song is easy. Types of songs to be taught to the children are:

- I. Nama Sankirtan, that is, chanting of the Divine Name from all religions where values related to the names of the Lord are explained.
- II. Songs as prayers for strength, guidance, wisdom, etc.
- III. Songs reflecting elevated feelings of sacrifice and universal love.
- IV. Songs depicting love of motherhood, arousing patriotic feelings and love and respect for one's heritage and culture must be included.
- V. Songs expressing love for Nature and regard for natural objects will develop a sense of gratitude to Nature and exhibit values of selfless service and sacrifice.

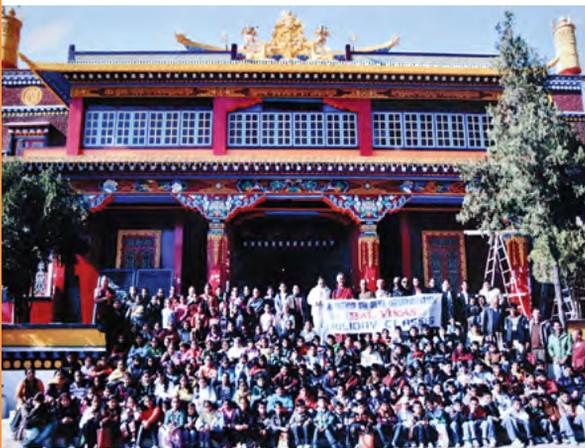


Group singing is a very powerful tool and has many beneficial effects on the overall development of the child. Justified use of five elements, right use of five senses, value of time, correct way of living, dignity of labour, patriotism, love of Nature, regards to parents / elders, avoiding wastage of food have been witnessed in day-to-day life of children after learning value songs composed by Gurus on various topics. Parents are happy that their children now sing Bhajans and value songs at home and do not listen to pop songs. Their energies are mobilised now for constructive work. They are less stressed and fatigued and their thinking has become more focused.

### Group Activities

*Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress and working together is success.* – Henry Ford

Group activities introduce Bal Vikas children at an early stage to group dynamics, endowing them with interpersonal skills, leadership qualities, critical and creative thinking, decision making, problem solving and both collaborative and cooperative team work. They learn to work with the group. Interaction is through fun and cooperation



*Bal Vikas children in Annual Holiday Camp.*

rather than competition. They learn to deal with success and failure gracefully.

The word TEAM stands for “Together Everyone Achieves More”.

“No one can whistle a symphony; it takes a whole orchestra to play it.”

Value games are an integral component of group activities and are intended to reinforce the contents of Bal Vikas syllabus. They develop alertness, focus, memory power, analytical thinking, discrimination, determination and train the children in problem solving.

I. **Literary Activities:** Debates, elocution, group discussions, just a minute, slogan writing on value-based themes infuse in them courage, critical and creative thinking and develop listening and communication skills.



*A tableau in the palanquin of Bhagavan in Sarva Dharma procession.*

II. **Celebration of Religious and National Festivals:** These will develop in children respect for all faiths and communities as well as for the diverse culture and the great and grand history of their motherland.

III. **Community Service Activities:** Activities like planting saplings and

*continued on page 55...*

# DYNAMIC PARENTING

*Dr. V. Anand Mohan*

**S** WAMI SAYS: "IF THE NATION HAS to prosper, improvements must start with the parents... without peace and harmony at home, there can be no peace in the nation... This message must be propagated throughout the country".

## **The Dilemma and the Challenge**

We usually adopt the parenting style our parents adopted in bringing us up. But the norms of life have changed. We are now passing through the age of what

Toffler called, 'The Third wave,' the 'High speed revolution'. This age tells everyone, "Be something, be somebody. This is a competitive world". In the race to be someone, 'Being is lost in becoming'. Children lose their inner core of values. Parents are not oriented towards making children good but on making them big: (Gandhiji was good, Hitler was big).

What happens to the children? Bombardment of the senses – A whole generation is being totally influenced by the media. Information overload – A large amount of trash accumulates in their brains. Parents have to re-orient themselves – Their own values should change. They should understand their role in moulding the character of the children.

Parents seldom do self-audit about their role as parents. Once in our youth programme, a psychologist / counsellor asked a teenage girl how many marks she would give to her father for his role as a father, fifty being pass marks. She said "twenty". There was a big uproar in the hall as the father was an icon, a good leader and a social worker. The psychologist again asked the girl to write down ten points on which her father should change, to get pass marks. She wrote down ten points.

To everybody's surprise, the father came to the stage and said: "My humble Pranams to my daughter for opening my eyes. I promise that I



shall change, and definitely will secure pass marks from her”.

### Parents as Role Models

The parents have to understand certain fundamental truths:

- A child is not a miniature adult. A five-year old can only think, feel and behave as a five-year old.
- A person’s “Life Script” is written by the seventh year of life, depending on what he / she sees, hears / experiences. So, parents have to be very very careful in their behaviour in the presence of their children and also to what children are exposed to, e.g., TV shows. Childhood is like a mirror, which reflects in later life, images first presented to it.
- All of us want security. A child too. The best way to make the child feel secure is when he / she is listened to and attended to. So, Love = Listening and Sharing.

“Listen to the child so that the child will listen to you” is the dictum.

Listen – Attentively to the Content. Share – The Emotion behind the child’s words.

- Never belittle a child . If a boy with 60% marks wants to be a doctor, never ridicule, saying, “You!?” Instead say, “Why not, you can try”!
- Appreciate his / her achievements, small or big.

A boy / girl gets 90% in Mathematics.

“What happened to the rest 10 marks?” – (Poor Parenting)

“Very Good,” Next time 100 marks sure.” (Good Parenting)

A child who cannot tie the shoe lace.

“Such a simple thing – can’t you do it?” (Bad Parenting)

“Tying a shoe lace is very difficult. But I am sure you can do it.” (Good Parenting)

- Never compare a child with another in a negative way –  
The child will develop a feeling of “I am not okay”, others are okay.
- Do not exaggerate their wrongdoings.

Make them “Understand”

Do not justify their wrongdoings in front of others.

Use “I” message rather than “You” message

“Don’t do it” is a “You” message

“Can we do it in a different way?”

Or,

“I would be happy if this had not happened”

These are “I” messages

- Children will reject – “Do as I say”. They will accept “Do as I do”.

A smoker parent cannot tell a teenage son, “Don’t smoke”. If parents do not want their children to be TV addicts, first parents themselves should stop watching TV.

“For the child,” says Richter, “The most important era of life is that of childhood, when he begins to colour and mould himself by companionship with others”.

Parents are the First Models for Children.

“A fig tree looking on a fig tree becomes fruitful” – Arabian Proverb.

“Home is the first and most important school of character. It is there that every human being receives his best moral training or his worst; for it is there that he imbibes those principles of conduct, which endure through manhood, and cease only with life.” – Samuel Smiles



- Quality Time –

All the members of the family should – Eat together, pray together. “A family that prays together stays together” is the dictum.

Love is to be expressed, not felt, and love is – “Listening and sharing”.

- Return to rituals:

Simple rituals like praying together, children touching parents feet, parents kissing the children and hugging them.

When a child goes for an exam, instead of saying, “Do well and get first rank”, parents keeping their hands on his head and saying “Vijayee Bhava” in blessing is a great way of building confidence in the child.

“The training of any man, even the wisest, cannot fail to be powerfully influenced by the moral surrounding of his early years.” – Samuel Smiles

Parents are like a gardener. A gardener takes care of the garden lovingly – caring, nurturing, protecting – to be handed over back to its owner. Likewise, parents should take care of children as God’s property to be handled carefully and returned in its original pristine state.

“Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of life’s longing for itself.

They come through you, but not from you.

You are the bows from which your children, as living arrows, are sent forth.

Let your bending in the Archer’s Hand be for gladness.” – Khalil Gibran

– **The author is the Director, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Primary Healthcare, Shoranur, Kerala.**

*...continued from page 52*

cleanliness campaigns which would remind them of their responsibility towards Mother Nature and society. Visits to old age homes, orphanages, slum service, etc., develop empathy, compassion and sympathy in them towards less fortunate in society.

**IV. Staging Short Plays:** By staging short plays on the lives of saints and great men, children come to know about the rich heritage of their motherland and get inspired to imbibe ideals.

Group activities are a pleasant deviation from the teacher-centred to child-centered learning process. Hence, they are highly recreative, refreshing and recharging. Children enjoy them a lot and look forward

to them eagerly. Being participatory in nature, group activities provide excellent opportunities for children to acquire values and skills through experiential learning, i.e., learning by doing. To say in short, group activities complete the entire Bal Vikas syllabus in a subtle way through fun and recreation.

It is needless to overemphasise how satisfied and grateful a Guru feels when she notices significant transformation in the child’s behavioural pattern through the use of the above five teaching techniques.

– **The author is Joint National Coordinator of Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas, India.**



# THE BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS

*C. Sucharitha*

**T**HE YEAR 1943 AND THE MONTH of December have become the most unforgettable month and year for our entire family circle for it was then that our elders got the opportunity to go to Sri Sai Sannidhi (proximity), incidentally which became our Pennidhi (fortune). Our grandparents, both maternal and paternal, did a wonderful job in not only taking to Sai Path, but encouraging the entire family circle to go to Sri Sai Kshetra (abode of Sai), Puttaparthi, so much so, Swami used to call us “Bangalore group”. Also, our elders, may their tribe increase, guided the youngsters so thoroughly that their words ring in our ears even today, after nearly 75 years. One wonderful statement they used to help us learn, “Swami Vaari Prathiocka Choopu, Aata, Maata, Paata Saini Cherchu Baata” (Sai’s every glance, word, action and song takes us to Sai Path to finally reach Him).

## **Bal Vikas Guru, a Gardener**

It was in the fag end of 70s or in the early 80s, while conducting Bal Vikas class, I was sharing a couple of Leelas of our Bhagavan with around 30 to 35 boys and girls. Once while addressing the Bal Vikas Gurus, Swami made a very emphatic unforgettable statement - Bal Vikas children are the beautiful fragrant flowers in the garden. Even as I mentioned this, the children felt elated and they expressed their joy. I posed a question to them in a light mood, “Children, if Bal Vikas children are the beautiful fragrant flowers, what would be the Gurus”? The children looked at each other and finally one boy stood up and gave



an answer which turned out to be thought provoking. He said, “The Bal Vikas Gurus will be the gardeners”.

So, what a beautiful thought – Bal Vikas Guru, a Gardener! A picture of the gardener tending plants in his garden to get the beautiful fragrant flowers passed before my eyes and the role of a Bal Vikas Guru helping the children to blossom rushed through my mind. That led to the good old past – the way, we as children, real innocent ones grew up, how we were observed, encouraged, corrected and helped to grow rushed through my mind. A golden opportunity to have grown in the Sai Garden, being observed and helped to take the right path was showered on us.



## Beginning of Global Akhanda Bhajan

I would like to share a few incidents that helped us to shape ourselves. It was in the year 1946-1947, our group comprising a few aunties and their children, about 15 to 20 in number in the age group 5 to 9 years, were all playing in the front yard. Old Mandir had come up in December 1945. A lot of wooden pieces were lying around. We, the girls got an idea of playing the usual "Illaata" (the home game) the girls usually play. Our houses back in Bangalore (Bengaluru) were small. But we wanted to build a big house like the house of Smt. Sakamma, the owner of Sakamma Coffee Works, an elderly lady devotee of Swami. Swami used to stay in her house whenever He came to Bengaluru. While building, we felt the need for a separate room for Swami, a spacious hall for Bhajan in addition to the normal kitchen, bedroom, etc. One girl in our group ran to her mother and got two photographs of Swami, cut from old invitations of a festival. One was kept in the lying position in a room and the other was kept in an upright position in the Bhajan hall. We were totally absorbed in our play. Suddenly, we heard Swami's voice, "Children, what are you doing?" from right behind us. We were surprised. So, all of us stood up, sheepishly grinning. One of us told Him, "We are playing Illaata". He asked, "Whose house have you built"? We replied, "Sakamma's house". He looked at the house and told Krishna, "See Krishna, these children think of Swami even in their play". Krishna was a devotee from Madras (Chennai).

Friends, the joy we felt, the encouragement we got that day, keeps us happy even today. Our elders were musically oriented, appeared ever hungry to learn and sing songs on all deities in many languages.

The daily Bhajan sessions both in the morning and evening in Parthi had been their joy, so much so that in 1945 about six ladies (my mother and five aunties) planned to conduct weekly Bhajans on Thursdays. The six families – the husband, the wife and the children all attended and enjoyed the Bhajan programmes very much. Time went on and these six families discovered that this weekly Bhajan programme had continued for one full year. They wanted to celebrate their Bhajan programme's success. So, they planned to have a continuous 24-hour Bhajan starting on Thursday morning and closing on Friday morning. They were not very well-to-do families, so they chose one of their houses quite big to conduct the programme. They had not thought of inviting Swami to the Bhajan. They went to Parthi just to seek His blessings. But Swami was bent on attending the function. I do not want to go into the details. Swami came over on Wednesday evening alone and stayed there until Saturday. The programme was a grand success and they called it Akhanda Bhajan. I am really happy to say this Akhanda Bhajan went on for 25 long years and Swami used to be with us personally. After 25 years, Swami announced during His Discourse on Friday, "This Akhanda Bhajan which was conducted for 25 long years for Loka Kalyanam will henceforth be called Global Akhanda Bhajan, to be celebrated the world over".

## Learning to Sing Bhajans

Every year, Akhanda Bhajan used to be a great occasion for us. One of our team members, Smt. Samanthaka Mani Bhashyam used to compose beautiful Namavalis and we really enjoyed learning and singing them. Very casually once I asked her to compose a Bhajan on Vibhuti,



which she did. When we offered that Bhajan to Swami, Swami liked it very much and He gave permission to sing it at the end of the Bhajan. It has become the Vibhuti Mantra.

These Akhanda Bhajans, year after year, helped us to learn so many relevant points on the path of Bhakti. Swami used to shower His blessings on the entire group. Every year after the programme got over, He would give us all the chance of offering Pada Puja (worshipping His Lotus Feet) to Him.

During the Pada Puja programme in the year 1948 or 1949, Swami made a very profound comment. We the youngsters would attend the weekly Bhajans and also the yearly Bhajans and attend to small chores in getting ready for the programme very eagerly and sincerely. But we never followed a regular daily prayer session in our homes, through the year. Swami said, "Children are all very good, helpful and understanding. Though they never have a daily prayer session, they actively participate in the annual Akhanda Bhajan".

That worked as a warning bell. We remembered Swami Vivekananda's quote, "Arise, Awake, Stop not till the goal is reached". From the very next day, we all started chanting our prayers. Parents were very happy indeed. Today, when we see our children and their children saying their morning prayers daily, we thank Swami, our Guru for guiding us so well.

My mother Smt. Sundaramma and her sister Smt. Sharadamma were called by Swami as Patala Ammayilu (singing sisters). They sang both Telugu and Kannada songs. They composed beautiful songs on Swami too and sang for Him. He adored their singing. Once Swami picked up their song

book and went through page after page. The 95th song happened to be the last. He took a pen and wrote 5 more His own songs to make it 100. What a bond between the Divinity and Devotee!

Once we three sisters, while going through the song book, felt why not we compose a song. We did a lot of thinking and planning. Finally, we were able to put together a few thoughts and a song was ready. But the tune? We were fond of learning and singing too. We got a beautiful tune from the children's programme on radio. There were no TV programmes then.

We felt very happy for it worked out well. After practising for a while, we went to our mother and presented the song. She liked it and appreciated our efforts. We felt very happy. Soon the summer vacation started and as usual we all went to Parthi. After nearly a fortnight stay at Parthi, we were planning to return. As usual, Swami permitted us to offer Pada Puja one day. We four sisters (the youngest was small) and brother were standing, my mother and aunt were washing the feet of Swami, all the while singing songs. My youngest sister very casually told Swami that we three sisters had composed a song. Suddenly, Swami asked my mother and aunt to stop singing and asked us to sing the song. We were shocked. I told Swami it was a kiddish song but He would not leave. We three had to sing the song. Thank God we were able to sing it fully. Swami was visibly happy. He said, 'Very good. The song is very beautiful. I am very happy'.

We had a sigh of relief. After Pada Puja was over, we all had to go for Bhajan in the Prasanthi Nilayam Bhajan hall. We rushed to the hall and sat down. Swami came over



and sat on His chair. The gents and the ladies were singing Bhajans. Suddenly, Swami asked the singers to stop. All got tense! Then Swami said, "These children have come for holidays. They have composed a song. Come children, sing the song". We were stunned. But He went on asking. We had to sing. Thank God, we remembered the lyrics and presented the song. Swami again said, "I am very very happy. The song and the singing is very good. I am happy." Friends, this was the most unexpected thing we had imagined. That is Sai Guru. Always loving, always caring.

### **Swami's Omnipresence**

Well, I was doing my degree course and for the future I had dreamt a lovely dream. My father was ready to support and help me. I was confident I could do it. But it happened the other way. I was simply crushed down. I became very angry. I could not express it in any way. I had no guts to express it before my parents and siblings. I locked myself in my room and expressed all my anger on Swami. My argument was when He is responsible for everything, how can He turn down my request and disappoint me? He helps only chosen persons was my feeling.

Swami was in Parthi. I went on accusing Him in my room. After some time, I broke down. I took some time to compose and come out. No one knew my outburst. Within a week, I got a message that I had got a seat for M.Sc. in Central College. I came away to Bengaluru and stayed in my uncle's house. My parents took some time to shift to Bengaluru from Mysore (Mysuru).

Pretty soon, we heard that Swami had come to Bengaluru and was staying in Sri Vasan's house. I went with my two aunts for His Darshan. He slowly walked towards

us, but was staring at me. I was wondering what could have happened. He just made me realise that He is Omnipresent and nothing can we keep away from Him, even at the thought level. He made me realise His Omnipresence for life. Then, He said very affectionately to me, not to get angry and never to give freedom to the tongue when angry. He said that one will regret this for life. I realised my mistake that I cannot hide anything away from Him. He was in Parthi while I was in Bengaluru in my room locked. I just uttered words in anger, thinking nobody would know but He made me realise that He is 'Sarvantaryami (Indweller of all). What a lesson! What a way He taught!! I have never excused myself for the same. But as a Guru, He taught me the right lesson.

Once when we were in Mysuru, my mother went to Parthi for Vaikuntha Ekadasi. Father had to go out of station on official duty. Only we three sisters were in the house. When my mother told Swami that only the three girls were staying in the house, He questioned her, "Why? Your three daughters and with each one her Swami. So, together six of them are there. Nothing can disturb or harm them". That assurance which is quoted very often – Intane, Kantane, Ventane, Jantane – Untini, Unnanu, Untanu (I am always with you, in you, around you). This is the message for one and all. That is our Swami!

**– The author is granddaughter of Sri Ravel Seshagiri Rao who was fortunate to serve the Divine Lotus Feet at Puttaparthi from 1944-45 to 1963. She came into Sai fold at the age of five (December 1943) and literally grew up under the divine umbrella. A teacher by profession, she became a Bal Vikas Guru. She was the State Coordinator (Education Wing) of SSSSO, Karnataka, with Swami's grace and served as such for twelve years.**



# A Psychological Survey of the Impact of Bal Vikas Education on Character Development in Children in India

## A Synopsis

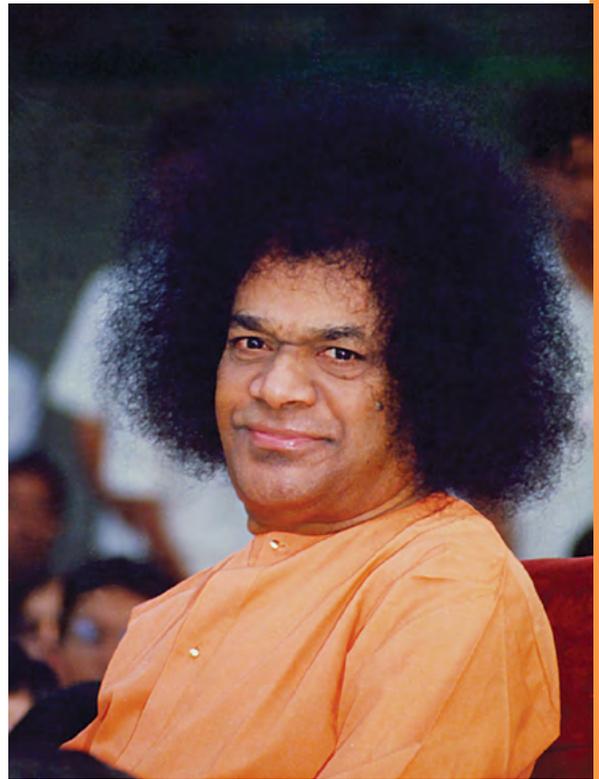
*Faranak Baria Khandadia*

**T**HE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH was to study the impact of Bal Vikas education on children's character development. As Bal Vikas education focuses on the practice of specific values in life as an implication of character development, Rokeach Value Survey was used to measure the application of Bal Vikas-related values.

The current research had a sample of 26,374 from 14 Indian States representing the north, south, east and west regions of the country. Of the 14 Indian States, 7 States measured the urban population and 7 States measured the rural population.

The sample comprised 6,537 Bal Vikas boys between the ages of 10 to 16 years, 7,031 Bal Vikas girls between the ages of 10 to 16 years, 2,971 Bal Vikas Gurus with a 5+ years of teaching experience, 2,193 Bal Vikas alumni who had graduated from the programme in the past five years and 7,639 parents whose children are currently in the Bal Vikas programme.

The respondents had to rank order terminal and instrumental values in the Rokeach Value Survey according to their importance in daily living. The scale contained nine Bal Vikas-related terminal values and nine other societal terminal



values; nine Bal Vikas-related instrumental values and nine other societal instrumental values.

It was assumed that if there was a positive impact from Bal Vikas education, the respondents would rank the Bal Vikas-related values as greater in importance than the other societal values in the Rokeach Value Survey. It was also assumed that as the rural and urban population was



introduced to the same Bal Vikas education, there would be no differences in their rank ordering of Bal Vikas-related and other societal values.

Being an integrated education programme, Bal Vikas stresses on the joint responsibility of Gurus and parents in the child's character development. Hence, it was assumed that the Bal Vikas parents would also show a higher preference for Bal Vikas-related values.

Bal Vikas alumni who had graduated from the nine-year programme were a vital group to study the impact on character development. This was the group that would be practising Bal Vikas values in their work, family and community setting. It was assumed that this group would show a very strong attachment to Bal Vikas-related values.

Statistical analysis of the data indicate that all the five groups, Bal Vikas boys, Bal Vikas girls, Bal Vikas Gurus, Bal Vikas alumni and Bal Vikas parents, ranked Bal Vikas-related terminal and instrumental values as having a greater importance in their lives than the other societal values. There were individual preferences regarding the importance of Bal Vikas related terminal and instrumental values amongst the groups.

All the groups showed a higher preference for Bal Vikas-related instrumental values to Bal Vikas-related terminal values. Terminal values are mostly seen as abstract concepts and a little difficult to practise, for example, equality, freedom, salvation, inner harmony. The Bal Vikas-related instrumental values like helping, loving, forgiving were seen as easier to practise in daily life.

The Bal Vikas alumni showed a slightly higher proximity in their ranking of Bal Vikas-

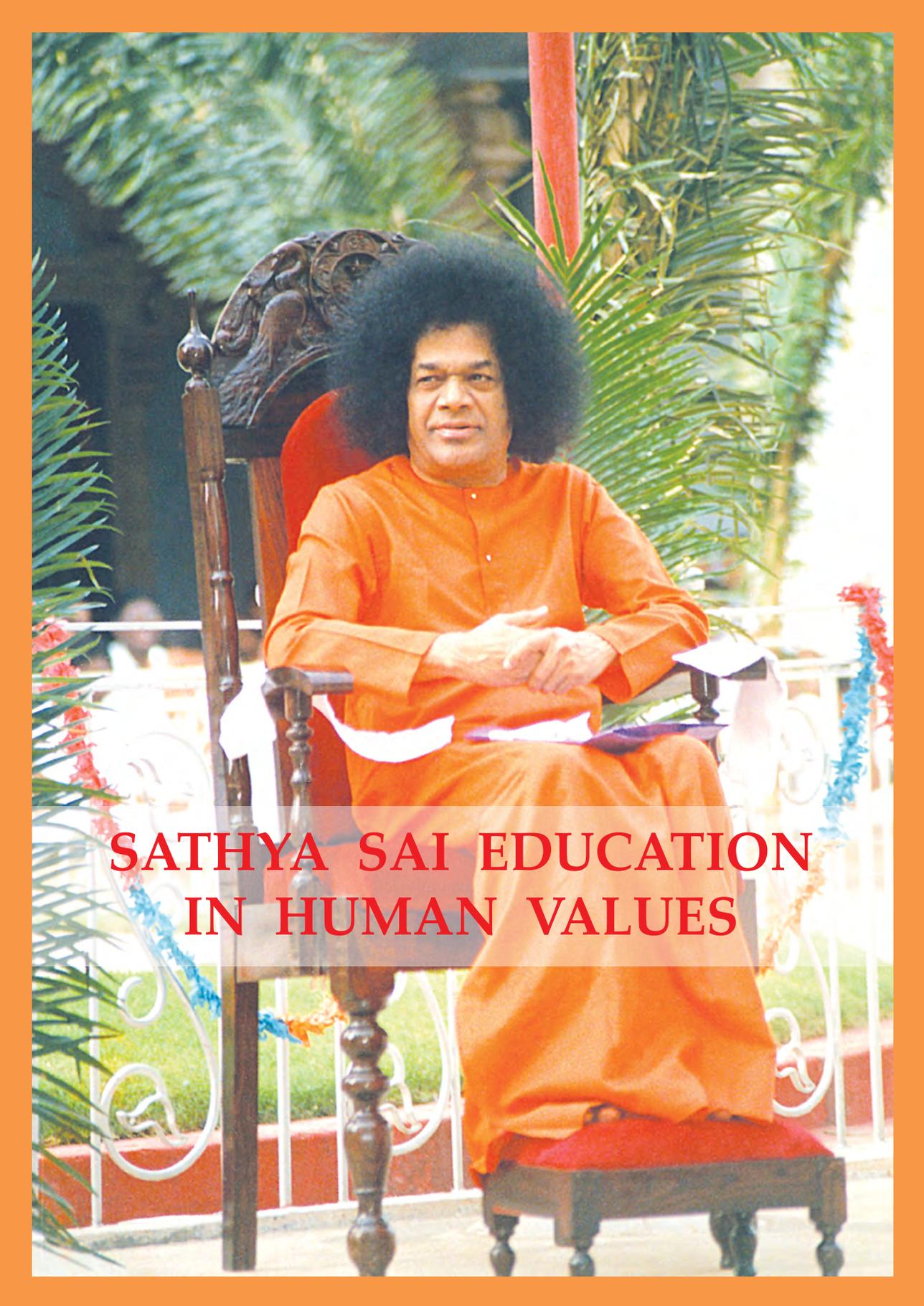
related values to the Bal Vikas Gurus as compared to the current Bal Vikas students. This may possibly indicate the positive impact on completion of the 9-year Bal Vikas programme bringing about a culmination in the perception and practice of the values taught in the programme.

There was a closer proximity and agreement on Bal Vikas-related values amongst the Gurus and the Bal Vikas parents. This does show a positive impact of the Bal Vikas programme which believes and works towards making not only the class environment but also the home environment conducive to the learning and practising of values.

One glaring result was seen in the choice made by the rural Bal Vikas girls when compared to the urban Bal Vikas girls and the other groups. The rural Bal Vikas girls indicated that the values of loving and forgiving were the least important to them whereas the other groups ranked these greater in importance. Rural Bal Vikas girls chose personal values of being courageous and responsible as important when compared to the interpersonal values of loving and forgiving. This result might possibly be attributed to the negative societal attitude towards women prominently seen in the rural areas where women are denied education and still perform lowly menial jobs. The inequality may lead to suppressed anger in the youth due to denial of opportunities and hence loving and forgiving taking a back seat in importance. This is the area where the study indicates a greater need for a change of teaching strategy to bring the rural girls on par with

*continued on page 94...*





**SATHYA SAI EDUCATION  
IN HUMAN VALUES**

# An Overview of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values in Overseas Countries

*Dr. Pal Dhall*

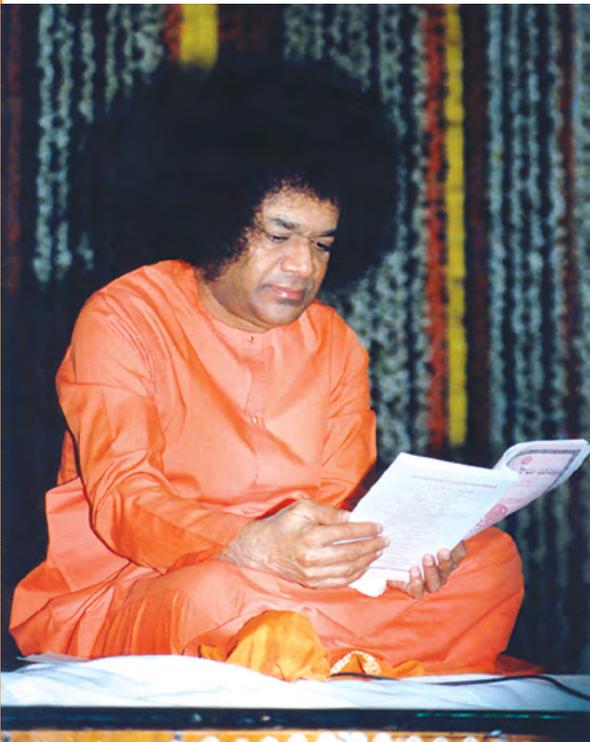
*Any system of education that does not help to discriminate between right and wrong, that does not instil the fear of sin and love for God, that does not impart norms of humility and reverence, that does not widen the horizons of your wonderment and enthusiasm towards intense devotion and service to your parents and inspire you to dedicate your skills and resources for the progress of your family, village, community, country, mother tongue and nation; stands condemned.*

**– Bhagavan Baba, 2nd August 1987**

**T**HE CURRENT SYSTEM OF education is seriously flawed in the very concept of learning, teaching and meeting with the real developmental needs of the children. It was developed

two hundred year ago to serve a rapidly industrialising society which required stratification into managerial class, skilled and unskilled workers. It encouraged inequality, competition and aggression. This system of education has resulted in global consequences such as division into rich and poor, first world and third world countries. Wars, terrorism, violence, intolerance, anxiety, family tensions, delinquency and suicides as well as indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources, all have their roots in the ways and policies through which children and young people are being educated and raised today.

At present, the vast majority of children are unable to realise their optimal potential. This is on account of three factors – an inadequate system of education that is not geared to development of humanness, poor family dynamics that fail to focus on the inclusive developmental needs of the children, and an all-pervading toxic culture of materialism, sensuality, violence, time-poverty and stress. Bhagavan Sri Sathya



Sai Baba has given the basis of a new model of education, Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV), a model that provides amazing strategies to deal with all the three basic factors that are acting as stumbling blocks in the hearts and minds of children and youth, and to put them on a positive trajectory of holistic development.

### **SSEHV for Holistic Development of Personality**

Advocating that education is for holistic development of children and youth, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba gave detailed directions on how education methodology should address at the two equally important and vital goals – academic excellence and development of character. He established exemplary schools and educational institutions to demonstrate how full human potential might be realised. In such a system of education, both mind and heart are prepared equally, and human values are seamlessly integrated into the curriculum. Based on the examples of His institutions, Sathya Sai Schools and Institutes were established in many overseas countries.

### **Sathya Sai Schools**

At present, there are 42 Sathya Sai Schools in overseas countries. They follow the mainstream government curriculum, but in addition suffuse the culture seamlessly with human values of peace, love, truth, right conduct and non-violence. Many of these schools were started in the 90's, and more are being established. These schools are located often in the most deprived parts of the country where the risk of educational failure is high. In the short time since their inception, many of these schools have been recognised as the very best in their own countries. In Thailand, the Sathya Sai

*With Bhagavan's teachings, our understanding of the purpose of education has moved on from merely preparing the young minds for the world of work and earning a livelihood to that of holistic human development. Is it not a privilege to be a part of a process that is transforming humanity and heralding a new era in which human values are permeating into more and more institutions in keeping with Bhagavan's vision for humanity?*

School is acknowledged as one of the best schools in the country; and many South East Asian Ministers of Education have emulated this system in their own countries. Sathya Sai School in Canada was ranked, by the Frazer Institute, among the top 18 out of the 2,800 schools in Ontario. In recognition of the amazing role of the Sathya Sai School in uplifting the local community, Prof. Dalton Amorim was awarded Citizenship of the City of Ribeiro Preto.

### **Institutes of Sathya Sai Education (ISSEs)**

There are at present 31 Institutes in overseas countries which were established to train teachers in SSEHV, to oversee standards in human values education in Sathya Sai Schools, to undertake research in SSEHV and to form professional links (or partnerships) with government and private schools for SSEHV. Most of these Institutes have established links with local government and private schools, universities and tertiary training colleges. For example, the ISSEs in Mexico, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Peru, Ecuador, Hong Kong and Europe have



developed strong links with the universities. In some of the ISSEs, the training provided is accredited towards degree courses or other State-recognised tertiary qualifications.

In most of the ISSEs, the main focus is on establishing partnerships with State and private schools for introducing SSEHV into mainstream education by way of providing training to teachers. Some ISSEs provide short courses while others conduct Diploma Courses. Teachers who go through such courses have reported amazing transformation in themselves, in children, in the culture of the schools and also their communities. Often the training is for a few schools at a time, but in some countries the ISSEs have undertaken a massive task of training hundreds of teachers, e.g., Thailand, Indonesia, Fiji, Brazil, Peru and Mexico. In many countries, the Ministers of Education are taking active interest in SSEHV while Ministers of other countries have sought national training programmes. For example, Indonesia and El Salvador governments requested training for thousands of teachers. In Fiji, all the government schools have been asked to train their teachers in SSEHV. Education Ministries are taking an active interest in SSEHV in Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Nepal and Oman. In Colombia, SSEHV is being introduced in a top, extremely well-endowed private school in Bogota. It is to be noted that SSEHV is successful in all cultures and even in countries with State religions, e.g., Kazakhstan and Indonesia (Islamic countries); El Salvador, Brazil and Philippines (Christian countries), and Thailand and Nepal (Buddhist countries).

In some countries, the ISSEs are working in collaboration with non-government agencies. Thailand, Nepal and Zambia are collaborating with the UN Habitat in

introducing SSEHV for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education in African and Asian cities. The ISSE in Nepal is collaborating with the government and UNESCO to build eco-efficient water infrastructure for rain water harvesting and waste water treatment. SSEHV programme is being adapted in many countries for application to professions other than teaching. For example, in El Salvador, training was given to executives of the Ministry of Public Works, and in Indonesia to the police.

In recognition of the role played by SSEHV in uplifting local communities and reforming the indigenous education system, many countries conferred prestigious honours on some functionaries of Sathya Sai International Organisation. For example, the Municipality of Guayaquil, Ecuador bestowed the title of Honoured Guest of the City on Dr. Tehseen Dhall and Dr Pal Dhall. In U.K., Dipak Fakeh was honoured by the Queen for the impact of value education club on the children in a school.

### **SSEHV Pedagogy and Techniques**

The global materialistic and technological culture, with readily available entertainment on TV and mobile devices, has isolated children and youth into a superficial virtual world, made worse by both parents busy working away from home. Violence and sensuality in entertainment, computer games and news have debased their language and values, made them insensitive to pain and suffering of others, and at the same time more fearful and passive. Many children have poor concentration from a cognitive disorder induced by too much screen time. The consequences are poorly developed social and emotional skills as well as poor communication and problem solving skills.



Sociologists are calling this phenomenon “deconstruction of childhood”.

Techniques in SSEHV specifically counteract all these adverse effects. Silent sitting enhances children’s concentration with improvement in learning. The calm inner focus enables better capacity to manage thoughts and feelings. This leads to finer discrimination and problem-solving skills. This inner focus of control enhances self-esteem and self-confidence.

Explicit and implicit focus on human values results in the establishment of a language of values with which the children grasp the concept of values and their dynamics in daily life. Group activity and stories followed by reflective discussion give them higher capacity of self-expression, self-confidence and problem-solving skills. It enhances moral conceptualisation and gives them a positive core ideation.

### **Observed Impact of SSEHV on Children**

Given the amazing pedagogy of SSEHV, it is not surprising that children from Sathya Sai and SSEHV partnership schools are different. They are well-disciplined, gentle, kind, friendly, and have better social skills. Parents notice that their children are more respectful, assume greater responsibilities, go to bed and rise early, do not watch too much television, are more attentive and focused, more interested in their studies and more diligent with the tasks assigned to them. They also comment that their children have become aware of wastage and are conscious of the need to recycle toys, clothes, paper and water. They show respect for food.

Visitors to the Sathya Sai and Partnership Schools consistently remark on the peace and harmony that prevail in

the classrooms. In both, the Sathya Sai and Partnership Schools, the teachers are less stressed, more caring, and are dedicated role models. It is not surprising that many parents move from other areas specifically to be close to Sathya Sai and Partnership Schools so as to enrol their children. There are many wonderful and moving stories from many ISSEs of educational and discipline improvement, cessation of violence and bullying, enhanced socio-emotional skills and academic achievements.

Indigenous education is a challenge for many governments on account of poor achievement levels, high dropout rates and high educational failure. SSEHV in one indigenous school in Australia reversed all the adverse features within two years; the academic levels became at par with other comparable schools. The Department of Education has located a research unit in the school. The principal of this school was awarded “The Queenslander of the Year” and is now Director of the Institute of Leadership in Indigenous Education. The SSEHV teacher-coordinator received “Teacher of the Year” award. This school is now regarded as a model for Aboriginal education. As a consequence of this, the SSEHV was showcased as one of the 12 values-education methods by the Government at an Education Forum held by the National Minister of Education.

In Thailand, Laos, Kenya, Nigeria, Malaysia and several Latin American countries, SSEHV programmes have been used successfully to recover adolescents identified as ‘at risk’ of educational failure. SSEHV is also being utilised in adolescent rehabilitation from drug addiction and crime.

### **Impact of SSEHV on Parents**

Many ISSEs around the world have implemented in Sathya Sai Schools, an



SSEHV programme for parents. This has had an enormous impact on the educational and social achievements of the child by way of improved relationships within the family, positive home dynamics and a peaceful atmosphere conducive to concentration and learning. Noticing the character of children of the Sathya Sai School in Bogota, parents from a top private school, Gymnasium Moderno, recently requested ISSE Colombia to launch a parenting programme in their school! ISSE Canada has implemented SSEHV for parents widely in the community with amazing results. Some professional family therapists are now using the same programme for improving family dynamics and family functioning!

### **Impact of SSEHV on the Community**

Sathya Sai Schools are creating better understanding in communities divided by ethnic, political and religious differences, e.g., in Fiji, Pacific Islanders and the Fijians of Indian descent. However, in children and parents of Sathya Sai Schools, both ethnic groups have reached levels of understanding never seen before. The Prime Minister of Fiji observed in the Parliament that if politicians could follow the example of the children of the Sathya Sai School, then all their problems in the country would be solved!

In Sathya Sai School in Indonesia, the local Muslim religious leaders were suspicious of the “free education”. But after the Imams were invited to make their own observations, they have become advocates for SSEHV! Similarly, in Latin American

countries, Catholic nuns who launched SSEHV programmes in Catholic Schools convinced Mother Superior and the Bishops that SSEHV and Christian teachings were completely compatible.

### **Future Perspective in SSEHV**

Relative to the time it takes to establish educational institutions, Sathya Sai Schools and Institutes and Partnership Schools have been established in shorter time. Despite their short history, they are already making positive impact on their communities, on the governments and education systems. It seems that their impact will go on increasing and SSEHV will spread to more and more countries.

With Bhagavan’s teachings, our understanding of the purpose of education has moved on from merely preparing the young minds for the world of work and earning a livelihood to that of holistic human development. Is it not a privilege to be a part of a process that is transforming humanity and heralding a new era in which human values are permeating into more and more institutions in keeping with Bhagavan’s vision for humanity? It seems that in many countries, SSEHV is sowing the seeds of a new global civilisation of peace and prosperity based not on economics, commerce, power and politics but on optimal human development through human values!

**– The author is the Co-Chairman of Education Committee, Sathya Sai International Organisation.**

*Human values cannot be practised by studying books or listening to lectures.*

*They have to be cultivated by individual effort.*

– Baba

# SATHYA SAI EDUCATION IN HUMAN VALUES (SSEHV) IN EUROPE

Marianne Meyer

*The word Education has its origin in the Latin word, 'educare', which means 'to elicit'. Educare has two aspects, the worldly and the spiritual. Worldly education brings out the latent knowledge pertaining to the physical world. Spiritual education brings out the inherent divinity in man. So, both worldly education and spiritual education are essential, without which the human life has no value.*

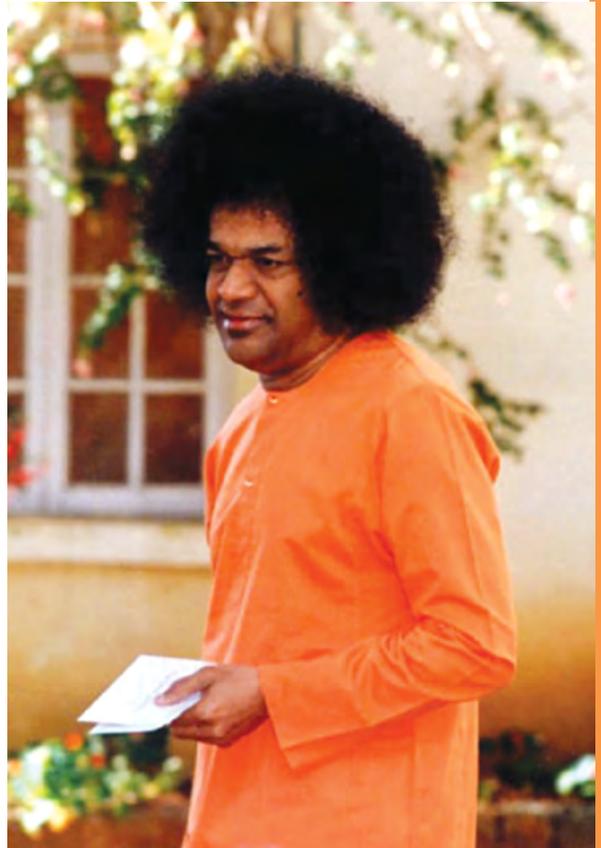
– Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

**B**RINGING THE UNIVERSAL Human Values, given by Bhagavan Baba, to society is one of the noblest tasks one can undertake. With this in mind, the two institutes in Europe – Institute of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (ISSE SE) and European Sathya Sai Education Institute (ESSE Institute) have undertaken the task of bringing SSEHV to children as well as to adults.

The ISSE SE is serving the countries of South Europe, and the ESSE Institute with its two campuses is serving North Europe as well as the Russian Speaking Countries. 'ESSE' in Latin means 'to be' and this beautifully describes the inner significance of the SSEHV programme.

## **The Teacher or Facilitator has a Key Role to Play**

*'Education has two important characteristics. One is exposition of facts related to any subject. The other is the individual's personality. The first is concerned with matter. The second is Divine Energy. Education is a combination of the two. It is a combination of worldly and spiritual knowledge. Education cannot be defined to stuffing*



*the head. It has to melt the heart, refine it and turn it towards God. Man has to be transformed into an ideal human being with a compassionate heart.'*

– Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Such a constructive developmental programme places a sharp focus on teachers and facilitators in SSEHV. The keyword is inspiring teachers/facilitators. The only way to inspiration is through the practice of the five human values and by being true and authentic exemplars. Therefore, training the Trainers becomes essential, as they are the key to success in all endeavours in educational programmes of the ISSEs and the Sathya Sai Organisation. Albert Schweitzer said, *“Example is not the main method in influencing others, it is the only method”*. Being an exemplar is a constant process of self-education and self-evaluation. *“Examine every day what you do, with what motives; then you can judge your progress”*. (Bhagavan Baba). When this effort is accompanied by deep spiritual joy and a feeling of fulfilment, it becomes transformational. Therefore, the main focus is on a transformational programme in Teacher Training based on the ISSE training programmes of the Education Committee.

The aim of ESSE is to reach out to Educational Institutions of all kinds, teachers and educators, as well as youth and parents willing to be trained. The Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) has also benefited from the training programmes of ESSE. Additionally, groups of professionals in the health and business sectors have been interested in these programmes. This is because today many are feeling the need for synthesising moral, ethical and spiritual values on one hand and the scientific and technological innovations on the other hand. This opens the door for SSEHV as a spiritual programme in a secular setting, thus harmonising the two aspects.

### The SSEHV Programme

The primary differentiating feature of the SSEHV programme is the unified integration

of secular inputs with an undercurrent of spiritual values. This naturally leads to a holistic and wider perspective on education and life in general leading to Character Building. *“The end of education is character”* (Bhagavan Baba).

In Europe, the report ‘Learning: The Treasure within,’ of the Delors Commission under UNESCO, has been utilised as an additional reference, as it re-asserts a fundamental principle: education should contribute to every person’s complete development. The basis of the report is articulated in the four pillars: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together, and Learning to Be. ‘Learning to Know’ focuses on the acquisition of knowledge. ‘Learning to Do’ is then to achieve the skills to do something. Learning to know and to do form the secular part of education, and are mainly used for making a living.

As violence is a dominant factor in the world today, ‘Learning to Live Together’ becomes an important issue. Education must not only teach the students about human diversity, but also how to develop tolerance for other people, their cultures and their spiritual values. Here SSEHV can make a huge difference.

‘Learning to Be’ from a spiritual point of view involves a self-transformation process that leads to full understanding of one’s true identity. ‘Knowing thyself’ as indicated by the ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, can be termed as Self-knowledge as the very basis of lasting happiness.

### How Do the Educators Receive such a Profound Message?

The feedback of SSEHV programmes is always very positive. Besides receiving



deep appreciation, the Trainers witness the marks of positive changes in attitudes and behaviour. These are great moments of inspiration. So, there is no doubt that the message of love and spiritual transformation is reaching the hearts of the participants. Many of them have expressed how important it is to spend time in working together with like-minded people striving for the same goal with the same means.

### **SSEHV is a Lifelong Transformation Process**

*Education is for life, not merely for a living; it is for living a fuller, a more meaningful life,* said Bhagavan. SSEHV as a lifelong transformation process is the kind of 'learning as a process', which in many ways matches our current constantly changing society. For this reason, it is much more important to be able to meet these changes in a creative and constructive way rather than imparting a lot of knowledge, information and skills based on the past. Having this in mind, it becomes obvious that this programme is not only for children but also for the whole of humanity.

The two Institutes in Europe have already expanded their target audience to include support to adults in the community. They have launched conferences and seminars specially designed for managers, staff within the health sector, parents, youth and others, who could benefit from learning about how to live a good, balanced and value-based life. In this way, the scope of SSEHV has become wider in reaching out to address the needs of the local society. As today's society is facing difficulties from long hours of working and living in high stress environments, we as trainers and facilitators in the Institutes can contribute to more positive human development.

One example of such a project is the European Manager's Conference: "Managing Change and Growth through Human Values and Spiritual Leadership". The aim of this Conference was to develop solutions to today's workplace challenges through the practice of human values in modern management processes.

Another example is the series of seminars in Israel, where participants from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Druze and Hindu populations of the country came together to learn about the SSEHV programme and how to bring it to children and adults in their society. At the same time, it contributed to bringing common understanding between different ethnic groups living together – often under extremely challenging circumstances.

### **'Human Values for Life'**

In Europe, workshops titled 'Human Values for Life' are providing inspiration to use human values in everyday life situations. They focus on topics such as leadership skills, group dynamics and conflict resolution. Other workshops focus on how to spread Sathya Sai's teachings to the public through interfaith engagement as well as creating awareness about environmental issues. Public Speaking seminars are also being offered for developing skills and methods for planning and delivering presentations.

### **Reaching out to the Mainstream**

It has become obvious that there is a need to harmonise and bridge different thinking within cultures, religions and sciences and to find a language that matches and resonates in the heart of the various audiences. For this purpose, references from science and psychology open the door to a materialistic society, and create a ground for the message of Bhagavan without diluting the



spiritual essence. But this has to be done carefully and with good understanding of Bhagavan's teaching in order not to dilute the programme.

One of the most significant experiences arises out of a close cooperation with a Government Institute in the East, where it was not possible to speak about spirituality. For this reason, the programme was introduced from the perspective of science and psychology. Quotations from scientists like Albert Einstein were used to make it possible to talk about how we have to redefine ourselves and realise that we are more than this body and that within us is a consciousness that can be described as unlimited Love also called Universal Human Values.

*"People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion."* (Albert Einstein)

*"A human being is part of a whole – the universe – a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, his feelings as something separate from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living."*

(Albert Einstein)

From this vision, it became natural to introduce the integrating process of secular and spiritual education through Unity of Head, Heart and Hand (3HV), Ceiling on Desires, Unity in Diversity and Unity of Faiths. It is these core tenets that distinguish

Sathya Sai Education from all other value-based programmes.

In the subsequent training sessions, everyone spoke about spirituality! After the 3rd visit, the seminars were even highlighted in the national mass media (TV programmes, newspaper articles).

### **SSEHV in Society**

Various other educational activities are taking place in addition to training courses. These activities include regular children's classes, radio programmes for the public, participation in International Conferences, open days on Human Values, narration of awakening stories in school libraries, puppet shows, extra curricular classes, interactive workshops for parents, public conferences, Human Values Camps, and SSEHV seminars for young adults.

'Education through Theatre' is another activity, where the SSEHV philosophy and methods are facilitated. And finally, Human Values clubs are taking place in Community Centres for children of the neighbourhood as well as for immigrant children.

### **SSEHV in Schools**

The basic approach in SSEHV Pedagogy is to achieve simultaneous and harmonious development of body, mind and soul, in order to shape the students into caring individuals, who are aware of their true nature. This has been termed Integral Education.

This means the programme involves the entire school (faculty, principal, school secretary, etc.), besides classroom teaching. Also, parent-teacher-student relationship plays a central part in shaping an ideal learning environment.

*continued on page 81...*



# SATHYA SAI EDUCATION IN HUMAN VALUES IN CHINA

Dr. Margaret Taplin

## Challenges for Teachers and Children in China

**C**HINA IS AN EMERGING economic powerhouse, with a serious need for people to re-connect to their traditional values. However, teachers face many challenges that make this difficult. First, due to the Confucian tradition that success in education is the road to success in life, there is tremendous pressure on children to achieve academically. The public exams dictate the curriculum, and everything, including teachers' contracts and promotions, is linked to results. This is compounded by the one-child policy as most children have six adults (two parents and four grandparents) all pinning their hopes and dreams for the future on that single child. Parents and grandparents often encourage children to do whatever it takes to outrank their classmates. Another consequence of the one-child policy is that many children are selfish, unmotivated, lazy and cannot accept criticism.

While teachers are aware of the social problems, the pressures of the examination-driven system make it difficult for them to add in any kind of values education. Moral education subjects are offered, but children who can give the "right answers" to pass the exam fail to practise the moral values outside the class. Due to its Communist philosophy, education in China is strictly secular, so it is not possible – or even legal – to suggest spiritual education as a means

of solving the many problems that exist. It was in this challenging environment that we had the opportunity to introduce SSEHV in 2003.

## How SSEHV Came to China

In 2000, the Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Hong Kong (ISSE HK) invited an education professor from southern China as a delegate to the SSEHV Conference in Prasanthi Nilayam. He was touched by the experience, and saw that SSEHV could be a way to address the growing problem of lack of social and moral engagement in his country.

After many subsequent discussions with ISSE HK, he determined that SSEHV could be presented in a way that would be quite compatible with the Government's ideology. Three years after the conference, the Chinese Government introduced curriculum reforms that included revisiting the existing moral education curriculum and, as an appointed member of the reform committee, the professor was able to bring in the SSEHV programme under this umbrella.

## SSEHV Model in China

The ISSE HK team has worked with clusters of local university professors and their postgraduate students, education bureau personnel, principals and selected expert teachers from primary schools in five provinces. They participate in a two-year introductory programme, based on regular seminars and school-based action



research, to integrate SSEHV into their regular subjects and across the whole school environment. As their experience and commitment grow, they develop as SSEHV mentors for colleagues in their own and neighbouring schools.

At the end of two years, selected schools continue as SSEHV leaders – models for other schools in their districts, under the direct supervision of the local university professors, their postgraduate students, and the ISSE, Hong Kong team. Following this model, around 1,100 teachers of some



*Children doing group work.*

19,000 children have now been through this SSEHV training, and have shared what they have learned with countless more.

### **Changes in Teachers**

When we introduce SSEHV, teachers' first concern is that it will take time away from the "drill and practice" that they believe is necessary to get good results. However, their academic results generally improve after they adopt SSEHV. One mathematics teacher shared his belief that " $35-5=45$ ". He explained, *"In a 35-minute lesson, if I take 5 minutes for silent sitting, the children's productivity is so much higher that we achieve as much as we would normally in a 45-minute lesson"*.

Whenever teachers become aware of the principles of SSEHV, it brings about positive changes in their teaching and in themselves.

### *Changing how they Cope with their Problems*

Our research has found that practising SSEHV for a year or more brings about significant improvements to teachers' problems, such as bullying / violent students, exhaustion, feeling angry, having doubts about their sense of mission as teachers and / or feeling burnt out, the pressure to get good results, coping with excessive workloads and their personal health.

### *Changing their Perception of Education*

One of the earliest transformations that happens to teachers is that they begin to re-examine their ideas about teaching, and shake off old beliefs that had made them unhappy:

*"Under the influence of the traditional ideas, I thought I was a good teacher as long as the students were getting results.... But the fact is not so. You pay very much, but the harvest is actually very little... I had become excessively sad, excessively disappointed and very tired. My teaching did not have any meaning. Then I started to participate in the values education training ... I have learned the "humanist" side of the work, to "take the love as the starting point" even if the student's outcomes are not so good. I try as much as possible not to look at the superficial things but to discover the students' true intrinsic selves."*

Consequently, teachers who have been feeling burnt out and doubting their sense of mission have experienced renewed vigour.

*"By rendering Love, I can feel the happiness of my life and career. If the*



*teacher has a positive, healthy inner world, students are naturally active and healthy. Living and working in such an environment, you can feel happy!"*

#### *Becoming Better People*

A significant turning point for these teachers is when they recognise that they have become better people as a result of teaching SSEHV:

*"In my own life I have become calmer. Now, when students quarrel or do not listen to me in class, I respond with repeated patience. ... I feel my teacher's sense of mission more strongly, love the students more deeply, am more harmonious in my relationships with the students... In brief, I have enhanced my ability to be a good person."*

*"The values education has changed my disposition when I encounter a difficulty. Instead of being irritable or having a fit of temper, it has helped me to learn to endure patiently and be tolerant."*

*"In my family, I am the only daughter. Therefore, I was often impulsive, did not consider others' feelings and always expected to be the "centre". If something happened that did not meet my expectations, I was unable to recover after a setback. But after participating in the values education ... I have become magnanimous, open-minded and forgiving. I say frequently to myself that others must feel happy and joyful because of my existence. If I can make others joyful, I can also be truly joyful."*

#### *Controlling their Own Behaviour*

Another consequence of teaching about human values is that the teachers naturally become aware of their own behaviour. They realise that to encourage children to be truthful, they cannot tell lies. If they want children to be loving and peaceful, they must be loving and peaceful.

*"As a teacher, I have grown. I have learned that in order to get the students to learn how to love, I have to give love first. I also know that giving is a blessing."*



*Teachers workshop on SSEHV*

*"In the past, teachers may just have taught children but not from heart to heart. My concept has changed. I use my heart, and am keen to build up a good relationship with students, and to use encouragement instead of punishment."*

#### *Becoming more Valuable to their Colleagues and Families*

As they become models of human values, teachers begin to realise that their behaviour is transforming not only themselves but also their colleagues and families:

*"The values education has changed me and my relationships with my colleagues. Before I would speak extremely candidly and did not consider the feelings of the person I was speaking to. Now I have learned to pay attention to others' feelings, which has helped to build a harmonious atmosphere with colleagues. Many of them now look from the other's point of view, render encouragement and assistance and respect each other equally as one respects one's own family members."*



*“Even if my husband does not come home for his meal, I am tranquil... I no longer get into a rage or slam down the telephone, but look at it from his point of view, understand, and forgive him.”*

### Transformation in Children

Participating teachers are asked to rate selected children in their classes and to involve the children in rating themselves, using a rubric based on Sai Baba's description of the qualities of a person with good character. Over time there have been consistent increases in the percentages of children scoring in the “excellent” and “high” categories. The spoilt, selfish “Little Emperors” become transformed.

*“The EHV has been like a beacon light illuminating the students' paths, improving their quality, and their behaviour and habits have made very big progress. The students have changed from being quarrelsome to peaceful, from liking fighting to becoming loving, caring schoolmates. ... It has built a solid foundation for the students' future.”*

*“Since participating in the values education, the children in the class and I have grown together, letting me realise the value of the human values. Their pardon, forgiveness, loyalty, sympathy, love, selflessness, peace, patience, mercy and so on have given my own life a focus and has caused my life to have warmth, forgiveness and love.”*

### Children's Comments

Examples of the children's comments about their own growth can be summarised into the following five categories:

- Feelings, thoughts and emotions

*“It's unbelievable a little silent sitting can become my psychological doctor, make me*

*shift from worried to peaceful, from anger to happiness.”*

- Better Study Habits

*“Silent sitting helps me to settle to study very quickly and will not let other matters interfere with my thinking.”*

- Improved School Performance

*“I can answer a problem very quickly.”*

- Physical Effects

*“When I feel perplexed or annoyed and worn out, absolutely exhausted, I will do silent sitting as our teacher tells us.”*

- Behaviour

*“Silent sitting makes me understand my shortcomings.”*

### Transformation in the Family

Some teachers asked their pupils to share what they had learned about SSEHV at home with their families. The children clearly indicated that their families had benefited from learning and practising values together and that it had contributed to building a sense of community within them.

### Conclusion

Due to the need to comply with China's laws and cultural constraints, and the current emphasis on material wealth at all costs, it has been a slow, cautious journey to introduce SSEHV. Nevertheless, we know the journey has been worthwhile when we hear stories of transformation in teachers, children and families, and when we hear teachers say, *“The human values education has lit a heart lamp”*.

**– The author is a Member of the Education Committee, Sathya Sai International Organisation.**



# THE AFRICAN CONTINENT LIT BY THE LAMP OF LOVE

Dr. Lalini Reddy

**T**HE AFRICAN CONTINENT HAS been blessed, as it is currently experiencing the expansion of Sathya Sai Baba's Love in the various countries.

We are reminded of the Divine Declaration made by Sai Baba when he visited Africa in 1968:

*"I have come to light the lamp of Love in your hearts, to see that it shines day by day with added lustre. I have not come on behalf of any exclusive religion. I have not come on a mission of publicity for a sect or creed or cause, nor have I come to collect followers for a doctrine. I have no plan to attract disciples or devotees into My fold or any fold. I have come to tell you of this unitary faith, this spiritual principle, this path of Love, this virtue of Love, this duty of Love, this obligation of Love."*

– Sai Baba, 4th July 1968

When Sathya Sai Baba put His Divine Feet on Kenyan soil in 1968, en route to Kampala, it sowed the seeds for the

promotion of His Message of Love which today is revealing itself through the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) programme.

The late Sri Victor Kanu and his dear wife pioneered SSEHV work in Africa with the establishment of the Sathya Sai School (SS School) of Ndola, Zambia in 1990. The school became known as a 'miracle' school, as it transformed school dropouts into exemplary students, many of whom returned to teach in the school. The African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (TAISSE) was then established and served Central and North African countries.

The continent is now experiencing an unprecedented resurgence, wide expansion and consolidation of SSEHV through the efforts of the Education Committee of the SSIO and the South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (SAISSE). The SSEHV programme is being welcomed by the African communities irrespective of race, religion and language.

## Historical Snapshot of SSEHV in Africa

Country	Language	Sathya Sai School	Emerging Partnership Schools	SSEHV Certificate Training	Other SSEHV Workshops / Programmes
South Africa	English, local African	3 SS Schools: Chatsworth, Lenasia South, Newcastle	Dawnridge Primary School, Westpark Special School	•SS School teachers (80)	•Sai Spiritual Education for children (Bal Vikas)

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public School teachers (900)</li> <li>• Healthcare workers (25)</li> <li>• Devotees</li> <li>• Community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community SSEHV for children</li> <li>• SS Parenting</li> <li>• Youth Leadership</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Values in Business</li> <li>• Educare for SSIO Officers</li> </ul>
Kenya	English	2 SS Schools - Kisaju - Uthiru		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SS School teachers (27)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘H.O.P.E’ programme</li> <li>• SSEHV Orientation Workshop for Department of Education, Kajiado District (220)</li> </ul>
Zambia	English	SS School of Ndola, Zambia		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SS School teachers</li> <li>• Public school teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN-Habitat Human Values-based Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education Programme (HVWSHE) in 2001</li> </ul>
Mauritius	English, French	SS Schools of Vacoas	–	SS School teachers, SSIO members (80)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sai Spiritual Education for children (Bal Vikas)</li> </ul>
Ghana	English	SS School of Ghana	–	Teacher training scheduled	–
Nigeria	English	SS School of Lagos	–	–	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN-Habitat Human Values-based Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education Programme (HVWSHE) in 2001</li> <li>• ‘Educare Nuggets’ - Moulding information for transformation</li> </ul>

Madagascar	English, French	SS School of Madagascar	-	Teacher training scheduled	-
Congo DRC	French	Sri Sathya Sai College	-	Teacher training scheduled	-
Congo Brazzaville	French	-	-	Teacher training scheduled	-
Gabon	French	-	-	Teacher training scheduled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community SSEHV for children</li> <li>• SSEHV for Masters in Teacher Education at Omabongo University</li> </ul>
Benin	French	-	Private School	Teacher training scheduled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community SSEHV for children</li> </ul>
Uganda	English	-	-	Teacher training scheduled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sai Spiritual Education for children (Bal Vikas)</li> <li>• Community SSEHV for children</li> </ul>
Morocco	Arabic, French	-	Les Ecole Union Prive School	Private School Teachers (22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSEHV community water project</li> <li>• Sai Spiritual Education for children (Bal Vikas)</li> </ul>

### Institutes of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE) in Africa

Currently, there are institutes in Zambia and South Africa promoting SSEHV in terms of the Sathya Sai World Foundation Guidelines. The following ISSEs are planned to cater for the demand for SSEHV Training:

- French Africa - to include the French speaking countries, namely, Morocco, Gabon, Cameroon, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, Benin, Congo DRC, Madagascar, Congo Brazzaville, Malawi, Togo.

- Central Africa - to include Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia.

- South African ISSE - is currently actively engaged in supporting many countries in Africa.

### Formal SSEHV Teacher Training

SSEHV training is a key function of the Sathya Sai Institutes. Established in 2002, SAISSE is now fully functional and supported by skilled facilitators who have trained

over 1,000 members to date. SAISSE offered the Sathya Sai Educare Diploma from 2002 to 2004. Since then the SSEHV Introductory certificate course is offered in four provinces to teachers, SSIO and community members. SAISSE has recently trained members in Morocco, Kenya and Mauritius upon request.

The SSEHV certificate covers the Philosophy of Sathya Sai Educare; the five basic human values; the unity of faiths; unity in diversity; unity of thought, word and deed (3HV); Ceiling on Desires (COD); teacher as exemplar; 5 transformation techniques; integration of values into the curriculum; and an environment and culture of love.

### **Sathya Sai Schools**

Currently there are 9 recognised SS Schools in Africa: 3 in South Africa, 2 in Kenya and 1 each in Ghana, Congo DRC, Madagascar and Mauritius. The schools subscribe to Sathya Sai World Foundation (SSWF) Guidelines, promoting both academic and human excellence.

The SS School of Chatsworth, South Africa is a comprehensive day school catering for Grade R to Grade 12 and is now in its 20th year of existence. The school annually records a 100% matriculation pass.

The SS School of Kisaju, Kenya is a classic residential primary school and is well managed by the Education Trust of Kenya by SSIO. An environment friendly secondary school is due to be inaugurated in 2018. Both the Kisaju and Uthiru Schools achieve high academic standards in Kenya.



*Sathya Sai School of Kisaju, Kenya.*

SAISSE provides professional support to the 3 South African, 2 Kenyan schools, Mauritius and Ghana SS Schools.

The Sathya Sai Education Trust of South Africa offers good governance and financial, asset and human resource management whilst the SSIO South Africa provides ongoing infrastructure, maintenance and financial support to all 3 schools.

*Accreditation of Sathya Sai Schools:* The SSIO International Education Committee is currently reaching out to all SS Schools to undergo an accreditation process. The 3 South African SS Schools and SS School Kisaju had their Accreditation Visits in June/ July 2017.

*Sathya Sai Partnership Schools:* Partnership schools are developing in Kenya, Morocco, South Africa and Benin. These are either public or private schools, in affluent or slum areas, that have adopted the SSEHV programme.

### **SSEHV Public Outreach in Africa**

*SSEHV Youth Leadership Workshops:* To instil discipline and motivation to learn, principals have invited SAISSE to offer





*Sathya Sai School of Chatsworth, South Africa.*

## **SSEHV Training Resource Material**

SAISSE has published SSEHV training manuals and a SS School Handbook. SSIO Mauritius and Morocco have each launched a CD of value songs in English and French. SSIO Morocco has also translated the SAISSE SSEHV Manuals into French, and Arabic translations are underway. These will be

Youth Leadership and Team building programmes for school prefects and senior learners. This popular two-day programme uses the 'right brain' approach to engage with critical value themes impacting youth.

*South African Department of Education Invitation:* The Chatsworth District Education Manager invited three Education Committee Members to address 150 school management staff on 29th July 2017 on "handling discipline at schools". SAISSE is now tasked with training all teachers in the district.

After two years of successful SSEHV training of senior education officers in King Williams Town, Eastern Cape, the Department of Education has invited SAISSE to train all teachers in the district.

*Kenyan Department of Education Invitation:* Inspired by the Kisaju Sai School and the SAISSE SSEHV Teacher training, the District Education Officer, invited SAISSE to train 220 school management staff on 11-12 May 2017 at Kisaju School. SAISSE is now due to continue the training of this critical mass to implement SSEHV across the Kajiado County, linking SSEHV to the new Kenyan Education Curriculum Framework.

shared via [www.saisse.co.za](http://www.saisse.co.za) and other sites.

## **SSEHV Transformation Stories in Africa *Learner Transformation***

- Form 1 learner, SS School, Kisaju: "I joined this school ... because my behaviour was not pleasing ...I would abuse many people. ...I was able to learn human values within the first term ...people were shocked ...told them that everybody can join. ...the founder of the school is Sathya Sai Baba whose mission... make a good society with values".
- Grade 3 Learner, SS School, Newcastle: "The children in our informal settlement wait for her to come home from the Sai School. She talks to them about the values and also tells them EHV stories".
- Grade 3 learner, SS School, Chatsworth: "Learnt about 'Seva' at the Sai School ...do more Seva with his dad. He and his cousins have formed a group called 'the Chettys' ... help feed poor people".
- Learner from primary 6 of SS School Lagos: "fire broke out in the nearby village ... management decided to help only the parents affected by fire ...A little boy saw his mother waiting in the queue to collect items for those affected by fire. He was surprised



...his house did not catch fire... He informed the teacher that his mother does not deserve any kind of help ...SSEHV made him speak the truth ...SSEHV always attracted him ... he had a responsibility to practise the same”.

#### *Teacher Transformation*

•Principal of the Les Ecole Union Prive School: “I received SSEHV training with many colleagues ... I practise both universal human values and our Muslim religious values ...and resolve many conflicts between students and their respective families ...Today we speak a lot about violence, competition, war, materialism. The environment in the school ... positive and peaceful. I live in peace, I see beauty in everything, I distance myself from conflict and I positively influence my family and professional entourage”.

•Deputy Head Teacher of SS School, Uthiru: In 2006: “I was sick with pneumonia. At 3.00 am, I saw Swami at my bedside. He stretched His hand and touched my right rib, and I got immediately healed”. In 2017, April: “In a dream Swami called me by name. Baba said: “There is life for the hopeless in SS Schools”.

#### *Parent Transformation*

•SS School, Lenasia South: “This School has made my child a better person and my family is following Baba's footsteps”.

•Neighbouring school to Kisaju: “... for the last ten years, SS School Kisaju has never failed to produce good results in Kajjado County ... pupils conduct is always good ... highly regarded ...thank the school administration ... changing the behaviours of bad mannered boys to mature and responsible citizens of the future. May the Lord bless this school”!

Almost 50 years after Sai Baba visited Africa, the lamp of Love burns brightly and it is our duty to respond sincerely to their call for Sathya Sai Education in Human Values to counter the challenges confronting education systems and society at large.

– **Dr Lalini Reddy is the Member of Education Committee, Prasanthi Council, Director of South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (SAISSE), Zone 9A: (Africa and Mauritius) and Faculty of Applied Sciences, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa.**

*...continued from page 71*

A very inspiring story is from The Abbey Leicester School in UK. The school rose from the bottom level years 8-9 to being one of the best-rated schools in the country. Their attitude of the children towards learning changed after Human Values programme was introduced which resulted in high academic standards and moral character in the students. The turning point started with the 'Good Value Club', afterschool activity

based on SSEHV, and from here it spread to the whole school.

Another noteworthy event is the accreditation of the SSEHV programme by the Ministry of Education in three regions in Italy: Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Abruzzo.

– **The author is the Co-Chairperson of the Education Committee and Member, Prasanthi Council of Sathya Sai International Organisation.**



EVER SINCE SATHYA SAI BABA initiated the teachings on Education in Human Values, the message has easily spread along entire Latin America, as seeds grow fast on good soil. It is hard to say why it spread so well in Latin America. Perhaps regional problems showed that something was wrong or missing in education, asking for urgency of action. Perhaps it was asymmetry and problems in the society that called loudly for values and love. Or perhaps it was

Sai Schools and 12 Sathya Sai Institutes in Latin America. There are now Sathya Sai Schools in Argentina (1), Paraguay (1), Brazil (3), Ecuador (2), Venezuela (1), Colombia (2), Guatemala (1) and Mexico (2). Size and material conditions of the schools vary, but the common seal of a loving and transforming atmosphere is common to all and it is remarkable and impactful. The impact goes beyond students who develop discrimination and nobility, strength and love. It is impressive to talk to the alumni, to

*Prof. Dalton de Souza Amorim*

## EXPANSION OF SATHYA SAI EDUCATION IN HUMAN VALUES ACROSS LATIN AMERICA

*“One may master all forms of knowledge (...), one may be an emperor reigning over vast kingdoms, one may offer cows and gold as an act of charity, one may count the countless stars in the sky, (...) but it is impossible to control the body, mind and senses. Turn the vision inward and achieve the supreme state of equanimity of the mind.”*

(Sathya Sai Baba, 22nd November 2001)

just the natural warmth of hearts in this part of the world that naturally enabled perception of secrets underlying SSEHV and corresponding actions.

### Progress of SSEHV in Latin America

The first Sathya Sai School in Latin America was founded in 1998 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It was based on a Seva project of taking care of children in a very poor neighbourhood that had begun back in 1993. In the early 2000s, schools and Institutes sprouted in different Latin America countries. Presently there are 13 Sathya

see the sparkle in their eyes, their love, and their readiness to serve. They are the fruits of a mature tree. To be at that stage, however, the tree also has to be nurtured by parents and family, teachers and staff, Principals, neighbouring schools, public authorities and volunteers. It is necessary that all changes coalesce together to produce the buds for a new generation. Sathya Sai Schools demonstrate that true Education is possible, that it is not an unreachable utopia, but it is rather real and tangible, which can be directly experienced.



The processes in these schools bring about amazing transformations. Teachers are used to be employed just to deliver academic content, but they soon realise at the Sathya Sai Schools that education is the expression of the Self. They gradually come to understand that they are role models, that their profession is extremely noble and that love flows through their actions. The testimony of these teachers, now Gurus, melts our heart. They understand that their own Sadhana is inspiring to the students and that everything about SSEHV is a self-transforming process. They acquire spiritual stature and transform their own homes and family. The staff, often not looked at with any special consideration by the modern society, also has to be role models. The work in the kitchen, garden, and cleaning brings together dignity and love. And their words are of those who finally recognise their own value as true human beings.

### **Widespread Impact of SSEHV**

These schools are working in communities that are basically Christian. In the beginning, there was some suspicion about why beautiful schools were there, free. But after 10 or 15 years of work, connection has resulted in confidence and support. There is understanding now that the basic principles of Education in Human Values are the same as their own background principles. This is a very special aspect of the process of developing these schools in Latin America. Once there is perception of the unity of purpose and principles, there is synergy between parents and school in supporting and guiding the children. Of course, these changes occur simultaneously. Parenting in the Sathya Sai Schools brings up discussions on real values, personal changes, priorities, practices of parents and family life – all this happens in



*Children of the Sathya Sai School of Goias, Central Brazil, gather for the flag ceremony.*

a society strongly affected by consumerism, materialism and superficiality. This means that about 1,300 children benefited by the Sathya Sai Schools in Latin America translates into thousands of people directly benefited by the projects.

Availability of funding for such a large number of Sathya Sai Schools to work in a part of the world with limited resources has been challenging. Sathya Sai Schools are open models to be shared. There is no need of luxury or fancy facilities. But excellence in both wings, academic and spiritual, cannot be forsaken. A minimum financial commitment is necessary for the projects. Consequently, some schools have closed, but not without having some major impact on children and family, on the community and on the surrounding education environment.

Soon after witnessing the loving environment and the academic achievements of the Sathya Sai Schools, other schools become interested in the change – as in the beginning happened with the school created by Bhagavan Sai. This involves public schools from all countries in Latin America in which there are SSEHV activities; but also philanthropic schools are attracted to this model of education.



In Ecuador, Brazil and Colombia, to refer to some few examples, expensive private schools have requested support from the Sai Institutes.

Sathya Sai Institutes are now established in Mexico, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, and Argentina. Some additional countries may establish Institutes during the next few years. The Sai Institutes share amongst themselves understanding and experience of these schools and this helps in continuous deepening and adjustment. Dozens of thousands of teachers, Principals and other professionals have gone through Institute courses that bring back new hope in education and a new school praxis. This is an amazing process: educators who were disappointed with the state of things re-discover education and realise that the education they dreamt all their lives is real and possible. The fact that teachers and Principals are role models for the values they talk about brings the need of self-transformation. This means that SSEHV is not a recipe, with minor effect outside the school. The entire life of educators and their own families are deeply affected by the concepts and practices of Education in Human Values. The Institutes generate a lot of transformational activity. There are branches of Institutes in different cities of each country. Regular regional and national Sai Education congresses and workshops are organised for sharing SSEHV beyond the limits of the Institutes. Support is given to public and private schools that express interest in SSEHV. A proper understanding of the nature of SSEHV and the proper practices of educare takes a long while and it is absolutely necessary to avoid a shallow and mistaken approach. M.Sc. and

Ph.D. dissertations are being written on the experience of these Institutes and schools. This knowledge generated reaches not only big cities, such as Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo or Bogota, but also tiny villages and small cities. It is amazing that all this is happening on a volunteer basis, with limited financial resources.

Communication and unity among the Sathya Sai Schools and Sathya Sai Institutes is rapidly increasing. We have had the thirtieth internet meeting between the Latin America Sai Institutes held over two and a half years. Such meetings allow the Institutes to share practices, organisation procedures, initiatives, standardise terminology and understanding. Since 2009, seven inter-



*Cultural presentation by the students of the Sathya Sai School of Bahia de Caraquez, Ecuador.*

Institute Diploma courses have been organised in Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, Argentina, Mexico, Dominican Republic and Bolivia. These internship courses take four weeks of full-day activities, and cover concepts, workshops, and a week of actual school practice. All those who experience the school practice testify to the power of love in education. These courses deepen the preparation of teachers both in Sathya Sai School and regular school, as well as members of the Institute faculty. And it has



provided an opportunity for the Latin America Institutes to come together, share their views, and learn from each other. A number of meetings between Sathya Sai School Principals have also taken place using electronic media to resolve doubts, share protocols, clarify practices and exchange inspirational stories: all expressions of unity in a huge continent. Close connection of the Institutes and School with the Sathya Sai World Foundation Education Committee has been key in giving guidance, in-depth understanding and long-term perspective.

### **Recognition of the Role of SSEHV by Society**

In some cases, the experience of Education in Human Values has been taken to a larger scale. In the city of Americana, in the State of São Paulo, Brazil, the entire municipal education system has adopted SSEHV. Because of rapid changes in politics, the formal educational initiatives by public authorities have limited life-span. But the transformation brought to the hearts of teachers, students, parents and educational staff is so deep that the awareness developed by SSEHV cannot be erased by changes in political landscape. In other cases, the perception of selfless love and dedication to the mankind by the professionals and volunteers connected with the Sathya Sai Schools and Sathya Sai Institute has resulted in formal recognition by the society. Dr. Pal Dhall, President of the Education Committee of the Sathya Sai World Foundation, was awarded Distinguished Medal and Honorary Professorship of the Ricardo Palma University in Peru for the long-standing work and sacrifice in the area of education in human values.

Sathya Sai Baba asked us to take the Message of SSEHV to all corners of the world. When we learn that a philanthropic school in Babahoyo – a city about 75 km northeast of Guayaquil, in Ecuador, South

America – is having major results in bringing into practice Sathya Sai Education in Human Values, we realise that this is really happening.

The process underlying spreading of Education in Human Values in Latin America is not short term. It will not only take generations, but it has to cover the length and breadth of a gigantic geographic area, with big and small cities, poor and rich



*10th National Congress of Education on Human Values in Brazil – one of many Latin American countries with regular meetings of the Sai Institutes.*

neighbourhoods that dropped spiritual or human values and practices long ago.

“First understanding, then adjustment,” said Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Institutes in each country in Latin America are strengthening the quality of their faculty. Free courses are offered to teachers, educators, public authorities and professionals of other areas. They understand Sathya Sai Education in Human Values, experience it, transform themselves and then share with others their enthusiasm for SSEHV. In the countries in Latin America with Sathya Sai Schools, the deep, loving atmosphere in the Sathya Sai Institutes and schools is being raised to unprecedented heights for one and all to see and understand, “Yes, it is possible”!

**– The author, a senior professor, University of Sao Paulo, is a Member of Education Committee, Sathya Sai World Foundation.**

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF SATHYA SAI EDUCATION IN HUMAN VALUES

Doris Hampton

*It is necessary for those engaged in Seva to be prepared to do what they are asking others to do. Only then their work gives peace and joy to others. Before we preach human values to all manner of people, we should practise them ourselves... Those engaged in teaching human values must also transcend the barriers of religions, castes, creeds and cults.*

– Sri Sathya Sai Baba  
Divine Discourse to Office Bearers  
Guru Purnima, 21st July 1998

**I**N THE EARLY 1980s, A modification of the Bal Vikas programme was developed for children whose parents were not devotees of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It was given the name Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV). SSEHV does not teach about Sri Sathya Sai Baba or any specific spiritual or religious figure. Rather, SSEHV is a spiritual programme, equally respectful of all faiths and religions and which promotes character development through deeper understanding and practice of human values; it seeks to instil in the students respect and reverence for Nature and for the rights of others. In this programme, the SSEHV teacher is an earnest practitioner of human values in her or his own life. The teacher, as an exemplar, enables students to grow in self-confidence and encourages personal striving in the students to realise their own full potential as human beings.

## **Beginning of SSEHV in Overseas Countries**

Beginning in the early 1980s, Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programme



developed initially in India and then rapidly spread in many parts of the world. United Kingdom was one of the first countries



outside India to start an SSEHV programme in 1981. An Education in Human Values Foundation was established in the United States of America in 1983. The Foundation developed the first official SSEHV Curriculum and incorporated a lesson-plan template. The curriculum was published by Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust as “Lesson Plans for Human Values”, International Edition. In 1987, the European Sathya Sai Educare (ESSE) Institute was established in Denmark and training of teachers began in Europe. Since then Institutes in Sathya Sai Education in Human Values have been established in many countries all over the globe.

The First International Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Conference was held at Prasanthi Nilayam in 1981, followed by a second one in 1983. After a mini SSEHV Conference in the 1990s, Bhagavan Baba blessed all the participants with an interview. He stated, “Too much talk; less talk, more work! Complain! Complain! Complain! Don’t complain, just work!” He then stated, “You will see the results of your work!” In 2000, a conference on “Strengthening Values Education” was held at Prasanthi Nilayam. To create a warm welcoming environment for the large number of non-Sai devotee guests, Sai devotees were instructed to wear professional attire and during our Lord Sathya Sai’s Discourses on education, everyone attending the conference was seated in chairs in the Darshan area in Sai Kulwant Hall. Six hundred and fifty participants from 78 countries attended this Conference. A Declaration proclaimed at the end of the Conference acknowledged that human values must be an integral part of all subjects taught in the education systems of the world. Further, it advocated

that all governments should be encouraged to make education in human values an integral component of teacher education.

Another ground breaking Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Conference was held in 2000 when the focus was parent education in Human Values. Over 400 delegates attended the Conference from overseas countries and took the training material to implement the programme in their own countries.

This was followed by another landmark Conference in 2007. At this Conference, a remarkable exhibition was held of all the SSEHV work in many countries around the world. Bhagavan Sathya Sai visited the displays of SSEHV work being done globally in Sathya Sai Institutes, Sathya Sai Schools, Partnership Schools and community venues. There were also displays of Sai Spiritual Education programmes, i.e., spiritual education of children of Sai devotees (SSE) conducted in Sai Centres from all over the globe.

### **International Education Committee Formed**

A Task Force was established in 2004 by Prasanthi Council to critically review all aspects of Sathya Sai Education programmes worldwide. The Report of the Task Force was comprehensive in its breadth as well as its depth. It made Recommendations on all educational programmes of the Sathya Sai Organisation including SSE, SSEHV, Institutes of Sathya Sai Education (ISSEs), Sathya Sai Schools, training of teachers, training of SSEHV workers, as well as Partnership programmes. Prasanthi Council then formed an International Education Committee to implement recommendations of the Task Force. Among its other tasks,



the Committee developed guidelines for the Institutes, Sathya Sai Schools, SSE and SSEHV programmes as well as curricula for Courses I, II and III for the training of persons interested in taking on the challenging task of propagating Bhagavan's teachings on Education in Human Values into the wider community by not only becoming exemplary teachers of the programme but also by establishing contacts with Universities, Educational and Cultural Ministries, Government and Private Schools and other community agencies. The Courses are adaptable to the specific culture, religion and historical context of the various countries. These Courses are based on the teachings of Bhagavan on Education. He has identified serious gaps in the current education as it is delivered all over the world. Secular education prepares the learners to earn money and obtain jobs for a dignified life, but does not prepare the heart and mind of the learners to experience inner peace, wisdom and love.

*Just as two wings are essential for a bird to fly high in the sky, two wheels for a cart to move, so too, the two types of education are needed for man to attain the goal of life. Spiritual education is for life, whereas worldly education is for a living. Only when man is equipped with these two aspects of education can he be deserving of respect and adoration in society.*

– Sathya Sai Baba

### **SSEHV Programmes, Teachers and Activities**

Dedicated Sathya Sai Education in Human Values-trained persons are currently taking SSEHV programme to youth, teens and adults in school classrooms and in a variety of community venues throughout the world. Some of the SSEHV trained

persons are Sai devotees and some are not. The critically important matter is their commitment to uphold the high principles of His programme. Lord Sri Sathya Sai Baba, in His Infinite love and grace, extended His teachings beyond the portals of those devoted to His form to all His children here on earth. SSEHV offers anyone and everyone the tools and opportunity for spiritual growth and development leading to, as Sathya Sai states, "Human Excellence".

In addition to integration of Human Values into mainstream education, SSEHV is also integrated into a variety of specialised topics such as Parenting, Leadership, Communication, Bullying, etc., and is presented as workshops for age and topic-appropriate audiences. Human values public meetings, seminars, community events, school assemblies, and local and national art projects are among the many activities to raise awareness of SSEHV. As this global movement evolves and reaches additional cities, rural and remote areas, Education Committee of Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO EC) will continue expanding its diligent work to support the movement.

### **Present Day Sathya Sai Education in Human Values**

There are now SSEHV Partnership / Complementary Schools and Community Programmes in cities, rural and remote areas all over the world: Italy, China, many parts of the Continent of Africa including South Africa and Morocco, Japan, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Haiti, Virgin Islands, Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Guyana, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Oman, Canada, Guyana, United States of America, Philippines, Croatia, Greece, Serbia, Spain, Netherlands,



Poland, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, United Kingdom and more.

## Future of SSEHV

A Conference on Sathya Sai Ideal Education was held at Prasanthi Nilayam in 2014. The overarching objective of the Conference was to receive input from members of Institutes of Sathya Sai Education and Sathya Sai Schools to further strengthen the institutions and programmes, develop roadmaps to bridge gaps and meet the challenges. At this Conference, many ISSEs shared their experience of SSEHV programmes in their countries. It was amazing to see the growth of SSEHV in Indonesia, Nepal, Fiji, Mauritius, China, and many Latin American countries in which there is close association of the Institutes with the Ministry of Education and Universities. Canada has a very active programme of SSEHV for parents. Malaysia has a variety of SSEHV programmes for youth.

Issues raised at the Conference by the various ISSEs and Sathya Sai Schools are being addressed by the SSIO Education Committee (SSIO EC). The Conference Recommendations included an appeal to the ISSEs to identify specific social challenges in the countries of their location and to develop SSEHV programmes to address these specifically. Following the Conference, the EC is focusing on forging close and strong relationships with all Institutes of Sathya Sai Education and other educational institutions of the SSIO. It has now embarked on a process of accreditation of all Sathya Sai Schools in the overseas countries and on active participation in Conferences and Seminars organised by ISSEs in different countries. EC is planning on building a seamless support system for

the global “world changing” work taking place under the umbrella of the ISSEs, Sathya Sai Schools and Partnership programmes.

The EC has now taken on the task of circulating a SSEHV Questionnaire to gather in-depth information on all SSEHV programmes, projects, workshops and events. The information will go into an accessible ongoing global database. This will enable EC to develop strategic planning to support SSEHV programmes and bring greater awareness of the SSEHV work that is being done. The easy access to the database will enable existing volunteers of SSEHV projects to share ideas, resource materials, and various problem-solving strategies to common community challenges around the world. Such unity will encourage learning from successful (and unsuccessful) projects anywhere in the world. Such a connected community of dedicated workers is an excellent platform for conducting research on the efficacy of the SSEHV programme for both SSEHV teachers and students. We can envisage a future in which we will see the emergence of well-conducted research based on evaluation and meta-analysis of data gathered from around the world and published in various journals and books to obtain global recognition for the amazingly transforming SSEHV programmes. The vision of EC is to develop currently separated workers into one global SSEHV community involved in a single project to take Bhagavan’s teachings on Education into the world.

**– The author is a Member of Education Committee of Sathya Sai International Organisation and a Faculty Member and National SSEHV Community Programmes Coordinator of Institute of Sathya Sai Education, U.S.A.**



# ACCREDITATION OF SATHYA SAI SCHOOLS IN OVERSEAS COUNTRIES

Dr. Tom Scovill

*All the chaos and evil in the world today are due to the fact that men have forgotten the Atma (the supreme spirit).*

– Sathya Sai Baba, 28th October 1989

**I**N 1968, BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA Sai Baba declared His Mission to re-establish Dharma in the world. In that same year, He established His first college in Anantapur for women. Education

by uniting secular academics and spiritual human values in the curriculum. This integral education is a part of His Mission.

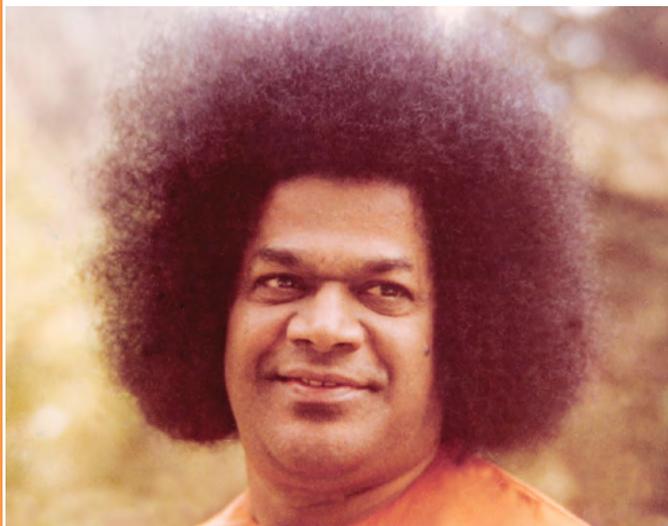
In 1968, the Loving Lord Himself gave the purpose for which He has come. In part He said: "...for establishing Dharma (righteousness) on a firm footing, I incarnate from age to age... The Dharma that has fled to the forests has to be brought back into the villages and towns. The Adharma (unrighteousness) that is ruining the villages and towns must be driven back into the jungle".

How is the Lord utilising education in His Divine Mission? With our limited understanding, what little can we explain how the Lord, the embodiment of the Universal Absolute, the One to whom the wise refer by many Names, carries out His Mission? We can only give close attention to His words and attempt to carry them out in their full implication, and reflect carefully on His actions as the Divine example for us to emulate. In the stream of wisdom flowing in His Discourses through the years, He has enlightened us as to the very purpose of our lives, our Swadharma (fundamental Dharma): to realise our inherent divinity.

has been and is central to His Mission in establishing youth firmly in right conduct. Nearly 50 years later, the Sathya Sai International Organisation is in the midst of accrediting the 42 Sathya Sai Schools outside India.

## What is the Purpose of a Sai School?

The Sathya Sai School is the model of true education as given by Bhagavan Baba



He established Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, and in its charter declared its purpose: to help mankind realise the inherent divinity.

By His own example and words, the Avatar's Mission includes setting right education as it is known in the world. He taught us the correct and true process of education, Educare: bringing out that which is within. Simply put: that which is within is our inherent divinity.

This is how we can understand the part education serves in the Avatar's Mission. The purpose of true education is the same as the purpose of life, the same as the purpose of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation: to help mankind realise the inherent divinity. The Sathya Sai School is an environment in which students are given the skills and understanding so that this awareness begins to emerge.

Swami's oft repeated phrase 'the end of education is character' brings a question, how can schools achieve this? There are several distinguishing features of a Sathya Sai School mentioned below which are commonly given to the wider public, but there is one directly given by Swami that is most fundamental. Readers of Sanathana Sarathi will appreciate His ability to clarify and elucidate the most complex issue in a simple manner. When He inaugurated the first Sathya Sai College in Anantapur, He told us: Atma Vidya (science of the Self) alone can fix the mind in Dharma.

*That is the reason why it has been resolved to start a women's college, in every State, in order to promote the Dharma, which I have come to establish. This is part of the general task. Every act of Mine, every word, will have only*

*that goal in view. Atma Vidya (science of the Self) alone can fix the mind in Dharma. The students here will be given a glimpse of that Atma Vidya; they will develop a keen desire to know about it – knowledge and desire that will stand them in good stead, when they encounter the problems of life.*

(22nd July 1968)

In language understandable to families and students around the world from different religions, cultures and ethnicities, Sathya Sai Schools are best positioned to foster students' awareness of the inherent reality, the supreme innate spirit, as the basis for morality. Swami makes clear again the necessity of awareness of spirit in order to establish good character:

*Teachers have to discriminate thus and develop a firm faith in the Atma. As the seed, so the crop. Unless they are able to implant this seed of knowledge, value orientation cannot happen.*

(30th August 1981)

## History of Growth of Sathya Sai Schools

By the early 1990s, Sathya Sai Schools were established in Zambia, Thailand and Nepal. Similar schools were soon started in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Fiji, Indonesia, Kenya, Colombia, Guatemala, Malaysia, Mauritius, Madagascar, Mexico, Nepal, Paraguay, the Philippines, UK, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Venezuela.

Through the pedagogy of integral education, Sathya Sai Schools around the world have become award-winning models of excellence, and the sites of visitations from educationists and government officials from around the world. Recent



examples include country-wide acceptance in government schools of SSEHV training provided by the ISSE in Thailand with the Thailand Sathya Sai School as the model. In Kenya, the district education officer over 60 government schools has taken a decision to broker SSEHV training to all of them due to the influence of the Sathya Sai School of Kisaju nearby.

### **Distinguishing Features of the Sai Schools**

The goals of Sathya Sai Schools are: (a) to create an environment, culture and ethos of Love, (b) to develop full human potential by eliciting the five human values from within the learner, and (c) to provide an educational model of excellence for others to emulate. The specific objectives of these goals are to promote: (a) academic excellence as reflected in the national or state educational objectives, (b) the realisation of the full potential of human excellence, (c) spiritual transformation of the learners, teachers, and school culture, (d) an atmosphere of love through the teacher, as exemplar, (e) identification with one's culture and nation, as well as unity in diversity, (f) the unity of faiths, and (g) an active social conscience, and selfless service.

The Institutes of Sathya Sai Education take a role of supporting the Sathya Sai Schools by providing training and guidance. In many cases, the national or local Sathya Sai International Organisation supports the Sathya Sai Schools by inspiring service volunteers to help with infrastructure projects of school grounds and financial resources on which the school depends.

### **Accreditation Rationale and Visits**

Socrates is said to have declared, "The unexamined life is not worth living". Swami has said: a greater proportion of spiritual progress is due to self-enquiry rather than

devotion. Accreditation involves self-enquiry by a school community against a set of standards, the results of which are affirmed by an accrediting organisation. The dual process of school self-enquiry affirmed by others provides the catalyst for increased effectiveness in teaching and learning.

Sathya Sai Schools following the principles of education given by Bhagavan Baba guide students toward excellence in both secular academics and in spiritual human values. Counting applies to things in the outer world, not in the inner world. Accreditation for Sathya Sai Schools includes both objective and subjective standards. How well students achieve academically compared to local schools can be measured by test results. How effectively values are emerging into thought, word, deed in students is assessed through interviews with parents, teachers and students and others in the school community. Standards are contained in the Prasanthi Council / Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation Guidelines for Sathya Sai Schools (Guidelines) approved by Swami in 2007. The Guidelines take into account differences in culture, language and ethnicities across all Sathya Sai Schools for the objective standards, and the oneness of human values for subjective standards.

The Guidelines contain objective standards such as employing properly qualified and licensed teachers; a two-tier governance system, one tier for day-to-day operations including the principal or head teacher, and another tier for strategic planning and financial considerations; presence of an Education Trust to hold assets; comparison of student achievement to other schools in state and local tests; a working relationship with country SSIO. Subjective standards include presence of



an environment of love, students' putting values into practice, showing awareness of the importance of spirituality in daily life and following one's conscience. These are daily life indicators of the emergence of unseen human values and spirituality within the student, manifesting the unmanifest.

### Accreditation Process and Visits

In the 2016-17 accreditation cycle, each Sathya Sai School was asked to undergo a Self Review to consider how well the School implements objective and subjective standards in the Guidelines which embody principles of education given by Sathya



*Interview with educators, Sathya Sai School, Newcastle, South Africa.*

Sai Baba. Beginning 2016, the Sathya Sai Schools are engaged in a two-step process of Self Review and Accreditation which involves a visit to each school. To date, six schools in Africa and Singapore have been visited by a small team of Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) Education Committee members since June 2017.

### Sathya Sai Schools and their Culture

*"In about 25 to 30 years' time, the entire world will become one. There will be only one caste, one religion, and one God."* Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference, Prasanthi Nilayam, 20th July 2008.

One of the distinguishing features of a Sathya Sai School is its environment of love.

In accreditation visits, the team was struck by the palpable, pervading presence of love on the school campuses, akin to the feeling of love in Prasanthi Nilayam. Parents, teachers and students remarked similarly from their own frame of reference on the atmosphere. The team wondered, could it be in around 20 years the predominant feeling experienced by more and more people around the world will be like the environment of love widely felt by visitors to Sathya Sai School campuses?

### Educare and Integral Education

The focus of the 2016-17 cycle of accreditation of Sathya Sai Schools is identifying and assessing the conditions, dynamics and effectiveness in implementing educare and integral education which leads to an environment of love. Swami explained the educare process as bringing forth that which is unseen within. At times He said: educare brings out the human values, the Atma and focuses on spirituality of the human being. Integral education integrates traditional academic secular knowledge with human values and spirituality in the student. As Swami described, true education is like a bird with two wings, secular and spiritual, flying towards excellence in both. He also described integral education as "skilling your knowledge" with spiritual understanding. The teacher proficient in academics and sincerely practising human values based on awareness of his/her own reality is a tangible example for students to practise human values fostering excellence in secular subjects.

### Collaborative Approach to Accreditation

Outside India, Sathya Sai Schools have developed around the world beginning in 1991. Since their inception, they are operated and funded in every respect by



country SSIOs, local school community and donors. Members of school Governing Boards, Education Trusts, national SSIO, affiliated Institutes of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE), and parent groups consider themselves stewards of these schools. They are operating the schools primarily with local resources, effort and commitment.

Recognising the 15+ year history of Sathya Sai Schools operating on their own, the SSIO Education Committee is a source, not a force in the accreditation process. Communication is transparent and informs everyone in the process. Tasks to improve or enhance school operations are developed collaboratively between school, Governing Board, ISSE, and SSIO leaders and the accreditation team. An environment of trust is the goal for establishing a long-term relationship in working towards school excellence.

Accreditation involves continual enhancement of the quality of the education programme through working on strengthening tasks identified collaboratively in the self-review/accreditation process. Accreditation will increase confidence in the school community's effectiveness in fostering academic excellence through values emerging into thought, word and deed of students. Sathya Sai Schools are reporting stories of transformation of students, families and teachers which are spreading into the surrounding regions resulting in local government schools seeking to be trained in SSEHV. Accreditation validates the work of Sathya Sai Schools and advances the spread of Swami's mission through Sai education.

**– Dr. Tom Scovill is a Member of the Education Committee, Sathya Sai International Organisation.**

*...continued from page 61*

the other Bal Vikas groups by enhancing their self-concept and self-confidence.

One of the other differences between groups which were statistically significant was in the choice of Bal Vikas-related values amongst the five groups. The urban Gurus were the only group that ranked intrapersonal Bal Vikas values of inner harmony, salvation, peace and wisdom, as being of greater importance in their lives. The other groups chose truthfulness, true friendship, equality and other Bal Vikas values as possessing greater importance to them.

Even though there are statistically insignificant differences in the preference of Bal Vikas-related values, all the respondents

chose Bal Vikas values as being important to their lives than the other societal values like a comfortable life, an exciting life, being ambitious, pleasure seeking and some others.

To conclude, this study indicates that Bal Vikas education does have a very positive impact on the character development of children.

**– The author, a clinical psychologist by profession, currently resides in the USA and is the Coordinator for the National Online SSE (Bal Vikas) programme. She grew up in the Sai-fold in Mumbai, where she has been a Bal Vikas Guru and an EHV trainer since the programme's inception.**



## *Effulgence of Divine Glory*

# THE BIRTHDAY OF THE LORD

**P**RANAMS AT THE LOTUS FEET. Today is Swami's Birthday. I wonder if we realise how unusual this particular day is. We all have very happy



and pleasant memories of Swami, all those who have been to see Him. I, too, have happy memories of Swami. I find myself deeply loving purity, truth and wisdom. Having known Swami for some twenty years now, I find those qualities – as well as all the other admirable qualities you can think of – demonstrated in Swami's daily life, day after day. He represents purity, truth, wisdom, auspiciousness and prosperity.

As His devotees, we are largely unconscious of our status. But we are really, if we can say so without any hint of ego, a group of very important people. We are holy people, although we do not realise it. Swami told me that the world is in a terrible condition, and were it not for the changed minds of His devotees – which He inspires – the world would be in a disastrous, catastrophic state.

He is in our hearts, and He is able to work through our minds from the inside.

Some of the memories I have of Swami are especially meaningful to me, and I continually reminisce about them. One happened many, many years ago, may be nineteen years ago, the second year I came to Prasanthi Nilayam. At that time, there were no new buildings on the campus at all. Just a few old buildings and the Mandir. We were given one of those buildings within sight of Swami's windows, His upstairs room in the Mandir. That was before the Mandir was extended and made larger. There were not more than four or five foreigners at the Ashram. I would be sitting on the verandah looking at

His window and Swami would come to His window and beckon to me, "Come on up, Hislop". Then I could go upstairs and have a chat with Him and ask all the questions I wanted.

Once I asked Him, "Swami, I hear stories from people all over the world who say they see You. They see You walking beside them, or they wake up in the morning and there You are standing in the room, or may be they find something left by You on their dresser. How can that be, Swami? Are there several Avatars"? He said, "No, there is just one Avatar. The sun has many different rays going out in all directions, but it is all from one sun. Similarly, there is only one Avatar".

– Excerpted from "Seeking Divinity" by Dr. John S. Hislop.

# FULFILLING THE DIVINE MISSION TO FOSTER VEDAS AND THE INTERNATIONAL VEDA CONFERENCE

Subramanyam Gorti

**T** HE AVATAR OF THE AGE Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba descended on earth and declared in His own words, “My love towards the



Vedas is equalled only by My love towards humanity”. This explicitly reveals His Divine

Mission to revive the Vedas and Vedic Dharma and restore them to their pristine glory. Thus, Veda Poshana, Vidwath Poshana (fostering the Vedas and Vedic Scholars) is an important aspect of His Avataric Mission.

In other words, He wanted to make sure that Vedas are learnt by all, so as to spread the vibrations of the Vedas and the fragrance of Sanathana Dharma among all the classes of people irrespective of caste, creed and religion as Vedas are universal. He exhorted one and all to protect the ancient wisdom and to preserve it, for, the injunctions given in the Vedas if followed by mankind will free them from all afflictions. It is His Divine Will to propagate the Vedas as part of His Mission.

## The Vedas are the Basis of Dharma

Quoting the Vedic dictum *Vedokhilo Dharmamoolam* (Veda is the root of Dharma), Bhagavan explained very beautifully as to why the revival of Vedic Dharma was necessary. He said, “Dharma is based upon Veda. If Dharma collapses, the universe may collapse. If the universe collapses, Dharma may collapse but the foundation that is Veda will remain intact. If, however, the very foundation that is Veda collapses, both Dharma and universe will collapse”. Veda is the source of Dharma, moral life and righteous conduct. If ‘Dharma’ is a mighty tree which is the metaphor for the entire creation of God, then the roots are the ‘Vedas’ which require constant nourishment to protect both Dharma and universe.



Bhagavan has brought the ancient and illuminating wisdom of the Vedic era back into our lives in a simple and lucid manner for our understanding. He said, “...Vedic literature is the most ancient in the world. It is a treasure house of wisdom. It has contributed to the all-round development of man. The Veda is the first-ever book in human history. It is the birthplace for human culture and the basis for all kinds of powers. All branches of learning have their origin in the Veda. All Dharmas and virtues have sprung from the Veda. The Veda is endless, unfathomable, indefinable, and blissful. The word Veda is derived from the Sanskrit root Vid, meaning knowledge or Jnana. Iswara Jnana (knowledge of the Lord) is Veda. Atma Jnana (knowledge of the Self) is Veda. Brahma Jnana (knowledge of the Supreme Absolute) is Veda. Advaita Jnana (non-dual knowledge) is Veda. Veda is Vijnana (knowledge par excellence). All these terms are synonyms for Self-knowledge or Atmajnana.

There are two important facets of the Vedas to reap their benefits at the individual level as well as societal or global level. Regarding the benefits of the Vedas, Bhagavan said, “...Different sounds have varied effects on the human psyche. The Vedic hymns, when chanted correctly, create a higher vibration and resonate with higher visions and realisations that help in calming the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual planes of the chanter. Therefore, even if the meaning is partly assimilated, the sounds influence the manner we conduct ourselves and help in unifying the head, the heart and the hand or, the thought, word and deed. It also cleanses the environment of baser instincts and brings about transformation even among

the listeners leading to higher power and strength.

*Every being that lives in the world strives to possess what it desires and avoids what it dislikes. The Vedas have laid down what has to be done and what should not be done. When these prescriptions and prohibitions are followed, one can earn the good and avoid the evil since Vedas are concerned with both material and spiritual worlds and beyond. The Upanishads, which are termed as Vedanta or the concluding part of the Vedas, detail the method of achieving the Chaturvidha Purusharthas (fourfold objectives of life), namely, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha (righteousness, wealth, desire and liberation)...”.*

### **Revival and Fostering of Vedas**

While it is true that ultimately the goal of life has only to do with final Moksha (liberation), the others are virtually essential steps along the way. Recognising the suggestion to live “in” the world, while not being “of” the world, the Vedas seek to transmit to humanity, the secrets of a happy life here and liberation hereafter. They reveal the essence of the divine glory, as declared in Jnana Yoga of the Upanishads that the whole universe is the manifestation of God who resides in all beings.

In the Narayana Upanishad, it is mentioned *Nishkalo Niranjano Nirvikalpo... Shuddho Deva Eko Narayana* (God is blemishless, ever blissful, one without another or alternative, all-pervasive, pure and One). Thus, Narayana is one without a second. This blissful Supreme Being resides within, as the life principle in the form of Aum or primordial sound, an individual’s heart as well as in the heart of the universe. The interpretation of Narayana is that it is



a compound of Nara (human) and Ayana (eternal, without ending). Thus, Narayana is one without an end. That means God only can be Ananta or endless. Therefore, Narayana is universal. Like this, references of Siva (auspicious), Vishnu (all-pervasive), etc., that we come across in the Vedas can be correlated to the names of Jesus, Buddha, Allah or any name that man worships.

In line with Bhagavan's commandment, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation (SSSSO), India has taken the initiative to further the cause of the revival and propagation of the Vedas in His Divine Mission through a dedicated National Veda team which is deeply pursuing to propagate the Vedas. A large number of children, young men and women apart from adults take to learning Vedas which is gaining momentum across the length and breadth of the country. The online Veda tutorials have been instituted apart from classroom-based training at the Sai Centres, being imparted across the nation through a structured syllabus to ensure uniformity and quality. Aspirants from almost all the States of India derive the benefit of these tutorials to acquire Vedic knowledge.

To further boost this initiative with the objective of creating awareness among the masses about the importance of the Vedas, SSSSO India is organising a unique two-day International Veda Conference integrated with multifaith prayers and mass recitation of Vedas for unity and world peace on 20th and 21st November 2017 at Prasanthi Nilayam. The conference is intended to decode the ancient wisdom for its application in modern life from the scientific standpoint. The central theme of interfaith congregation is *Samasta Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu, Love All Serve All*, heralding the message that we are all one

world family (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*), to bring to the fore the underlying truth that Vedic knowledge is secular and not aligned to any religion, and Vedas are universal, and inclusive, and impart peace and unity. Using this platform, an Exhibition on Vedas will also be set up to bring out the message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the Vedas and their universality apart from the science behind Vedas as a key takeaway of the two-day mega event. It goes without saying that it is once in a lifetime opportunity to participate in such a unique programme. It is kept open to all with the only eligibility criterion of "interest" to be a part of it. That is all.

We are at the threshold of a critical juncture in human history. Undoubtedly, everything that Bhagavan said is the only panacea to overcome the adversities of life and protect the universe for a peaceful coexistence of all beings. We must nourish the roots of the mighty tree of Dharma which is based on the Vedas. Everybody in the organisation has a role to play in this Divine Mission. We all have to achieve this divine vision of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in all its pristine glory with resolute will and determined effort. Referring to Siva Sankalpa Upanishad, we all should attune ourselves to the Divine Will of Bhagavan to foster Vedas as Sadhana ...*Tan Asmakam Manah Sai Sankalpam Astu* that means, may our mind constantly focus on Sai Sankalpa (Will of Sai) of fostering the Vedas. Veda movement will surely be the biggest movement in the world by the time of Bhagavan's centenary celebrations in nine years time.

– The author is National Veda Coordinator, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, India.





Vedas are Universal, Let Us Preserve, Propagate,  
Proliferate to Protect the Planet

# 1ST INTERNATIONAL VEDA CONFERENCE

TO BE HELD AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM ON NOV. 20-21, 2017

*Chant Rudram and make your life bhadram (safe);  
why, let it become a Bhadrachalam,  
an unshakeable Mountain of Safety*

- BABA

On 20th November 2017 there will be mass recitation of Rudram and Mantra Pushpam by the chanters comprising Bal Vikas Children, Youth, Adults, Ladies from all around the world apart from India.

Visit our website [www.ssssindia.org](http://www.ssssindia.org) for registration.  
Dont miss this once in a lifetime opportunity to participate  
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On 1st January, 2009, Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust (SSSST) commenced operations with four divisions; the Bhakta Sahayak divisions (one in Prasanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi and another in Brindavan, Bangalore), the Publications division, and the Media division.

### The Publications Division (SSSSTPD) caters to:

- 1) The publication and distribution of spiritual, religious, and educational Sai Literature and the production and distribution of audio and visual multimedia, photographs, calendars, and diaries for the benefit of visiting pilgrims and devotees all over the world. All the literature and publications are based on the teachings, philosophy, message, and values of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.
- 2) The publication and distribution of Bhagawan Baba's monthly spiritual journal - Sanathana Sarathi - in English and Telugu languages. Since 2011, e-version of the magazine is also released simultaneously and is available in the popular Interactive PDF format on [www.sanathanasarathi.org](http://www.sanathanasarathi.org).
- 3) Maintaining a reporting channel [www.theprasanthireporter.org](http://www.theprasanthireporter.org), which covers all the major activities taking place in Prasanthi Nilayam, and publishing an e-newsletter 'Sai Spiritual Showers'- for free distribution.
- 4) Providing library and Reading room for visiting devotees, with a very large collection of books written by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and books on Bhagawan besides various spiritual and religious books.

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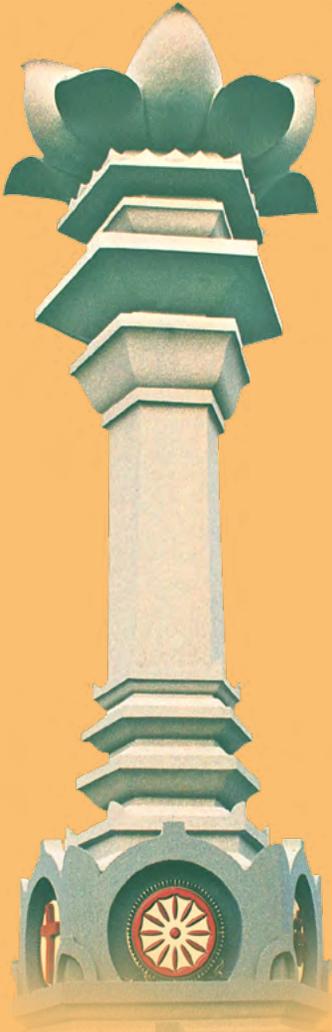
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## *True Objective of Education*

Mere acquisition of degrees should not be the objective of students. They should make proper use of the five elements. This is the true value-oriented education the world needs today. Values are for education, education is for life, life is for love, love is for man, man is for spirituality, spirituality is for the world and the world is for peace. So, one should travel from values to peace.

– *Baba*

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