

Chapter 8

ACHIEVEMENTS OF
SATHYA SAI EDUCATION



Paraguay

ACHIEVEMENTS OF SATHYA SAI EDUCATION

Man must either know the Supreme Truth of the One Being behind all becoming, or at least know the practical Truth of Love and Brotherhood. These two points are the limits which education must ever keep in mind, the starting point and the goal.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sri Sathya Sai Baba says that though acquisition of worldly knowledge is important and beneficial to children growing up, they also need to be assisted in the development of good character traits by bringing out the five human values that are considered an expression of spirituality. The assertion that the human purpose is fulfilled through spirituality and that character development should be a key component in education practices carries profound implications for society. His teachings in this regard have led to the development of a range of formal, non-formal, and informal educational programmes, which are collectively referred to as Sathya Sai Education. The programmes have been described in detail in earlier chapters.

From its early beginnings in India in the late 1960s, Sathya Sai Education has

spread to all parts of the world and is practiced by educationists in diverse cultural settings. This chapter presents results of a comprehensive assessment of programme achievements conducted by the Education Committee of Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation in 2006. Data were collected from all 95 countries where Sathya Sai Educational Programmes are currently implemented. Included are research reports from the Institutes of Sathya Sai Education, as well as the results of independent appraisals of Sathya Sai Schools made by governmental education agencies and by universities. Additionally, the assessment has drawn upon the vast wealth of anecdotal evidence that comes from students, ex-students, teachers, and parents who participated in these educational programmes.



Brazil



Mexico



Thai Drug Free March

FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The Sathya Sai Schools, Sathya Sai Colleges, the Institutes of Sathya Sai Education (ISSEs) and the Sri Sathya Sai University implement the Sathya Sai philosophy of education in formal academic settings. All these institutions have received high acclaims from national leaders, educational authorities, independent evaluators, the corporate sector, and international agencies such as the United Nations, for providing a working model of education that successfully combines spiritual and secular education, achieving both academic and character excellence in the students. The Sri Sathya Sai University in India has been referred to as the 'Crest Jewel' of the university education system by the highest national accreditation body in India. A full account of the University and its achievements is given in Chapter 5.

Sathya Sai Schools

Anecdotal evidence from Sathya Sai Schools in Australia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Zambia, South Africa, and Latin America has been used to profile a typical Sathya Sai School (see page 138).

Observational Research and Studies by Independent Evaluators

One of the earliest to be established outside India, the Sathya Sai School (with grades 1 to 12) in Ndola, Zambia was the first to systematically introduce SSEHV through a formal educational institution in Africa in 1992. In 1999, Dr. P.C. Manchishi, a Christian and an independent scholar of the School of Education, University of Zambia, was invited to conduct an independent evaluation of the School. The objective was to find out the impact of the programme on pupils, teachers, and parents and also to assess the suitability of SSEHV as an educational input for schools in Africa.

Dr. Manchishi observed the school's delivery of education over an extended period of time, and also conducted systematic interviews with pupils, teachers, parents, the Parent Teacher Association, and Education Ministry officials. His conclusions are given in the box on page 139.

"The Peer Team feels that this Institute (Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prasanthi Nilayam) stands out as a "crest jewel" in the university education system in the country and this model is worthy of emulation by the institutions of higher learning in the country and elsewhere, so that these benefits would be reaped fast and on the widest possible scale."

— From a report (2002) of the Peer Team of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, University Grants Commission, India



Australia

Sathya Sai School: A Typical Profile

The Sathya Sai School creates an ethos of academic and human excellence. The children experience five human values in every aspect of the school culture. The values are evident in the School in the emphasis on unity of faith, absence of harassment and bullying, healthy life style, and the vegetarian food in the canteen. Ceiling on desires programme; cultivating an active awareness of not wasting time, energy, food or money; and promoting selfless social service feature prominently in the school.

When children from many schools are gathered together, those from Sathya Sai Schools are identifiably different. They are more disciplined, gentle, friendly, and in general have better social skills. The parents are the first to notice their children's transformation. Their children become more respectful, assume greater responsibilities, go to bed and rise early, do not watch as much television, are more attentive and focused, more interested in their studies, and more diligent with the tasks assigned to them. Several parents have commented that their children have become aware of wastage and are conscious of the need to recycle toys, clothes, paper, and water. Often parents decide to reside close to a Sathya Sai School in order to enroll their children.

Experienced teachers who come to Sathya Sai Schools from government schools have noted that the children are eager to learn. They are keen to look after their school, attentive to cleanliness and tidiness, and their honesty is obvious. They take care not to damage books and computers. They are respectful towards the teachers. They trust the teacher more and are open in their communication, regarding the teacher as part of the family.

— Source: Anecdotal Evidence from Sathya Sai Schools around the world

Three things came up clearly in the findings, especially from the interviews – character excellence, academic excellence, and spiritual and moral excellence. The school at present recruits Grade 7 'failures', that is, pupils who fail to secure places in the public school system in grade 8...these pupils (at the time of recruitment) were bullies, truants, rebellious, and stubborn... Today, these pupils have completely changed for the better. They have become disciplined, and have developed respect for teachers and elders. They also offer voluntary service to the school... I noticed for example that vandalism is non-existent unlike in government schools. The school has for the past five years registered 100 per cent academic success at grades 9 and 12 levels. The school is non-denominational, it accepts all religions and forms of worship as being valid in essence. The integration of five human values in the curriculum has had a positive impact on the pupils, both spiritually and morally. SSEHV has also had an impact on the teachers. They have also changed for the better. They are more caring, punctual, friendly, and committed to duty. SSEHV has also had an impact on parents. One parent said that the type of education the school gives has really made a great impact on the whole household... All the people interviewed have agreed to the viewpoint that SSEHV should be extended to other schools in the country.
— Excerpts from the Report of Evaluation of the Sathya Sai School in Zambia,
Dr. P.C. Manchishi, School of Education, University of Zambia

H. Seshadri and S. Harihar (2004) report: In Bengkulu, Indonesia, the local communities observed that after a single year of study at the Sathya Sai School, the students displayed positive changes in behaviour, had increased respect for parents, higher self-confidence, deeper faith in their religion and joy in studying.

In her evaluation of the Sathya Sai Primary School, Murwillumbah, Australia, Kaye McNaught (2005) notes:

"There is abundant qualitative evidence that children at the Sathya Sai Primary School develop and increasingly demonstrate sound values-based behaviour. This is demonstrated by the self-evaluation sheets, school reports, parents' opinion service, and anecdotal comments by visitors (inspectors and teachers from other schools) and the general public."

Reports by School Inspectors and Other External Bodies

All Sathya Sai Schools follow the state curriculum and undertake regular state examinations administered to the students at different stages. Results of such assessments show that the Sathya Sai School standards are in the top range. For example, the Canadian Sathya Sai School in Toronto exceeded the provincial expectations in the EQAO in all the three areas of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. The School result was 100 per cent compared with the average of 61 to 64 per cent for the State of Ontario. Similar academic attainments have been reported by Sathya Sai Schools in Australia, India, Latin America, South Africa, Thailand, and Zambia.

Sathya Sai Schools undergo two distinct inspections. The first is by the Education Ministry

which assesses standards and assures compliance with the National Curriculum. The second is by an appropriate ISSE. Most Sathya Sai Schools have been given the maximum term of accreditation permissible by the Ministry of Education (for example, schools in Australia, Thailand, South Africa, and Zambia). Often the inspectors have made complimentary comments on the standard of academic work and have noted the excellent behaviour of the students.

The quote given at the bottom of this page, from the report of inspection of the Sathya Sai School in Leicester, England (November 23, 2004) by an Inspector of the Office of the Standards in Education of UK is typical.

A Supervisor of the Ministry of Education of Ecuador remarked after observing the Sathya Sai School in Guayaquil: "The air here inside feels so light! The children are so special! This is what I call a 'Real School'."

Dr Chris Sarra, Director of the Institute of Leadership in Indigenous Education, Australia, was the external inspector of the Sathya Sai School in Australia. He noted:

"The School feels like a nice place to be in and the students obviously enjoy it. The quality of

the visual art and craft is very high and this was evident from the classrooms and the School hall displays of art work."

Professor Kadar Asmal, Minister of Education in South Africa observed in 2005:

"As Government, we fully support the underlying principle on which Sathya Sai Schools operate, namely the human values-based education that prepares pupils for life, qualifying them as valuable assets to the society that they are entering. Few would argue with the fact that the values prioritised in the Sathya Sai School's curriculum, such as politeness, discipline, and respect provide a strong foundation for building good moral character in children. Like in Sathya Sai School, our mission is to regenerate the ethical and moral fibre of our society and to inform our young people into a spirit of nation building."

In 2005, in recognition of the outstanding commitment to quality and excellence of the Sathya Sai School in Zambia, the Business Initiative Directions (Paris) awarded to the School the "International Gold Star for Quality in the realm of Customer Satisfaction, Leadership, Innovation and Technology as established in the CC100TQ model."

This is a distinctive school that is successful in achieving its aims. It provides a secure spiritual environment in which pupils can learn and make good progress.....Pupil's personal development is a very strong feature of the school and it is conspicuously successful in promoting its philosophy. The SSEHV programme is central to the life of the school. It manifests itself through the daily devotions, with the teachers acting as good role models and constantly linking all aspects of the curriculum to the values of the SSEHV programme.....The SSEHV programme is instrumental in pupils developing confidence and in raising their self-esteem. Pupils are valued as responsible citizens. They learn to be confident through such roles as leading the singing at assemblies and helping younger pupils.

— Report by an inspector of OFSTED (UK), November 2004



Brazil

Some Sathya Sai Schools are acting as the nuclei for creating better understanding in communities divided by ethnic, political, and religious differences. For example in Fiji, while the division between the Pacific Islanders and the Fijians of Indian descent has been deep for generations, the children at the Sathya Sai School learn both Hindi and Fijian and the parents from both ethnic groups have reached levels of understanding never seen before. On August 2, 2002, the Prime Minister, Honourable Laisenia Qarase, while speaking in the Parliament referred to the students of the Sathya Sai School in Fiji and said, "It is these young people who are pointing to the right way for us all. They lead by example."

In the Kisaju Sathya Sai School in Kenya, the local Imams, suspicious of the "free education" provided by this boarding school, objected to their children praying with children from other religions. The Imams were invited to hold prayers in the School. Now the Muslims have

become more accepting of the prayers of other religions. Similar experiences are reported from some of the Latin American countries where Catholic nuns have run SSEHV in Catholic Schools and convinced Mother Superior and the Bishops that they do not see conflict between the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and Jesus Christ.

Institutes of Sathya Sai Education

Students who participate in the Diploma and other programme of the ISSEs regularly report amazing transformations in themselves. Jumsai (2003) has given an excellent account of such transformations. The statement made by a student from Sweden is given in the following page.

The quality of programmes in some ISSEs has been recognised by the local universities as at par with their own standards for post-graduate

I got motivation and inspiration to go on with my studies to become a teacher. Prior to my stay in Lobpuri I felt that the education system was dry and solely academic. I had not seen the spiritual part of life being practiced and felt in the educational field before I came to the Sathya Sai School. This absence of values had made men discouraged about getting a degree in teaching. The course in Human Values Education in Lobpuri changed that.

— A student from Sweden after attending a Diploma Course in ISSE-Thailand

courses. For example, the Diploma and the Advanced Diploma of ISSE in Australia and the Philippines are accepted for transfer of credits at postgraduate degree level in universities.

Independent Evaluation by the United Nations

Since 2001, the Institute of Sathya Sai Education in Africa (ISSE-Africa) has been assisting the

United Nations (UN-HABITAT) in implementing a Human Values-based Water Education Programme in Africa. The programme covered six African countries in the first phase and was implemented in partnership with the ministries of education in these countries. Details of this programme are given in Chapter 7. An independent evaluation of the Phase I of the programme conducted by the United Nations in late 2004 reports as follows:

Indeed the evaluator believes the Value-based Water Education Programme (VBWE) to be a necessary one because of the breakdown of traditional behaviour and erosion of values over much of Africa and because of the seriousness of the water crisis. Nor, as has been pointed out by many, are human values foreign to most African countries. In fact they are inherent in the African tradition. And when confronted with their existence and significance most stakeholders readily agree that their adoption is a necessary condition for a return to responsible behaviour on the part of all in society.

The project has clearly captured the imagination not only of those participating in Phase 1 itself but also of those cities and countries that have since been informed about its inception and progress. In this context, note should be taken of the great interest shown by countries in other regions of the world. The evaluator was fortunate in being able to attend the recent SEAMEO-UNESCO Education Congress in Bangkok. At this Congress one of the topics was VBWE including a session entitled "Africa-Asia Meet Forum" where African delegates were able to share experiences with their fellow delegates from Asian countries. The resultant discussion testified to the intention of such countries (and others) to place VBWE as a central plank in their future educational and water and sanitation activities.

— From the Evaluation Report

by Prof. Norman Clarke, Independent Evaluator, United Nations, Sept. 2004

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

If a question is put, what is education? People say, it is the acquisition of knowledge. But it is not merely acquisition of knowledge; it must be in action. What is the end of education? Character is the end of education. What is the essence of education? Concentration is the essence of education. What is the aim of education? The aim of education is not only cultivating human qualities, but attaining divinity. Education is meant for life, not for living.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Observational research from a variety of sources indicates that children become more open and confident, and able to share their feelings after they join Bal Vikas/Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) or SSEHV classes. Their attitudes and behaviour improve as found in the following research data gathered from a survey conducted through questionnaires in a sample of 65 former SSE students (Paramsothi, 2006). The researcher observed:

"The vast majority of children attended SSE classes because they found the lessons interesting, and they seldom missed a class. They found the course content relevant, and that the teachers enhanced their motivation and were ever ready to help them. SSE equipped them to deal with life challenges in later life, and they would recommend the programme to others. Further, the vast majority of children with these views noted that SSE had motivated them to engage in community service activities."

The researcher concluded that SSE develops better capacities in the children to:

- face difficult situations and deal with them better and positively
- put to use lessons they had learnt when struggling with dilemmas
- become more responsible, and help others
- develop strong faith in God
- become better persons through following Sathya Sai Baba's teachings

Similar studies conducted in the UK show that where a more structured SSE programme is in place, the level of benefits derived by the children is notably high. Some of the teaching methods used have contributed toward academic development and an increase in self-confidence and self-reliance. SSE programmes have strengthened the commitment of teachers and parents to live the five human values in daily life. Parents and teachers are aware of the need to cultivate harmony of head, heart, and hand (3HV) for their own spiritual progress.



Ecuador



Chile

Teachers have reported the personal benefits gained from teaching the SSE programme. They see it as an important opportunity for personal spiritual growth, as well as an opportunity for serving the community. Many of the ex-SSE children have completed full-time education and are now working in various fields, such as medical, accountancy, engineering, public relations, teaching, marketing, and information technology.

Testimonials from Former SSE Students

Self-evaluative statements by former students of SSE and Bal Vikas programmes indicate that they are more tolerant, have greater ability to handle negative thoughts, and are more willing to serve others. The following statements are typical of the hundreds of such testimonies from students around the world.

Nine years of Bal Vikas course has influenced my thinking so that I could discriminate between good and bad in life. It was Bal Vikas, which prompted me to consider all patients as divine.
— Dr. Sumit Thakar, former Bal Vikas student from Andhra Pradesh, India

As I have matured, my perception of the benefits I derived from SSE have changed. I was initially unable to put the information received into my life because I lacked the awareness to live consciously.

In an increasingly heterogeneous world it is advantageous to understand other cultures. SSE has provided me with some of the skills to evolve my own paradigms. It has promoted an interest in the world, an understanding of other belief systems, and it has reduced my prejudice. The values espoused have provided me with the logic for my morality, identity and sense of self... SSE has shown me how much of the content of religions is similar.
— An ex-SSE student, Australia

My brother and sister and I learned to discriminate between what was not good and what was good for us. When our father had to sell the TV to put food on the table, we discovered that we had more time to study. When, about a year later our family finances were better, father offered to buy us another TV. We told him it would interfere with our studies, and that we didn't want it. Today I am a doctor, my brother is a civil engineer, and my sister is an architect. Without Bal Vikas we would still be in the slums watching TV.
— M. Hernandez, El Salvador

People will ask, what is Sri Sathya Sai Baba's greatest miracle? For me, the greatest miracle of Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the transformation of the heart. My transformation began at the age of nine thanks to the Sai Spiritual Education programme.
— Shitu Chudasama, National Youth Coordinator, United Kingdom

Impact of SSE and SSEHV on the Teachers

SSEHV proves effective when presented with warmth and sincerity, and with an understanding of the emotional and spiritual aspects of the programme. The programme takes little time to connect with the target audience, and frequently there is enormously positive response when presenting the programme to newcomers. While dedicated and consistent effort on the part of the teachers is required, the positive results obtained appear to more than justify the time and effort actually expended. To witness the results achieved by volunteers has often proved to be more convincing evidence to professional teachers of the benefits of SSEHV than any academic treatise on the programme might provide. It often motivates professional teachers to investigate further and adopt SSEHV themselves.

- Research (Marantz, 1991) conducted in a variety of public schools and settings in the

U.S.A. - in New York, Chicago, and in San Diego involving fourteen schools, sixty teachers, and 1,500 students from a variety of backgrounds, demonstrated that SSEHV could be integrated and implemented in formal academic settings in public (government) schools. Teachers and administrators found the SSEHV model of integrating human values and character development to be of exceptional value.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba always emphasizes that the teachers need to be exemplars and to demonstrate by their own behaviour that they think what they say, and they do what they teach. The Sri Sathya Sai Organisation encourages that the teachers not only receive high quality standardised training, but they also implement the human values into their own lives. Accordingly, teachers themselves gain great spiritual benefit by their participation in the programme. Below are some testimonies from teachers.

...It was not until I was introduced to this programme that I overcame all the problems that I had. The SSEHV programme helped me grow into a hard-working and happy young gentleman. This programme keeps reminding me to be a model to the upcoming young lights of this continent. It has also helped me to know the importance of this continent, Africa, the beauty of our skin and our culture.

— I. Sitali, Teacher, Zambia

"The effect is unity. It pulls us together, like a family."

"I am more aware of being a positive role model because of these lessons."

"I'm learning with it as much as the children."

"These ideas will take them through life."

"Something wakes up inside."

— Teachers' Comments, Clissold and Fairfield Public Elementary Schools, Chicago, Illinois, USA

My greatest insight was the understanding of the value of teachers and the great opportunities teachers have to make a difference.... The knowledge that I gained helped me to develop myself as a better person as I really started understanding the importance of first "being" and then teaching. It instilled in me the confidence, motivation, and perseverance to do anything.

— Kirti Singh, Teacher, Australia

Becoming conscious of Swami's omnipresent love has given me confidence for new challenges in my life. I was a Bal Vikas student, and now I am a Bal Vikas teacher.

— F. Sosa, SSE Teacher, Latin America

There is a saying "Life is a circus - you never know when it will turn upside down." Well it not only turned us upside down, it shook us all around as well. Amazingly, this is when the values blossomed from my children. From leading a life of luxury they faced hardship with absolute dignity and taught me the meaning of equilibrium. Patience, love, understanding, compassion were no longer just words but actions that helped us face many challenges we had to face.

— A Parent of SSE pupils in South Africa

The Sri Sathya Sai Educare programme must be implemented in the very fundamentals of the education policy of the country.

— Atal Bihari Vajpayee, former Prime Minister of India

Impact of SSE and SSEHV on Parents of the Students

There are many indications that the positive impact these programmes have on students often transfers to their parents. The perception by parents that favourable changes are taking place in their children frequently results in a positive change in relationships at home. Many parents report that their children have become more respectful, more appreciative, less wasteful, and more inclined to take responsibility for themselves and their home. They also watch less TV and use softer speech. Noticing these changes, the parents tend to develop a more positive regard for their children. Jumsai (2003) reports that parents become more loving, help their children with their homework, begin to interact with the teachers, incorporate human values into their own life, and improve their social behaviour.

Impact of Sathya Sai Parenting Programme on Parents

There are several dedicated Sathya Sai parenting resources (Dhall and Dhall 1999, 1999a, 1999b; Bruce, 2001; Jareonsettasin, 1998). One of these resources has been made into a structured programme for parents (Dhall and Dhall, 1999) that has been in use in many countries now for several years. It is currently being formally evaluated for its effectiveness through research.

Research findings on the Sathya Sai Parenting programmes (Bilimoria, 2006) indicate a highly significant positive and lasting effect on the family health and attitudes in parents who attended the programme. This is especially evident when the programme is delivered by skilled facilitators and the initial programme is followed up with subsequent workshops. There are many stories and anecdotes of family reconciliations - between the spouses and between alienated youth and the parents. There are even anecdotes of recovery from addictions after attending a SSEHV programme for the parents as illustrated by the following example from Mexico:

In a correctional institute for minors in Monterrey, Mexico, devotees started giving human values classes, once a week, to the inmates who are children from 12 years to 17 years of age. Then they had the idea to give the Sai Parenting Programme to the parents of the inmates. The results were amazing. When one parent started to open up and talk of all his problems, others joined in, and they found they were all facing the same types of problems which they did not want their children to repeat. The relationship between parents and children improved significantly. The governor of the State of Monterrey sent a letter of appreciation and a certificate of commendation to the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation for this outstanding contribution to the society.

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