

# Chapter 1

THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF  
SATHYA SAI EDUCATION





*Sri Sathya Sai Baba with Bal Vikas children*

## THE BACKGROUND

Sathya Sai Education has its roots in the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the revered spiritual leader who resides in India, but who has followers in virtually every country of the world. Very early in his life, Sri Sathya Sai Baba declared that his mission was to impress upon mankind the crucial importance of leading moral lives by the practice of universal human values: *Sathya* (Truth); *Dharma* (Righteousness); *Shanthi* (Peace); *Prema* (Love); *Ahimsa* (Nonviolence). He says education should bring out human values. "To bring out" means to translate these values into action. Since then, he has remained a constant motivator and guide in the development of Sathya Sai Education.

The most distinguishing feature of this educational system is its philosophy that helping students develop a good character is equal in importance to fostering the development of skills that will help them to earn a good living. He says education is for life and not merely for eking out a livelihood. Revolutionary in concept and comprehensive

in scope, Sathya Sai educational principles have become a lifelong learning and transformation process for children, men, and women in all parts of the world. His message to the students is: "The end of Education is character and Education without character is useless."

Speaking at the Maharani's Women's College in Mysore in September 1963, Sri Sathya Sai Baba said:

"Education is not for mere living; it is for life, a fuller life, a more meaningful, and a more worthwhile life. There is no harm if it is also for a gainful employment; but the educated man must be aware that existence is not all, that gainful employment is not all. Again education is not for developing the faculty of argument, criticism, or winning a polemic victory over your opponents or exhibiting your mastery over language or logic. That study is best, which teaches you to conquer this cycle of birth and death and that will not be disturbed by the blessings or blows of fate. That study begins where this study of yours ends."



## EDUCARE: THE PHILOSOPHY OF SATHYA SAI EDUCATION

**The word Educare 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 and spiritual education are essential, without which the human life has no value.**

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The high levels of suffering and anxiety that exist worldwide show no signs of abating, despite continued scientific and technological progress. Persistent conflict and a steady decline in morality are but some of the factors threatening the very survival of humankind. Most serious thinkers would agree that a profound change is needed in the way human beings view themselves and one another. Such a spiritual awakening would require an educational model with the capacity to transform the minds and hearts of all people. The model that is now prevalent throughout the world would need to be expanded from its emphasis on the secular to encompass the spiritual.

The message to educationists is that they must not be content when students acquire knowledge and adaptive skills that can prepare them only for earning a living. Rather, they should be equally concerned that education helps students to realise their full human potential, which is the realisation of one's inherent divinity. Further, it is through this awakening of human consciousness that students become cultured and refined. Culture and refinement take them beyond the concerns for personal welfare, to the welfare of all members of society. Such individuals, who have recognised this prevailing unity within the diversity, would then be guided by their sense of right and wrong, good and bad, and by what is helpful rather than harmful to others.

It is in the above context that Sri Sathya Sai Baba proclaimed, "In the sphere of education, many revolutionary changes are needed." Secular and spiritual education should be merged into a philosophy and pedagogy of education with the power to better serve the needs of society. He has inspired and guided the development of an educational system that achieves this goal. The essential premise of the system is that the recognition of one's divine nature can be assisted and nurtured through all forms of educational activity and with students at every level of educational advancement. Sathya Sai Education thus entails a life-long process of transformation, and aims to strengthen the sacred connections between the individual, the family, the society, and all creation.

The philosophical cornerstone of Sathya Sai Education is the concept of Educare. Sri Sathya Sai Baba 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 goals of real education. Rather, "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'." Therefore, "Educare should be pursued along with what has usually been meant by education."

**The rainbow in the sky is formed by dispersion of one single pure white ray by raindrops. It symbolises multiplicity in nature caused by the prism of the mind. The diversity of the five elements in creation has its origin in the pure Divine Light within. Revelation of this Truth is Educare.**

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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*Sri Sathya Sai Baba at a Conference to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Bal Vikas Programme, Prasanthi Nilayam, 1983*

The guiding principles of the term Educare, as used by Sri Sathya Sai Baba, are: (a) divinity is love, and it is the undercurrent of all human values; (b) Educare elicits the inherent human values and translates them into action in daily life; (c) the purpose of education is for living a fully human and spiritual life; (d) the end of education is character and character manifests itself as the unity of thought, word, and deed.

The principles embodied in the concept of Educare apply to everyone. Sri Sathya Sai Baba

teaches that there are five human values which are innate in everyone, and that real or true education develops the full human potential. He says that everyone, young and old, should strive to develop a noble character. He regards as useless, educational systems that do not foster the development of good character traits. Character is reflected in one's words and overt behaviour. He urges everyone to refrain from acts that harm others, and to always speak in a pleasant manner: "you cannot always oblige, but you can always speak obligingly."

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**Good education is that which teaches the method of achieving world peace; that which destroys narrow-mindedness and promotes unity, equality, and peaceful co-existence among human beings.**

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

**Love in speech is Truth. Love in action is Right Conduct. Love in thought is Peace.  
Love in understanding is Nonviolence.**

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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## The Five Human Values

Human values make life worthwhile, noble, and excellent. Those qualities lie within the human personality, waiting to be drawn out and translated into action. Sathya Sai Education is based on five human values: Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love, and Nonviolence. Drawing out these five inherent human values develops good character. Sri Sathya Sai Baba regards the development of good character as the ultimate aim or end of education.

Sathya Sai Education utilises a pedagogy of integral education that elicits human values through all aspects of education, including: the process of learning and the process of teaching, while integrating them into the curriculum, and the educational environment. Most importantly, it does this through Love, which underpins all the other values.

The following are examples of commonly recognised character attributes of the five universal human values.

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<b>TRUTH</b>	<b>RIGHT CONDUCT</b>	<b>PEACE</b>	<b>LOVE</b>	<b>NONVIOLENCE</b>
Curiosity	Cleanliness	Calmness	Caring	Awareness of responsibility of citizenship
Discrimination	Courage	Concentration	Devotion	Compassion
Intuition	Determination	Endurance	Empathy	Consideration for others
Quest for knowledge	Duty	Purity	Forbearance	Harmlessness
Spirit of enquiry	Honesty	Self-discipline	Friendship	Helpfulness
Truthfulness	Service to others	Self-respect	Selflessness	Justice

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*Source: V.K. Gokak (1981) and others.*

**What exactly is Truth? Is it a description of a thing as one has seen without exaggeration and understatement? No. Or, the narration of the incident in the same words as one has heard it narrated? No. Truth elevates. It holds forth ideals. It inspires the individuals in the society. It is the light that illumines man's path to God.**

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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### **Truth**

A key component of Sathya Sai Education is the assertion that there is one ultimate and universal Truth, which may be expressed in a multitude of ways. It may be ascertained through many paths, names, and forms, but Truth is always only One. The different religions and spiritual orientations offer a rich variety of approaches, affording seekers the ability to choose on the basis of their inclination. For example, Truth can be approached through the path of wisdom (rational thought and knowledge). It can be approached through the path of intense devotion towards a symbol of divinity and it can be approached through selfless service.

Truth also finds expression in nature, art, music, poetry, ancient scriptures of all faiths, and through scientific discipline. Increasingly, various scientific disciplines are showing the compatibility of science and spirituality. Science has revealed that matter is nothing but energy and energy is matter. Sub-atomic particle physics and many of the common assumptions of spirituality point to the existence of a force that is constantly dissolving, preserving, and creating. Ultimately, however, Truth is found within. The pursuit of Truth requires discrimination, intuition, and introspection. The highest Truth is that it is changeless in the past, present and future.

### **Right Conduct**

The Right Conduct of which we speak is rooted in the Sanskrit word, Dharma. Though Dharma has no literal translation in English, it may be said to encompass the sum total of codes of ethics, ethical behaviour, and moral rectitude. The injunction, "do good, see good, and be good," captures the essence and intent of this value. It is rooted in attitudes and habits inculcated from early childhood that mature into respect and adherence to the duties and responsibilities that come with one's life circumstances.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba's 'Ceiling on Desires' programme, which is an important aspect of Sathya Sai Education, can easily be applied to the expression of Right Conduct. Placing a ceiling on one's desires involves the making of a conscious and sustained effort not to waste food, water, time, energy or money. Adopting such a code of conduct can go a long way towards reducing the tragic imbalance that exists between the 'haves and have-nots' of the world.

**Love alone can alleviate anxiety and all fear. Love is joy, love is power, love is light, love is God. Love helps you to see God in everyone, everyone as Divine.**

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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### **Peace**

Everyone desires and seeks Peace. Lasting Peace cannot be found in the material world. Peace requires the capacity for introspection and self-awareness. Self-awareness enables one to become mindful of his or her thoughts, words and deeds. When self-awareness becomes a habit, the individual begins to monitor and modify the habitual patterns of thought that obstruct the Peace within. True Peace requires inculcating equanimity, regardless of loss or gain, success or failure, pain or pleasure. Quieting the mind and opening the heart are essential for acquiring Peace. A quiet mind requires the application of discipline to take the time to look inward and experience the silence within.

### **Love**

The human value of Love may be best expressed as an energy permeating all life. That is, it is not an emotion or passionate feeling of desire and attachment. It refers to something much deeper, and more basic to human nature. It is totally unselfish and independent of whether there is reciprocity. All the great religions extol the importance of Love. It is kindness, caring, empathy, and compassion. Love is not passive, but active, and it grows, as Sri Sathya Sai Baba would say, “by giving and forgiving”.

### **Nonviolence**

The zenith of all human values is Nonviolence. Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, and Love merge in Nonviolence. Nonviolence is a state of mind that recognises the unity within the apparent diversity. It manifests as nonviolation of the laws of nature and respect for law and order. It calls for restraint from the doing of harm to others and to nature in general. Nonviolence is rooted in forbearance, morality, and integrity. When the ethics of Nonviolence is embraced as the means to world peace — there will be global harmony.

## **The Five Teaching Techniques**

A philosophy of education requires a pedagogy. In the case of Educare, this pedagogy needs to be experiential, transformational, and integral. In addition to an emphasis on the indispensable role of the teacher as exemplar, there are five recommended teaching techniques. Along with

other compatible teaching strategies, these five techniques provide the full range of learning activities and embrace body, mind, and spirit. They are: Storytelling, Prayer or Quotations, Silent Sitting or Tuning-in, Group Singing, and Group Activities.

**Students have to imbibe the nine important qualities, which are as precious as nine gems. These are: spirit of sacrifice, humility, the spirit of selfless service to society, friendliness, discipline, commitment to integrity, truth, love, nonviolence, and faith in God.**

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Storytelling captures the imagination, engaging the heart and intellect in a dynamic process of making meaning and relevancy in one's life, while providing models of human behaviour, faith, and wisdom. Prayer, or an inspirational quotation, elevates the mind and heart to the noblest ideal. Music and song bring joy and love, while Silent Sitting develops the capacity for concentration, intuition, creativity, and quietude. Group activities are designed to integrate the experience of the human values in thought, word, and deed.

Again, the teachers' role as an exemplar is crucial. Their personal immersion in the process of *Educare* enables them to be tuned in to the needs of their students, at all levels of development. As such, the teachers' choice of teaching strategies reflects both worldly and spiritual development. These five teaching techniques can form the core of a complete lesson or a curriculum focused on human values. Combined with other compatible teaching strategies, these techniques are easily integrated into any academic curriculum.

## **Sathya Sai Education as Life Transformation**

Learning does not begin with formal schooling and end some time after secondary school or university. Rather, it is taking place all of the time. Generally, children are provided with structured learning curriculums and environments. However as they grow into adults, they become self-learners. Through the process of *Educare*, self-learning transcends to self-transformation. Through studied introspection, self-awareness, and daily mindfulness, the intrinsic human values continue to become manifest.

Sathya Sai Education places great emphasis on self-discipline, self-sacrifice, and selfless service to the community as means to self-transformation. The adage, "*Help Ever, Hurt Never*," is fundamental to the Sathya Sai Service Organisation, and its logical extension into Sathya Sai Education, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels. Recognition of the inherent divinity in all human beings leads to the attitude that one is serving himself or herself when an act of service is performed.

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**This finished product, where personality is character and character is personality, this is integral education — Sathya Sai Education.**

— V.K. Gokak, 1981

## EARLY BEGINNINGS OF SATHYA SAI EDUCATION

**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.**

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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### Bal Vikas/Sai Spiritual Education (SSE)

The year was 1969 when, inspired by the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and under his guidance, a programme was established in India to teach children of Sathya Sai devotees about the country's ancient scriptures through story telling, enacting plays with morality themes, and through singing of devotional songs. The responsibility for implementing the programme, which was named as "Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vihar", was assigned to the Ladies Wing of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation. 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". Accordingly, rules, regulations, and a course syllabus were developed in order to enhance the blossoming of "truth, beauty, and goodness in the child".

By 1975 the number of trained Bal Vikas teachers in India had grown to 3,500, and the number of students to over 50,000. The programme was soon to be introduced to countries outside of India.

Early in the development of Bal Vikas, Sri Sathya Sai Baba emphasized, "The Bal Vikas course is designed to impart the values of

*Sanathana Dharma* (perennial, virtuous conduct). Wherever *Sathya* (Truth), *Dharma* (Right Conduct), *Shanti* (Peace) and *Prema* (Love) are emphasized, in whatever religion or language, by whichever teacher it may be, there we have *Sanathana Dharma*. It is imperative that the *Guru* (teacher) teaches this course with full faith and confidence."

In the very early 1970s a Bal Vikas programme was begun in the United Kingdom. In 1977, Sathya Sai devotees in the United States of America started a Bal Vikas Programme, modelled along the lines of the one in India, and published an international Bal Vikas Newsletter, The Om Publication.

In 1980, Sri Sathya Sai Baba introduced his 'Ceiling on Desires Programme' at the Third World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations held at Prasanthi Nilayam (Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh). He said children must be taught not to waste food, water, time, energy, or money. Sri Sathya Sai Baba explained that to do so is a form of violence against nature. Further, the only remedy to curb violence in the world is for individuals to minimise their desires. This implied that the Ceiling on Desires Programme should be adopted not only by children, but adults as well.

The Bal Vikas Programme began to spread rapidly to other countries around the world, and in 1981, a conference for overseas teachers



*Sri Sathya Sai Baba presenting awards to Bal Vikas children*

was held at Prasanthi Nilayam. It was here, during this conference, the concept of education in human values was introduced and Sri Sathya Sai Baba called for the development of objective assessment techniques. Subsequently, added emphasis was placed on the further development of Bal Vikas teacher training and curriculum. In 1983 the 15th Anniversary of Bal Vikas Celebration was held in Prasanthi Nilayam. This was attended by well over 20,000 children and teachers. In 1995 at the Sixth World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations, in order to emphasize the universality of the Bal Vikas Programme, it was decided to change the name to Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) in countries outside of India.

## Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV)

Bal Vikas or Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) classes are designed for children whose parents are devotees of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. These classes are conducted at local Sai Centres by devotees who have been trained by the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. The core content relates to the five universal human values of Truth, Right Action, Peace, Love, and Nonviolence. Sri Sathya Sai Baba has long held that these human values are valid and necessary for the education and schooling of all the children of the world.

In 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 secular programme (in the sense that it is equally respectful of all faiths and religions), which promotes character development, and seeks to instill in the students a respect and reverence for nature and for the rights of others. The SSEHV teacher is expected to earnestly practice the human values in her or his own life. The teacher, as an exemplar, encourages students to grow in self confidence and strive to realise their full potential as human beings.

As SSEHV continued to grow, it became necessary to increase the number of persons qualified to train SSEHV teachers. Accordingly, a "training of trainers" conference was held at Prasanthi Nilayam in 1984, attended by participants from 10 states in India. In 1985, Sri Sathya Sai National Board of Education was

established, and it conducted the first SSEHV workshop, attended by principals and headmasters from 300 schools in 16 states of India. By 1989, 35,000 primary school teachers had been trained and SSEHV had been extended to 3,000 schools in India, with most state governments formally adopting SSEHV for their school systems.

Throughout the 1980s, Sri Sathya Sai Baba continued to elaborate on his concept of ideal education for children. Addressing students in May 1985 he said, "The process of education involves the process of self-control and self-denial. No person is free to live as his impulses prod him.... Wealth, scholarship, power, and prestige are all despicable if they are not directed towards moral ends." In the same year, Sri Sathya Sai Baba started encouraging the integration of human values in all aspects of the school curriculum and in extra-curricular activities through SSEHV.

In 1981, the United Kingdom was one of the first countries outside of India to start an SSEHV programme. The concepts of SSEHV were implemented in London at Spencer Park School in the Borough of Wandsworth, South London, and the "Education in Human Values Society" was formed. This group was charged with the responsibility of raising awareness of members of the local Sri Sathya Sai Organisation about SSEHV, and training teachers for the Inner London Education Authority. In 1983, an Education in Human Values Foundation was established in the United States of America. The Foundation developed the first official SSEHV Curriculum and incorporated a lesson plan model. The curriculum was printed and published by the 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 throughout Europe began.

SSEHV conferences, symposia, and workshops were organised in many countries throughout the 1980s: London, UK (1981, 1983, 1985); Port Dickson, Malaysia; Jakarta, Indonesia (1984); Mexico City, Mexico (1984); Los Angeles, USA (1985); Lagos, Nigeria (1986); Ibadan, Nigeria (1987); Ndola, Zambia (1988); Harare, Zimbabwe (1989); El Salvador (1986); Accra, Ghana (1986 and 1987); Glasgow, Scotland (1987); and Bangkok, Thailand (1986 and 1987). Concurrently, SSEHV programmes were started in community settings and in a number of public and private schools in India, as well as in the UK, the USA, Malaysia, Australia, Africa, New Zealand, Latin America, Thailand, and Japan.

In most instances, these SSEHV programmes catered to students who were considered poorly motivated to put forth their best effort in school. The consistent impression of on-site observers was that implementing an SSEHV programme in these schools and community settings resulted in students developing more positive attitudes about themselves and the learning experience. For example, in the UK, the highly positive anecdotal reports and enthusiastic praise from parents, school officials, and community agency personnel, attracted the favourable notice of professional teachers and the Department of Education. In Thailand, the government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation to provide SSEHV training at all 36 of the country's Teacher Training Colleges, and several thousand Thai teachers participated in weekend workshops.

## Sathya Sai Schools and Colleges in India and other countries

The first educational institution to be established under the direct guidance of Sri Sathya Sai Baba was, for good reasons, not a school but a college for women. Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Women started functioning in Anantapur (a town in Andhra Pradesh, 60 miles from Prasanthi Nilayam) on 22 July 1968 and was later moved to its own premises to be inaugurated by the then President of India, Sri V. V. Giri, on 8 July 1971. The purpose of establishing this institution was expressed by Sri Sathya Baba in his inaugural speech (1968) in the following words:

*"This is a divine and blessed land whose tradition is based on spirituality. This college has to be an example. Motherhood aspect is very important. The influence of good or bad, which a mother exerts on her children is far-reaching. Good mothers are needed to rebuild India again."*

This was soon followed by Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Men at Brindavan, Whitefield (near Bangalore in the state of Karnataka), established in June 1969 (for more details the reader may refer to Historical Development of Sri Sathya Sai University in Chapter 5).

In the early 1970s, the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation began establishing Sathya Sai Primary Schools and Sathya Sai Secondary Schools in India. These schools were based on Sri Sathya Sai Baba's philosophy of education, which places emphasis not only on educational achievements, but on character development and the importance of leading a moral life. The philosophy also stresses the importance of encouraging young persons to become aware of their divine inner nature.

The schools attracted the positive notice of educationists and policy makers in India. This inspired devotees involved with SSE and SSEHV programmes outside of India to begin similar schools in their respective countries.

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, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Paraguay, the Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and Venezuela. Currently, there are over 60 Sathya Sai Schools in India and 41 Sathya Sai Schools in 26 countries outside India.

The Sri Sathya Sai Organisation is careful to ensure that these schools operate within the jurisdiction and educational norms of the country where they are located. The local educational authority must be satisfied that the school meets all appropriate requirements, including approving the aims and objectives, the site and structural adequacy of the buildings, syllabus, teacher preparation, proper classroom size, physical resources, staff salaries, and the capacity to meet maintenance and sustainability needs.

The main purpose for establishing Sathya Sai Schools is to provide quality education permeated with human values to children who would otherwise not receive it. To this end, the schools are often located in disadvantaged areas. Funding comes primarily from donations and, in a few cases, from government grants when such grants are consistent with national educational policies and those of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. The Schools strive to provide free education. In some cases a small fee is charged for consumables.

## Institutes of Sathya Sai Education

As the number of Sathya Sai Schools and SSEHV classes increased in India and around the world, there was need for more standardisation and quality assurance with respect to teacher training and certification. This led to establishing the Institutes of Sathya Sai Education (ISSEs). The first Institute was opened in Denmark in 1987. Since that time it has been conducting seminars for teachers, office bearers, and members of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisations throughout continental Europe, as well as in Russia and countries that were part of the former Soviet Union.

In recognition of the growing demands of parents that their children be provided a values-based education, an Institute was established in the late 1990s at the Dharmakshetra in Mumbai, India. Earlier the Institute staff worked in collaboration with staff from several official agencies, such as the Navodaya Vidyalayas, Western Railway, the Delhi and the Pune Municipal Corporations, and the government of the state of Maharashtra, in order to promote a curriculum for human excellence in their schools. Similar Institutes were established in Thailand, Zambia, the United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa, Latin America, and Canada.

The network of Institutes of Sathya Sai Education has now expanded to over 20 countries. Their stated purpose is "to propagate the ideals of Sathya Sai Education in primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities." In their respective geographical regions, the Institutes provide standardised training of teachers and teacher-trainers. They also offer Diploma and Advanced Diploma courses, assist in establishing Sathya Sai Schools, and support the adoption of existing schools.

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