



# Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas: Nurturing Young Minds Since 50 Years

## | Sri Sathya Sai Philosophy Of Education

Sri Sathya Sai Baba's educational philosophy is a reflection of his philosophy of life. Its depth, range and comprehensiveness, integrating theories of naturalism, idealism and pragmatism, fostering rapport between science and spirituality, mind & heart, knowledge & wisdom, individual and society, encompassing the entire life span from childhood to adulthood, is indeed holistic. We can perceive in it a unique contribution of an incisive intellect, a pragmatic thinker, dynamic visionary, a Divine being with limitless love for mankind and who, through the processes of education, would like men and women to realise themselves and manifest their inherent Divinity.

Rooted in the ancient education system of India and tempered suitably to be adapted to modern day requirements, the Sri Sathya Sai Educational Philosophy offers a paradigm shift in current education thought. Challenging the current practice of education that focuses more on collection of facts and cramming of knowledge from the book to the head, Baba states:

**What is education? 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 of mind 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 a living.**

”  
- Baba

The philosophical cornerstone of the education system propounded by Baba is the concept of 'Educare'. He draws a distinction between what has traditionally been conceived to be 'education' and what he refers to as 'Educare'. He says that educationists who merely read books and pass on the contents to students are not fulfilling the real goals of education. Real education is that which promotes unity, equality and peaceful co-existence with fellow human beings.

It flows from the heart and is termed as 'Educare'. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word 'Education' has a double Latin root. The first is 'Educare', which means to foster, to nourish, to feed. The second is 'educere', which means to bring out from within, to develop from a latent or potential existence. Both these meanings are contained in the term 'Educare', which is the process of eliciting & rearing the human values latent in every individual.

Baba has said, **“The need of the hour is not a new social order, nor a new political or economic revolution; what we need today are men and women of character.”** Through his Educare programme, Baba has ushered in a silent revolution in the field of education that has the potential to shape the course of human history.

### Baba has given the Guiding Principles of Educare as:





## Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Programme: Genesis And Overview

During the formative period of the age group 6-15, it is easy to nurture and develop human values in children and very natural for them to practice human values in their everyday life. Through the women's wing (Mahila Vibhag) of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Baba started Bal Vihars (cultural centres for toddlers) in 1969. He laid down the purpose, scope, and goals of the Bal Vihar programme that emphasised the inculcation of morality, ethics and spirituality. These cultural centres aimed at complementing the school education system with valuable learnings based on the rich Indian culture and heritage through classes delivered every weekend. A national conference was organised in 1971 for volunteers who had been trained as teachers and administrators of the programme. At the conference, the name 'Bal Vikas' was chosen in order to better clarify the objectives of the programme. Bal Vikas is a Sanskrit term which means 'blossoming of the child'.

The aim of the programme is clearly defined as **Vikas or Blossoming in respect of :**



**Mano Vikas**  
(Mental Development or Blossoming of Mind)



**Deha Vikas**  
(Physical Development or Blossoming of Body)



**Buddhi Vikas**  
(Development or Blossoming of Intellect)



**Bhava Vikas**  
(Development or Blossoming of qualities of Heart)



**Atma Vikas**  
(Development or Blossoming of Spirit)

The Bal Vikas programme is based on two fundamental principles:

**Belief in God**

**Belief in the Divinity of every human being**

Baba stated the Vision for the Bal Vikas Movement:

**"The ideal of the Bal Vikas is to raise a generation of boys and girls who have a clean and clear conscience. The Bal Vikas is the primary basis of the great movement to restore Dharma (righteousness) in the world. Children have to be led into good ways of living, into simplicity, humility and discipline."**

## A Voluntary Movement For Revitalising Indian Ethos & Values



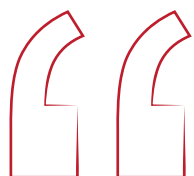
*“Children are the crops growing in the fields, to yield the harvest on which the nation has to sustain itself. They are the pillars on which the future of the nation is built. They are the roots of the national tree, which has to give the fruits of Work, Worship and Wisdom to the next generations.”*

*- Baba*

Like all initiatives of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, the Bal Vikas programme is a spiritual endeavour. It aims to expose young minds to the quintessential message of all world religions and prophets, saints and sages. The programme has been provided at no cost to the participating students consistently for the past 50 years.

Over the last five decades, the Bal Vikas programme has graduated from being an initiative to a mass movement for the resurgence of Indian ethos and values, which unfortunately have fast eroded despite the advancement of the education system. This movement has been possible because of the selfless service rendered by over 1,00,000 Bal Vikas Gurus through the Sathya Sai Organisations' platform. The Gurus, both professionals and homemakers, dedicate themselves to this noble cause without any reward or recognition, often sacrificing their own personal comforts only for their love towards their spiritual master and their commitment to societal wellbeing and nation building.

## Methodology: Five Teaching Techniques



*“Education must not only inform, it must also transform. The sages who laid down the goals of education have declared, ‘Saa Vidya Yaa Vimuktaye’. True education is that which helps to liberate humans - liberate them from greed, hatred, unrest, narrow loyalties and ego impulses. True education is that which fosters the sense of oneness, draws out one’s Divine qualities and promotes the blossoming of human personality.”*



Implementation of the Bal Vikas curriculum emphasises on using five teaching techniques in a systematic and integrated manner. The five universal human values of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Nonviolence are imbibed through lessons based on these techniques that can be adopted irrespective of any caste, creed, community or country. These are:



### Prayer:

Prayer is a way of communicating with God or connecting with the inner Self. Prayers help us remember the Truth behind our existence and cultivate closeness with God. It is a way of expressing 'Praise and Gratitude' to God.



Prayer cleanses the mind, gives spiritual vigour, promotes positive thought, provides a safe outlet for pent-up feelings & frustrations, and infuses strength and courage.





It helps develop concentration, strengthens memory, removes fear & anxiety, aids self-control and enhances a feeling of peace and wellbeing.



## Group Singing:

To sing in a group there must be coordination of melody, words and rhythm which creates a sense of balance and harmony within the personality. Group singing teaches children to co-operate with each other and work together as a team. Devotional singing cultivates love of God and promotes harmony of body, mind and spirit. It fills the mind with pure thoughts and even purifies the atmosphere.



## Story Telling:

Storytelling captures the imagination, engaging the heart & intellect, while providing models of human behaviour, faith and wisdom. Stories can act like a flash that illumines, shower that cools, joke that tickles, give a peep into epic grandeur, be a tale of the past, or act as a mirror of contemporary life. In ancient days before books and written material were so readily available, storytelling was the main method of teaching and character development. Stories based on scriptures, epics, lives of saints and Divine personalities, and holy books, promote noble thoughts and actions through inspiring role models.



They kindle love & compassion for all, develop a sense of fair play, fire the imagination, encourage the spirit of enquiry, stimulate constructive debate and informative discussions.



Group activities promote discipline, teach selflessness, cultivate a sense of responsibility, increase adaptability & social awareness, build confidence and empower children.



## Group Activity:

Humans are social beings who live in societies constantly interacting & interrelating with each other. In this context, for the holistic and wholesome development of society, it is important to get along with others and to respect the opinion of others. Group Activity and Teamwork help in developing this value right from childhood.



## Silent Sitting:

Silence is the art of listening. While Prayers are for 'telling' God what we want, Silent Sitting is for 'listening' to what God wants to 'tell us'. In the depths of silence, we can tap into the energy of love that vibrates throughout the cosmos. It is a precursor to meditation. It is a way of tuning with our inner conscience. Once children are in tune with their own conscience, they will be able to differentiate between right and wrong. They will develop their own inner discipline that will serve as a guide. The life & works of great scientists, inventors and artists, indicate that their moment of glory for genius often came in moments of quietness and contemplation.



Silent Sitting also develops intuitive power, reduces expression of negative tendencies, cultivates self-control, and improves memory and concentration.



“ ”

## Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Diploma Programme

*“Guide the children in the spiritual path, through simple and moral living. Install in the young minds, the importance of duty, devotion and discipline. Help them understand the five human values, so that they can practice these in their daily lives. 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. Education must aim at providing the child not livelihood, but, a life worth living. The promotion of human values must become an integral part of the educational process.”*

**– Baba**

A full-fledged curriculum of nine years covering ages 5 to 13, divided into three stages, is delivered through the Bal Vikas programme culminating in a Diploma. The key outcomes at each stage are:



### **Group I: 5 to 7 years (Learning through Doing and Making)**

- Learning Reverence for Parents and Remembrance of God during the day through Prayers
- Imbibing the values of 'Sharing and Caring'
- Following external disciplines of Social Behaviour
- Accepting God as the only True Friend



### **Group II: 8 to 10 years (Learning through Making and Thinking)**

- Imbibing teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and Bhaja Govindam in everyday life
- Understanding and appreciating significant features and practices of all Religions, and celebrations of all Festivals
- Recognizing the importance of Health and Hygiene
- Learning Yogasanas for balanced Life and Living
- Understanding the Importance of the 5Ds in daily life: Devotion, Discrimination, Discipline, Determination and Duty
- Recognizing the voice of Conscience within and learning to discriminate between right and wrong
- Accepting God as a mentor and Guru who is always watching and guiding
- Learning from the Life and Message of Sri Sathya Sai Baba



### **Group III: 11 to 13 years (Learning through Thinking and Creating)**

- Developing Social Consciousness through participation in Community Service
- Discharging Duties at School, Home and in Society
- Practicing 'Ceiling on Desires' as a conscious effort to reduce wastage of Food, Water, Energy, Money and Natural Resources as a solution to Global Warming/Climate Change
- Cultivating Patriotism and Love for Motherland
- Studying lives of spiritual icons, Swami Vivekananda and Adi Shankaracharya and applying their Philosophy in adolescence and youth





### **Group IV: 14 to 17 years** *(Learning through Planning and Achieving)*

- Seeking Human Excellence consistently
- Appreciating unity in diversity of customs and cultural practices of India
- Augmenting skills required to shape up personality through Thought, Breath and Time Management
- Learning skills like Public Speaking and Dramatics
- Conducting parent awareness programmes, cultural exhibitions, and sports meets/value games
- Gaining exposure to Disaster Management training and Information Technology tools
- Undertaking community rural service activities and Bal Vikas classes
- Developing better Problem Solving and Management/Leadership skills
- Imbibing the significance of Vedic Mahavakyas (Aphorisms)
- Learning to see Divinity in everyone/everything; and introspecting the essence and purpose of human life

## **Bal Vikas Gurus**

The Bal Vikas Gurus (teachers) are given intensive training so that they can serve as role models for inspiring the children. Baba emphasised that it is imperative that the Guru teaches this course with full faith and confidence. The ultimate goal is to help the child realise the inherent Divinity dwelling within each human being. Bal Vikas is also meant to be aimed at parents and teachers as much as at the children. With deeper understanding, a significant change comes about in the attitudes of the mothers, from 'my children' to 'our children'.

For each age group, from young children to teenage youth, the Bal Vikas Guru takes on a specific role linked to the psychological development of the child. For Group I, it is that of a mother, who encourages discipline and rewards good behaviour. In Group II, the teacher takes on the role of a teacher and enables the children to develop a sense of order and respect for rules. In Group III, the teacher becomes a friend helping the children to develop firm principles and become aware of their conscience and its dictates.

The Gurus are typically Baba's followers who also participate in other activities of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations. The fact that many of them are teachers in schools in their professional life is important in the sense that this has given the Bal Vikas Movement a wider scope, as the Gurus apply the Bal Vikas techniques to their normal teaching too.

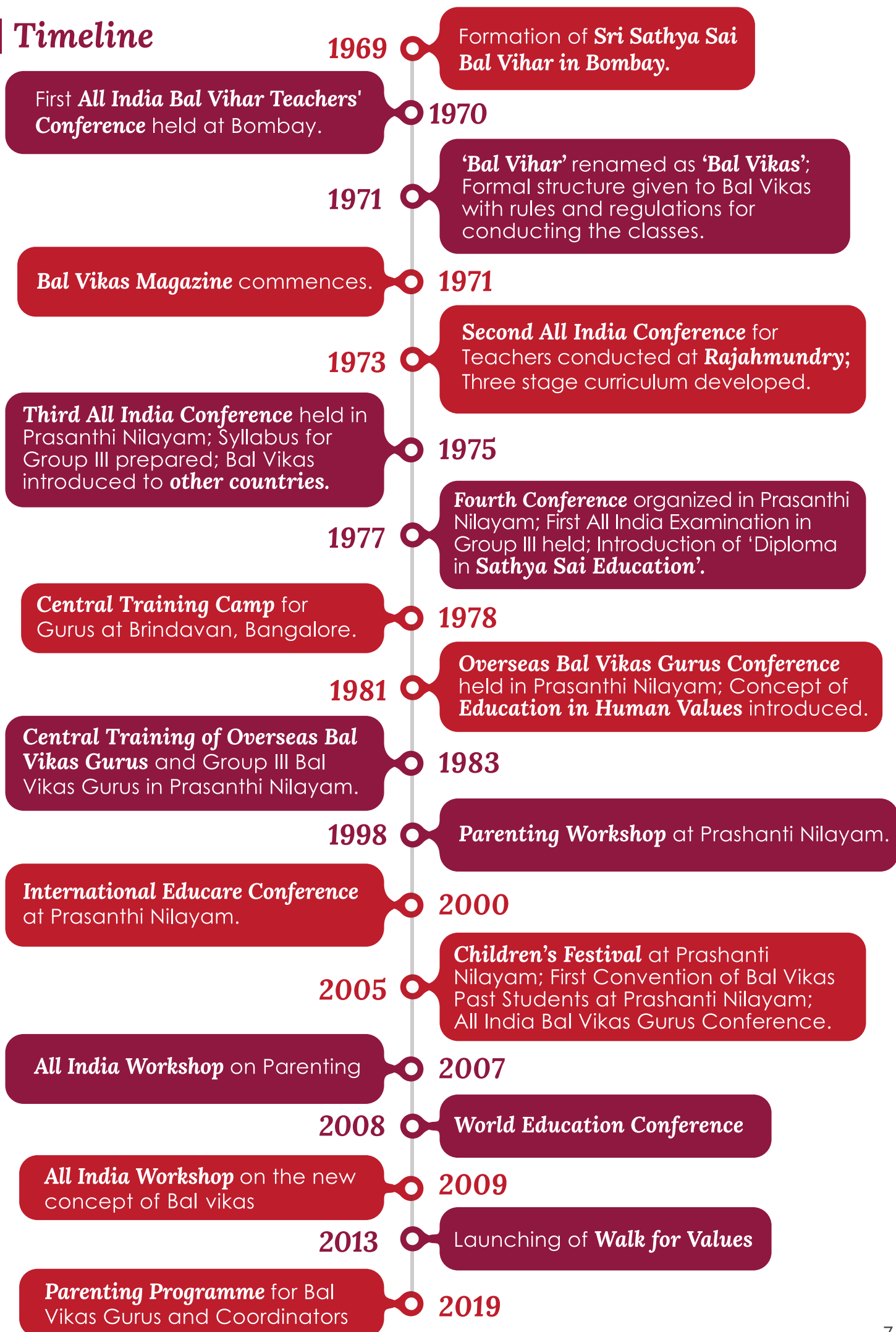
## **Scale Of The Bal Vikas Programme**

In the past five decades, the Bal Vikas programme has spread across 15,000 centres in 20 states pan-India. In these centres located in the cities as well as the rural hinterland, nearly 20,000 teachers are transforming the lives of children across all sections of the society.

**In the last 50 years, over 78,00,000 students enrolled for the Bal Vikas programme. Nearly 10,00,000 students received the Diploma in Sathya Sai Bal Vikas on completion of the integrated nine-year programme.**

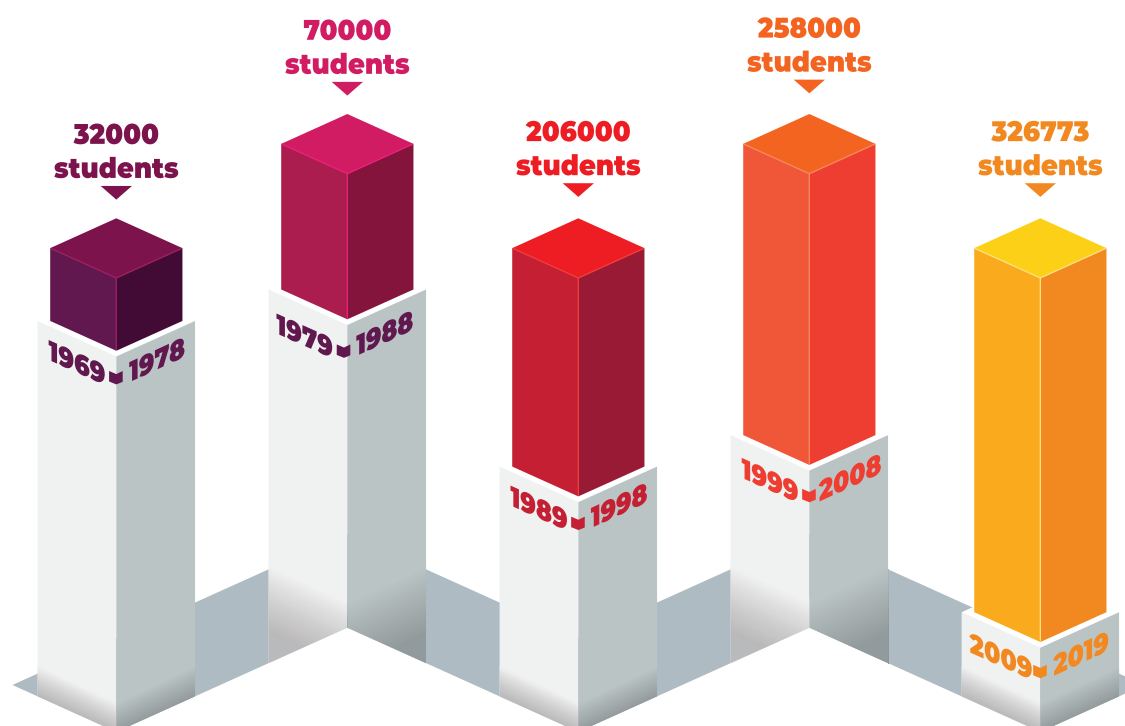


## | Timeline





## | Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas- Progress from 1969 to 2019



## | Impact Of Sathya Sai Bal Vikas

Several research studies have been conducted by national and international scholars over the last 40 years to study the process, outcomes and impact of the Bal Vikas programme. Three of them are listed here.

# 1

**Evaluation of Spiritual Training imparted through Bal Vikas Programme – Dr. T.R. Kulkarni and Villy Nanji, Department of Applied Psychology, University of Bombay, 1975**

Two studies were planned and carried out using modern psychological techniques of assessment and statistical tools of analysis. The data analysed was collected through interviews. The findings indicate that the child receiving Bal Vikas instruction manifests positive signs of improved personality, better developed moral and cultural values, a respectful attitude towards parents and a moral enlightened outlook on life. In short, a gain, which if retained and developed in the succeeding stages of the education programme, should result into full spiritual potential in human beings.

# 2

**Evaluation of Bal Vikas Centres in India and Impact of the Bal Vikas Programme on the Moral Judgement of Children – Department of Education Technology, Himachal Pradesh University, 1985**

Two groups of 100 children each were selected for the study from Bangalore and Hubli. The report stated, 'It is heartening to note that the expectations of parents are in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Bal Vikas. Value development has to be measured in terms of the level of moral judgement a child has reached. The present study was designed to compare Bal Vikas children with non-Bal Vikas children in respect to global moral judgement as well as some specific dimensions of moral judgement. The statistical comparison of the two global mean scores showed that the Bal Vikas group had scored significantly higher.'

## 3

***Impact of Bal Vikas Education on Character Development in Children in India - Faranak Baria Khandadia, Clinical Psychologist, USA, 2017***

The research had a sample of 26,374 from 14 Indian States representing the north, south, east and west regions. Of the 14 States, 7 States measured the urban population & 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 over 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 were currently in the Bal Vikas programme. The scale contained nine Bal Vikas-related terminal values & nine other societal terminal values; nine Bal Vikas-related instrumental values and nine other societal instrumental values.

***Statistical analysis of the data indicated that:***

All the five groups, Bal Vikas boys, girls, gurus, alumni and parents, ranked Bal Vikas-related terminal and instrumental values as having a greater importance in their lives than the other societal values like a comfortable life, an exciting life, being ambitious, pleasure seeking and some others.

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.

There was a closer proximity and agreement on Bal Vikas-related values amongst the Gurus and the Bal Vikas parents. This showed 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 & practising of values.

***In conclusion, the study indicated that Bal Vikas education does have a very positive impact on the character development of children.***

***Testimonials From Bal Vikas Alumni***

***“The link between education and employment which has remained from the days of Macaulay has to be broken. Education should be for life and not merely for earning a living.”***

***- Baba***

The philosophy of the Bal Vikas programme and the message of Baba that lays an emphasis on ‘being’ rather than just ‘knowing’, makes an indelible mark on the alumni. These ideals continue to manifest in their personal and professional life, decisions and priorities, for decades after they complete the nine-year programme. Here are some of the most outstanding alumni of the Bal Vikas programme who have made extraordinary contributions to their professions, while staying rooted to their personal value systems that were imbibed during their formative years as a Bal Vikas student.





**Justice Ram Subramaniam | Judge, Supreme Court of India | Year of completion: 1973 | Place: Chennai, Tamil Nadu**

The Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Movement is the only institution that makes good human beings. Much against the worldly pursuit of wealth, status and prosperity offered by the worldly education, Bal Vikas offers character and contentment. The twin, 'emotional and spiritual quotient', nurtured by Bal Vikas comes handy in the modern-day's stressful living. The pledge ordained in Bal Vikas is more constitutional than the pledge ordained under the Constitution of India. Bal Vikas certificates and diplomas are more valuable than the worldly certification being ordained by normal schools and colleges. I am a Bal Vikas student first, before being a judge.



**Aishwarya Rai Bacchan | Film Star; Padma Shri | Year of completion: 1988 | Place: Mumbai, Maharashtra**



I am blessed to have experienced the Divine blessings and the unconditional love of Bhagavan Baba. I am filled with gratitude to have had an opportunity to be a Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas student. It is not an experience that can be defined, nor does it require an explanation. At an early age in life, having had the opportunity to experience such wonderful guidance, to discover Nishkaam Karma, and to experience selfless love, is such a blessing. I hope to be a good alumnus and recreate and share the values that have been inculcated early in my life.



**Hari Ranjan Rao, IAS | Joint Secretary, Department of Telecommunications, Govt. of India  
Year of completion: 1989 | Place: Mandla, Madhya Pradesh**



I am always faced with situations where I have to make some difficult decisions. My Bal Vikas education has helped me have a sense of justice and fairness. Moreover, it helps me remain calm when the water seems to go over my head. Bal Vikas moulds one to love one and all and be compassionate. It has given me a sense of identity that truly accepts God and believes that spirituality helps to drive one forward towards the unknown with utmost faith.



**Dinanath Kholkar | Vice President and Global Head of Analytics and Insights, Tata Consultancy Services  
Year of completion: 1984 | Place: Mumbai, Maharashtra**



I tremendously value the cultural enrichment Bal Vikas did to me. My knowledge of Ramayan, Mahabharat, Bhagavad Gita and various Shlokas played a critical role in my upbringing and how I have been able to contribute back to the community. The biggest benefit I had was through the public speaking sessions. It catapulted my confidence significantly and helped me in the various roles I have played. The community initiatives I have been involved with over the last two decades are built on the foundation of empathy learnt during Bal Vikas.



**Dr. Ashish Pandey | Professor, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay  
Year of completion: 1991 | Place: Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh**



My teaching, research and organisation development work in the corporate and social sector is deeply inspired by Indian traditional wisdom of spirituality and human values. Bal Vikas is at the source of this inspiration. The elements of Bal Vikas like the spiritual connection with Bhagavan Baba, the systematic learnings from scriptures, life history of enlightened masters, spiritual practices, service activities, overview of major world religions, still give me joy and enrich my personal and professional life."



**Dr. Saikumar Mungamuru, IAS | Principal Secretary, Office of the Chief Minister, Government of Tamil Nadu  
Year of completion: 1982 | Place: Hyderabad, Telangana**



Bal Vikas lays the foundation for spiritual, moral, and social values in a young mind. It is a personality development saga with human values. It has inculcated in me the values of sanctity of life, service, compassion, and complete faith in God. These values always stand us in good stead in later part of our life in whichever sphere we are employed.



**Gopal Rao | Managing Director, Landmark Education | Year of completion: 1981 | Place: Mumbai, Maharashtra**



The most critical aspect I see that was contributed to my life through Bal Vikas was the installation of Faith and Values. When my Faith is strong, Divinity is a strong presence in my experience. Values means what I choose to respect, honour, and have regard for. So, over time, Values became the pillars on which I built my life. They began to shape who I am and what my life is dedicated for. Stronger the foundational pillars - mightier is the construction.



**Pankaj Dwivedi, IRS | Joint Director of Income Tax, Kolkata | Year of Completion: 1995 | Place: Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh**



The teachings of Bal Vikas helped me at every step of life in meeting the challenges, taking right decisions, and staying focused till the goal is reached. Be it my student life or the time when I was preparing for Civil Services or my career as a Civil Servant, the teachings of Bal Vikas have been the driving force. The golden rule of Surrender has helped in aiming high with a balanced mind without fearing the outcome.



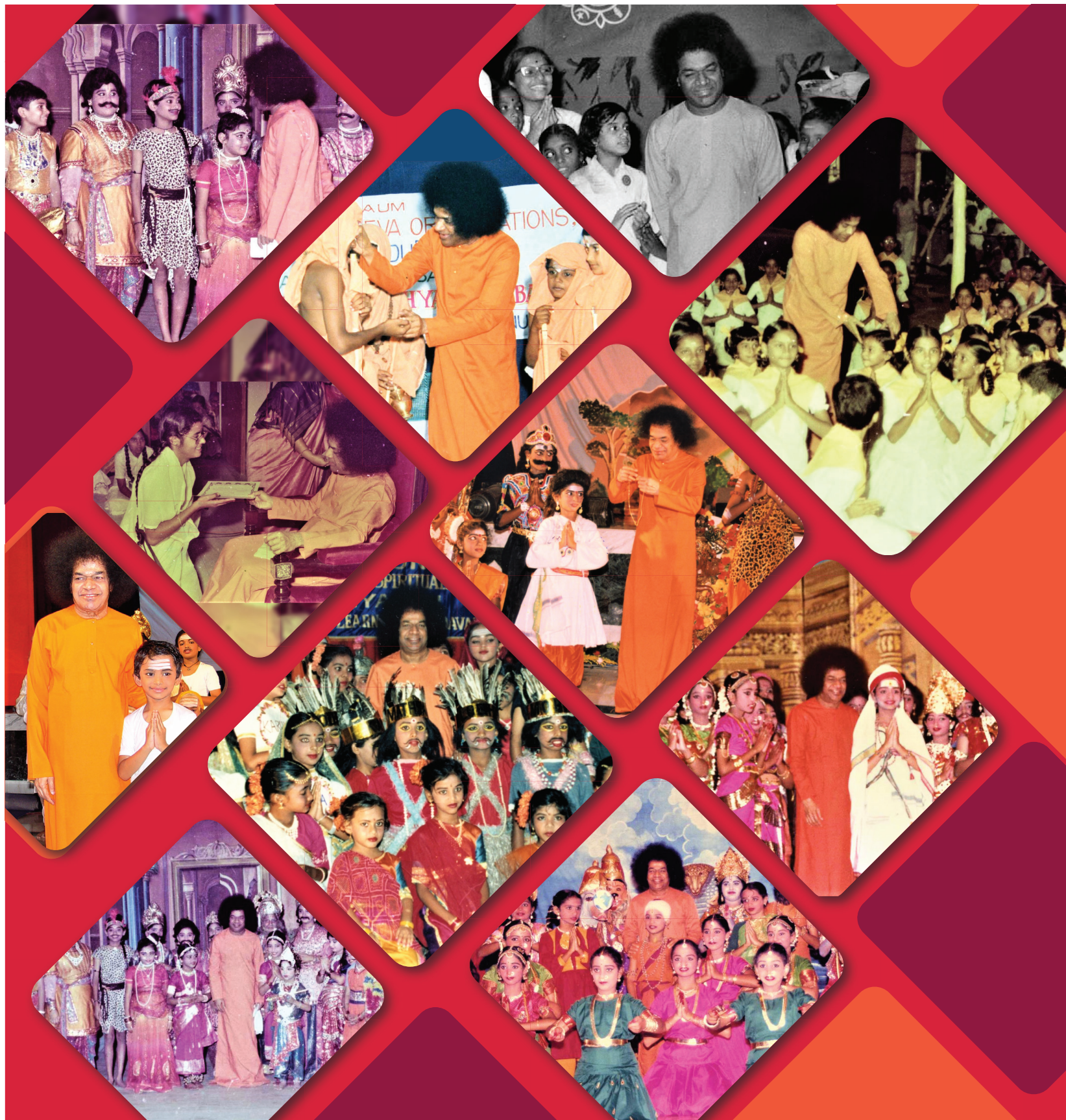
**Hariharan Pallavoor | Director, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India | Year of completion: 1989 | Place: Vadodara, Gujarat**



Bal Vikas has formed the foundation of my character and professional profile. Completing the full course helped me understand Indian Culture and Spirituality and thereby made me a better Indian. Bal Vikas has given me the moral and spiritual strength to face the vagaries of professional and personal life from a young age. I owe all my career success to Bal Vikas.







## Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations (India)

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