



GOLDEN MOMENTS  
OF SRI SATHYA SAI BALVIKAS

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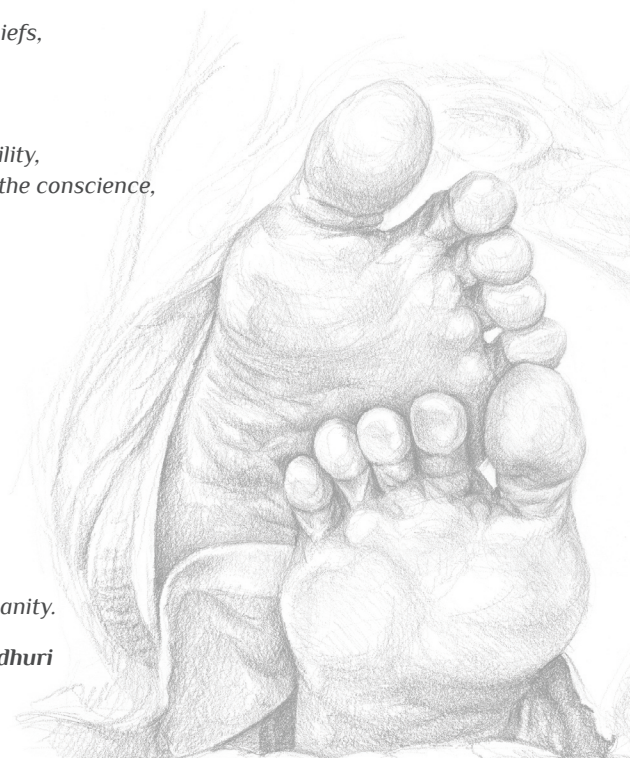
# SRI SATHYA SAI BALVIKAS

*Balvikas – A Stellar Courtesy For All Of Humanity...  
To propel and enrich progress of the society, the country,  
For the utmost benefit of mankind,  
An awakening flame of ethicality had to be lit individually,  
In addition, an ultra-positive momentum required to gush globally,  
Consequently, Bhagavan... the All-Knowing One,  
In 1969, a divine pathway did illumine -  
The Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas saw the launch of an enlightened journey,  
Bequeathing - A Stellar Courtesy for all of humanity.*

*Children are young buds still to blossom and bloom,  
Pure rays yet to gather shimmer and glow,  
Fledglings hitherto unaware of the strength of their wings,  
Streams from the cosmic glacier unconservant about their potential...  
...to flow forth with courage as a river,  
Beloved Bhagavan... the Supreme Sculptor,  
Desired to sculpt and chisel,  
Enhance and auger,  
The as yet innocent impressionable psyche,  
Towards elevated living wafting the fragrance of spirituality,  
Respect and affinity for the family and community,  
Sentiments of adoration for the Motherland truly,  
To Love All, Serve All; Help Ever, Hurt Never,  
Evolvement that encompassed a rendezvous with values,  
Meandering with clarity through ethics, culture, tradition, and beliefs,  
Heightening reverence for the Universe,  
Compassion for all beings, concern for flora and fauna,  
Augmenting Love for the Divine, Fear of Sin...  
...encouraging associations favourable while enhancing compatibility,  
Thus so, Balvikas firmly links each one's essence permanently to the conscience,  
And presently in 2019, SSSBV glistens brightly, joyfully,  
Having moulded countless tender mind, heart, body and soul,  
Painstakingly...*

*SSSBV remains as yet,  
Refreshingly, inspiringly, resplendently youthful even at 50...  
At this moment, as celebrations mark this glorious event,  
One can hear an echo of an applause quickening in resonance,  
From the core of each balvikas guru and alumni,  
An outpour of affection and respect for each other,  
A flow of love and gratitude for the Omniscient Lord,  
For the shower of grace to be a part of this great grand movement...  
...this colossally impactful mission of Beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai,  
For Balvikas is truly an eternal blessing – A Stellar Courtesy For All Of Humanity.*

*-Jullie Chaudhuri*



**Dear Gurus, Parents and Balvikas Children,**

Sai ram! Another year has dawned, giving us yet another wonderful opportunity to serve at His Lotus feet. This year is indeed even more unique, as it marks the 50th year of the Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas Movement.

This is a year not only of celebration but a year when, we must continue to strengthen the edifice of Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas, so that the foundation is strengthened for establishing the glory of the Avtaar for the generations to come. This year, it is time for us, once again, to reflect on His Divinity and His Omnipresence and carry His Message to all the little ones across the country.

We must ensure that the generations to come will not lock up the Glory of Sri Sathya Sai in a class or in a book, a photograph or a statue. We must therefore without much delay, light the lamp of love, first, within our hearts and then, in turn in the hearts of all our children and their parents, for all time to come.

Let us join hands and forge ahead with purity in our minds, unity in our actions and Divinity in our hearts and fulfil the opportunity given to each one of us, in the coming year, so that we, in turn, can become the true messengers of Sai for the future generation.

With lots of love,

**Nimish Pandya**  
All India President  
Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations

01/01/2019

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**THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE  
BALVIKAS MOVEMENT – A BLUEPRINT FOR THE  
BLOSSOMING OF HUMAN EXCELLENCE**

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*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; Balvikas Conference)*

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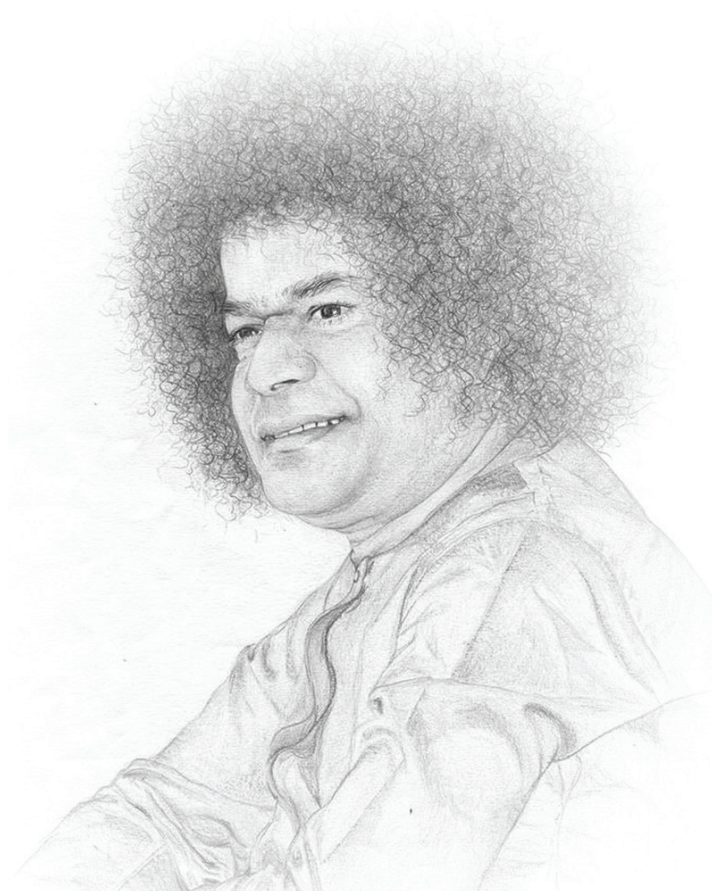
#### THE GENESIS OF BALVIKAS

Never in the history of mankind have the children of the world received such a unique boon as the Balvikas movement. Balvikas is the primary basis of the great movement to restore Dharma in the world. Balvikas 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 Balvikas 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 Bhagavad Gita 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 Balvikas 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 Balvikas’ 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 Balvikas 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 Balvikas 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 Balvikas 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 Balvikas 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

YOU HAVE TO MAKE IT  
SHINE IN ALL BRILLIANCE  
TO ILLUMINE THE WORLD —  
LET THIS BE YOUR VOW, LET  
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DAWN AND REIGN IN THE  
WORLD IN FULL GLORY.

THE FABRIC OF THE BALVIKAS 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

Technology, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla (1985) to assess ‘moral judgement’ as a readout of value development. Here again the Balvikas children scored significantly higher than their non-Balvikas counterparts.

‘Sai Colony’ Balvikas 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 Balvikas to other countries.

Since 1977, Easwaramma Day has been engraved in the pages of history as ‘Mother’s Day’. It is one of the most significant days in a Balvikas 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 Easwaramma, 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 Balvikas movement. Many would recall an incident which took place at the International Balvikas Conference in 1983, wherein Balvikas 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 Balvikas 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 Balvikas 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, Balvikas 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 Balvikas 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 organization.

In 1980, the ‘Ceiling on Desires’ programme became an integral part of the Balvikas 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 Balvikas 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 Balvikas 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 Balvikas centre and every mother a Bal Vikas Guru."

#### DIVINE OPPORTUNITIES

Balvikas 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 Balvikas Convocation (cum convention) being held at Prasanthi Nilayam since 2014 are sweet homecomings for the ex-Balvikas students.

#### A QUICK LEAP FORWARD

In keeping with the times, the Balvikas 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 Balvikas Education on character development in children across India, both rural and urban. Overall, the study proved that Balvikas students, Gurus, parents and alumni have indeed imbibed Balvikas values which they ranked higher than societal pleasures.



THE IDEAL OF BALVIKAS IS TO RAISE  
A GENERATION OF BOYS AND  
GIRLS WHO HAVE A CLEAN AND  
CLEAR CONSCIENCE. BALVIKAS IS  
THE PRIMARY BASIS OF THE GREAT  
MOVEMENT TO RESTORE DHARMA  
IN THE WORLD. THE YOUNG MINDS  
OF CHILDREN ARE NOT POLLUTED  
AND HENCE THEY CAN BE LED INTO  
GOOD WAYS OF LIVING, SIMPLICITY,  
HUMILITY AND DISCIPLINE.

AS WE CELEBRATE THE GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR (2019) OF THE BALVIKAS MOVEMENT, LET US RECALL WHAT BHAGAVAN HAS OFTEN SAID, "THE HEART SHOULD BE GOLDEN (FULL OF LOVE AND COMPASSION), THIS WILL RESULT IN GOLDEN IDEAS AND A SUCCESSFUL LIFE."

### THE IMPACT OF BALVIKAS

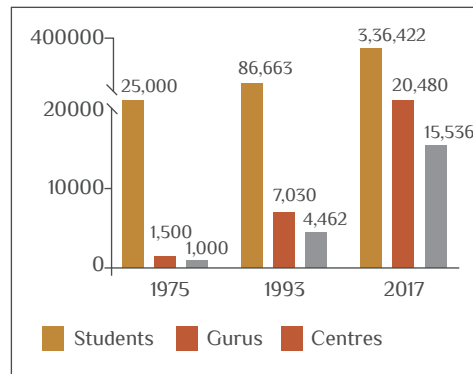
The tiny stream of Balvikas which emerged between 1968 and 1971 with a few classes and children, grew steadily to 1500 centres in 1975, expanding to 4662 classes in 1993 and has now gathered great momentum with 3,36,422 children and 15,536 classes in 2017. This stream symbolises Bhagavan's love to give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

As we celebrate the golden jubilee year (2019) of the Balvikas movement, let us recall what Bhagavan has often said, "The heart should be golden (full of love and compassion), this will result in golden ideas and a successful life."

The river of the Balvikas 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!

**Mrs. Roshan E. Fanibunda**  
Mumbai

### Growth of the Balvikas Movement in India





## BALVIKAS PAVING THE WAY FOR GOLDEN AGE

*Hiranmayena patrena satyasyapihitammukham*

*Tatwam pushannapavrunu satyadharmaya drishtaye.*

*'The face of truth is hidden by the glittering golden disc (desire for worldly pleasures).*

*O lord Surya, remove this golden disc so that I can see the truth. I have been  
steadfastly devoted to Sathya and Dharma.'*

*Isavasya Upanishad*

---

“Won’t you sing the song *Daivame?*” I asked.

“No.”

He was standing before me, with his eyes downcast.

“Why not?”

“I don’t know.”

I knew he was lying. He had been singing it for the last  
few weeks without any mistakes.

“Aren’t you lying?”

He looked up at me intently. I could feel his little brain working out an answer, behind those eyes. This is it. It was the golden moment of truth... one of those moments where you get a chance to understand how much you, as a Balvikas teacher, have influenced the child.

Although the gap between the question and the answer was only a few seconds, it felt like eternity and all those months flashed before my eyes...

As a part of Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme, we had decided to start Rural Balvikas in a colony that we had adopted. The kids were innocent, brimming with energy and filled with mischief. Not one day passed without them being told off by one elder or the other. Kids ranged from age 6 to 13. Initial days were hectic. They were so full of energy that it would take at least 30 minutes, just to get them settled. And yet, due to His Grace, we persisted. Every Saturday we would be there, to conduct Balvikas. There was an apprehension about Bhagavan and us when we began. Later months saw the parents themselves making sure the kids attended the class. None were Sai devotees, and had no clue about Balvikas. Moreover, kids from different religions were requested to attend. Hence, we mostly stuck with value stories and games and kids started to attend enthusiastically.

*Daivame,  
(Oh Lord,)*

*Njan ellavareyum snehikkum.  
(I will love everyone.)*

*Njan aareyum upadravikkilla.  
(I will not hurt anyone.)*

*Njan achanammamar parayunnath anusarikkum.  
(I will obey my parents.)*

*Njan nallavannam padikkum.  
(I will study well.)*

*Karanam njan Nalla kuttiyaanu.  
(Because I'm a good kid.)*

As months progressed, we felt the requirement of a prayer. But we couldn't just include any prayer. We wanted something which was applicable for every kid from every religion. We searched for it and found several but they weren't what we exactly wanted. So we ended up making one, on our own.

We started singing this, one line at a time and asked them to repeat it. This song became instrumental in shaping them because once they themselves said they were good kids who do not fight or who obey their parents, we could easily question them when they deviated from it. We didn't use any of the disciplinary actions that parents usually take, instead we simply asked, when, say, they fought among themselves (which was quite common), "didn't you all just say that you will not hurt anybody?" to which they would nod.

"Why? Because...?" and they would fill in the rest... "because I am a good kid."



AS A PART OF SRI SATHYA  
SAI VILLAGE INTEGRATED  
PROGRAMME, WE HAD  
DECIDED TO START RURAL  
BALVIKAS IN A COLONY  
THAT WE HAD ADOPTED.

Slowly, Balvikas classes became a place to resolve conflicts and complaints (“a kid in my class took my pencil...!”), receive appreciation (today a boy asked me water and I gave him!), and exhibit talent (today we sang in school!). For the kids, this was becoming a haven, a place where they were considered as good kids. Slowly, they began meditating on their favourite deities (“I want Ayyappa. No one else can take him...!”) and started arranging their footwear in a line. A girl, the youngest of all, took it up, on her own, to arrange all the footwear in every class and once she was done, she would come, pull my shirt and would point at it; and on hearing “Good girl!”, her face would light up like a Christmas tree, and she would go and sit down all happy and content...

Recently, they have informed us that, they now have started reverentially touching their parents’ feet every day along with singing *Daivame*...

“Yes. I know the song.”

I was brought back to the present by his reply. I smiled. Truth had triumphed.

“Won’t you feel sad if your friend lies to you? Do you want me to be sad?”

“No.”

“Then sing...”

And he started off... “*Daivame*...”

Moments in Balvikas that sparkle in my memory are moments like these... moments of revelation that bring home the understanding that all those hours of interaction have not been in vain... that love, kindness and forbearance in a Guru shall inevitably succeed in transforming... in removing ‘the golden disc that obscures the face of truth’; paving the way for the arrival of the Golden Age that our Lord has promised.

**Srekanth R Shekar,**  
Kerala



HUMAN VALUES ARE IN EVERYONE. WHAT WE NEED ARE PERSONS WHO WILL PROVIDE THE STIMULUS AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO BRING THEM OUT. IF THE FEELING THAT THE DIVINITY THAT IS PRESENT IN EVERYONE IS ONE AND THE SAME, IS PROMOTED AMONG ALL, HUMAN VALUES WILL SPROUT NATURALLY IN EVERY PERSON.

## BALVIKAS SOWING THE SEEDS OF DEDICATION

Offering my humble pranams at thy lotus feet of our beloved Swami. I would like to take this golden opportunity to share my experiences as Balvikas student and alumnus.

I find myself applying the teachings and principles learnt in Balvikas on a daily basis and at every moment. The teachings help me distinguish between what is right and wrong, allowing me to make better thought out decisions from the lens of Swami's gems. What startled me the most when I moved to United States was the unity in diversity. Although the beliefs are so different, culture is so different, but all the Sai Balvikas students rally behind the same driving force which in real world helped me to forge better networks and be an instrument in expanding Swami's teachings even abroad. This is the ultimate divine will of Swami and brings the strangers together to work for a common cause. All my successes and joys are results of what I learnt in those 9 years and am proud to be a Balvikas student.

Some of the incidents of how Balvikas transformed my life includes the opportunity to chant Vedam at my university campus in front of a crowd of 100-200 people from many different countries. Secondly, during my annual review at the workplace, the feedback I received from my manager said and I quote, "You know what Sai! I have led and managed many people in my professional career. But you have something special in you. May be its your parents or the society where you come from because you bring a very unique set of skills, dedication and devotion to the workplace that has defined your path of professional success". I hope that the secret spark remains within you always and you also become a great leader one day". All this is Swami's will and grace. With these words, I rest my case and urge all young brothers and sisters to please join this cause and lead your spiritual life in the right direction and become a better person.

**Sai Giridhar Tata**  
Chhattisgarh



## BALVIKAS MOULDING US INTO BETTER PERSONS

What makes us human?

*Viewing the beauty in everything makes us human*

*Acting with empathy towards others makes us human*

*Loving unconditionally makes us human*

*Understanding and respecting differences makes us human*

*Empowering the less fortunate makes us human*

*Striving to be a better person makes us human*


It is VALUES that make us human!

As a child I loved playing with dolls. I used to pretend to cook for them, bathe them, feed them, dress them, basically, the things my parents used to do for me. But as I became older, and having studied psychology for 2.5 years, I realise that parenting is about facilitating the holistic development, including the spiritual development of the child.

**Swami says, “The end of education is character.”**

I am grateful to my parents for introducing me to Balvikas which inculcated essential human values in me. Today, I can confidently say that Balvikas has made me who I am.

I was 5 when I joined Balvikas; since then I have had several golden moments in this wonderful journey. Every Sunday was a celebration where we as a Sai family spent memorable moments learning, laughing and loving. When I was 7 years, I had the opportunity of acting in a play staged at Prashanti Nilayam. This was my first tryst with the world of theatre - the music, the lights, and the dance. Today, music and dance are my solace when I need to de-stress. When I was 9, I once again had the chance to participate in a play, this time giving the voice for the lead character. At age 9, I had already experienced what it would be like to be a dubbing artist! Several other golden moments come to my mind - going to various places in Tamil Nadu to participate in competitions and perform plays, going to Prashanti Nilayam for the Balvikas convocation and being a part of that magical moment. As I reminisce these memories, I am aware of the momentous impact of Balvikas on my life.



I AM CONFIDENT THAT  
NOTHING IN MY LIFE CAN  
HAPPEN WITHOUT THE  
APPROVAL OF SWAMI AND  
I HAVE FULL FAITH THAT  
SWAMI IS THE ONE GUIDING  
ME AT ALL POINTS OF TIME  
WITH THE RIGHT CHOICES.



Balvikas has taught me to respond rather than react to situations. Perhaps this is the reason why judgmental comments about my choice of career (pursuing a degree in Psychology) do not affect me. I am confident that nothing in my life can happen without the approval of Swami and I have full faith that Swami is the one guiding me at all points of time with the right choices. This skill of responding and not reacting to situations has helped me in rising above my challenges - laughing or crying, but always emerging victorious. Thanks to Swami for the wonderful Balvikas programme and thanks to Balvikas for making my life so wonderful. I pray that this divine journey continues for eternity.

**Upasana Sridhar**  
Tamil Nadu



SELFISHNESS, ENVY AND EGOISTIC PRIDE ARE THE THREE TENDENCIES AND ATTITUDES THAT SHOULD NOT TAKE ROOT IN TENDER HEARTS. WHATEVER INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION OR INSPIRATION MAN HAS GAINED, OR WHATEVER WEALTH, RICHES OR MATERIAL POSSESSIONS HE HAS EARNED, HE SHOULD SHARE THEM WITH OTHERS IN AN UNSELFISH MANNER. THIS IS HIS PRIMARY DUTY. TEACHERS MUST BE ON THE WATCH FOR CHANCES TO INSTIL THIS IDEAL IN THE HEARTS OF THEIR PUPILS.

## BALVIKAS A DIVINE GIFT

As a little child in way back 1982 I was introduced to the Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas classes in Kalimpong by my mother (who in fact was my first Guru). I was not clear about the things that I was taught in Balvikas but with the passage of time and with the grace of beloved lord Sai I completed my Pre-Seva Dal in 1992 under the guidance of the most dedicated, humble and hardworking Gurus who always encouraged, motivated and inspired me and it is due to their guidance that I achieved many things in life.

And today when I look back to those times, I really feel that those were the best days of my life. I always had fear of stage during my early days but my Gurus who were ever supportive always inspired me to speak up, developing confidence in me and taking away my fears. Especially when I was in the third Group, we were introduced with the lessons on Bhaja Govindam and my Guru who is still guiding the children in Balvikas used to stress particularly on the stanzas, “*Satsangatwe Nissangatwam, Nisangatwe Nirmohatwam, Nirmohatwe Nischalatatwam, Nischalatatwe Jeevan Mukti*”. She dwelled on this particular stanza which spoke about the importance of good company for about a month. I used to feel bored that I had to hear this almost every week, but that time, I really did not realise how important those lines were and my Guru’s painstaking efforts to drive home the concept.



It was much later, when I went to College I nearly fell a prey to smoking, drinking and of course smoking weeds under peer pressure but thanks to my Guru and our beloved Bhagavan that those particular stanzas of Bhaja Govindam constantly reminded me that I should shun bad company and habits and conduct myself in a way that befits a balvikas alumnus. So thanks to Balvikas, I exercised my power of discrimination and through sheer willpower and Divine Grace could overcome the vices.

BALVIKAS CLASSES HAVE  
TAUGHT ME THE MOST  
BEAUTIFUL LESSONS OF LIFE.  
ALTHOUGH I EARNED MY  
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BUT THE DEGREE OF LIFE  
I EARNED WAS FROM SRI  
SATHYA SAI BALVIKAS. I PRAY  
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ENOUGH STRENGTH TO TEACH  
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BALVIKAS AND DO SELFLESS  
SERVICE IN SOCIETY.

As a young boy I always had a great urge to join the Film Industry and become a successful Film Director, but Bhagavan wished that I should become a teacher. I thought always that Bhagavan did not fulfil my desire but I was completely wrong because all the direction, music, dramas I wanted to do in my life, I did with the young Balvikas children, the youth brothers and sisters and my students in school. I have no complain today because the things I

could not do in the silver screen I was blessed by Bhagavan to do in real life screen. Today, I really feel blessed as I have been constantly motivating my students in school too and they are rendering their services continuously at Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Gangtok.

Everyone says that I am so fortunate and lucky to receive many awards in life but the greatest award I got was my life, in fact my second life from Bhagavan in the year 2013. The greatest blessing was a second lease of life that Bhagavan gave me when I suffered from cerebral stroke, that paralysed my left side and affected my kidneys. Baba, out of His infinite compassion revived me on 23rd November 2013, His birthday. Today, what I have realised is that if we try to make Swami our “Jeevan ka Aadhar”, He shall never release the clasp of His divine hands that holds us securely.

Balvikas classes have taught me the most beautiful lessons of life. Although I earned my degrees from Universities but the degree of life I earned was from Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas. The lines below from the song Soham Sai has really touched my heart and till the last day of my life I pray to Bhagavan to give me enough strength to teach the little children in Balvikas and do selfless service in society.

Nirmai Mani Shilal,  
Sikkim



*“Sai hamara swas hai,  
Sai hi vishwaas hai,  
Jeevan key har mod par,  
Sai ka hi saath hai”.*  
*Jai Sai Ram!*

## BALVIKAS PROMOTING DESH BHAKTI

The golden moments spent during the Balvikas period have been truly instrumental in shaping my life. After obtaining a degree of B. Tech in computer sciences, I found myself at the crossroads of my life. On one hand, I had a choice of leading a peaceful civic life and an easy job in some multinational company in India or abroad. On the other hand, stood a hard sturdy military life. The intense yearning to serve the country and my Balvikas values and the love and will of my dearest Swami encouraged me to join the army. Getting selected in the short service commission exam in the very first attempt proved Swami's will.

Initial few months of rigorous training at OTA, Chennai could not have been possible, if Swami were not there with me at all times. He gave me strength, patience and perseverance to face all the difficulties at work and life. One such incident was when we as group of 40 soldiers were assigned a tough job in the adjoining forests somewhere in the South eastern sector. As we were moving in the forest, our group got separated from the main group and we lost our way. My eyes closed, I had a flash of Bhagavan's image directing me to move north. We moved another 2 kms north and reached a mansion with Swami's photograph displayed on top of it. We heaved a sigh of relief. Swami had heard our silent prayers and guided us across the storm.

Today, I am an officer in the Indian Army. When, I was posted at the "line of actual control" in the Eastern sector on Assam border risking cross-border enemy fire, my nights on job were always under the vigil of my beloved Swami. As my mother would quote Swami, "Why fear when I am here".

Swami's omnipresence, His ring of protection around me gives me strength and willpower to serve my nation with pride and dignity. I pray to Swami to be with me at all times and I thank Him for all that he has done in shaping me. I promise to live up to His expectations as a Balvikas Alumnus in future. Thank you Swami for everything.

**Lieutenant Lakshya Gupta**  
Himachal Pradesh





## BALVIKAS MY PATH TOWARDS DIVINITY

I am indebted and grateful to our beloved Bhagavan Baba for being a Balvikas Student. A Student forever because it's a blessing and path to Divinity shown by our very Lord Bhagavan Baba as he called it 'Balvikas for Loka Vikas'. I'm obliged to reminiscence my journey of Balvikas. Balvikas is a boon for every child, a necessity for being an exemplar in today's society.

Every Balvikas Student recalls their Balvikas classes and their lessons in day-to-day life considering the very brief schedules making impact throughout their lives. So do I in my Journey, walking down my memory lane, I was blessed to start my path with divinity to Divinity.

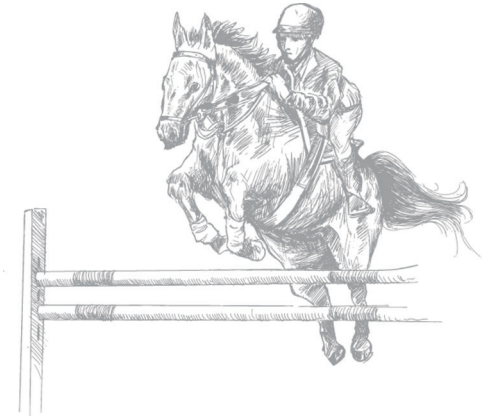
I joined Sathya Sai Balvikas in 2007. Innocent and young, I was fascinated by the classes, teachings, games and much more. All I wanted those days was to be in good competition, to prove that I will do better than everyone else, little knowing that Balvikas is a class of introspection, a class to be a better yourself.

A BALVIKAS STUDENT  
KEEPS CONNECTING THE  
SIMPLIFIED TEACHINGS TO  
LIFE AND BE ASTONISHED  
BY THINGS FALLING IN THE  
RIGHT PLACE

But as Baba promised, "Take a step towards me, I shall take ten steps towards you", with time I realised and comprehended Balvikas is not a place to prove, it's a path paved towards Divinity, to savour the essence of life, to live a life knowing which is worthwhile.

The days passed by with enlightenment dawning slowly. I realised that all these teachings are gifted by Baba through Balvikas Gurus. My guru selflessly served, taught all students with much love, nurtured regardless of us being talkative and indisciplined brats, she demonstrated patience, unconditional love and induced discipline. I completed my group 2 and participated in many activities held in Sivam and other Balvikas Centres and Sai Samithis. However, my studies didn't permit me to go through the regular Balvikas classes, but 'determination' led us to a solution as my madam shifted classes according to our spare time. The determination and persistence led to my first and proud achievement of my life, the certificate of completion of 'Balvikas Spiritual Education Course' received with blessings of Baba in Prashanti Nilayam. We are taught to abide by 'duty' and Baba blessed me with the patience and perseverance to study for my higher education. Eventually, I was blessed with a seat in ECE in NIT Jaipur.

Overwhelmed, I started off my journey to Jaipur, far from home, still naïve about the world I was about to jump in but deep-down I knew I will be helped and taken care of by the Omnipresent. Everyday has been new, I met people with different cultures, religions and languages. 'Discrimination' between good and bad, because of the insights I had, I moved forward making choices of friends and acquaintances, learned to live independent. 'Devotion' towards



the things for which you look forward to, I didn't deviate from my very goals, despite the language differences, I made myself proud with very good percentage till date. Currently, I pursue my final year Engineering, still starting my day with 'Karagre Vasathe ...' and partaking food with 'Harirdhata... A Balvikas student keeps reminiscing the induced nature to 'See Good, Do Good and Be Good'. A Balvikas Student keeps connecting the simplified teachings to life and be astonished by things falling in the right place. The intuition becomes stronger and brighter as we move towards Baba.

With courage and strength blessed by Baba, I look forward to face hurdles but stand up again, to be a good citizen, to achieve success, To be patient, persistent, perseverant and passionate.

Ms. Divya Tarana  
Hyderabad

## BALVIKAS SECRET OF SUCCESS

*“Spiritual discipline is the cultivation of Love. Be full of Love. Taste the exhilaration that Love can confer. Let everyone see your exuberance with light and joy.”*

***Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba***

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I am one of the blessed Balvikas alumni from Hyderabad. As mentioned by Baba in the above quotation, spiritual discipline has cultivated love in my soul. The time I have spent in the Balvikas class has not just transformed me to become a better self but has also ignited me to share the very same thoughts with many other younger people. The actual meaning, Baba was referring to, by the words ‘light and joy’ hit my mind only after I realised its by-products.

Now, I am an architect, a freelance designer working for the Indian Film industry as a Set designer. The importance of sharing knowledge was one huge by-product that I referred to previously. My inner self got calm only after I got an opportunity to teach design students by building them to crack any design exam in India. My passion in absorbing more and more knowledge resulted in filling chunks of paper with my diversified ideas. Gradually, I streamlined my ideas and started writing research papers and fortunately, few of them have been published in few international universities. Ranging from, ‘How to crack a design exam’ to ‘Solving complicated Islamic Geometry’, I have written papers which might have helped people become more aware and interested in diversity.



The life lessons taught through stories in my childhood in the Balvikas classes have metaphorically alerted me to write my own life story. The disciplines practised in the class were not just engaging us but taught us unconsciously about the sense of life. In design language, those disciplines were like the minimum requirements to start with living a healthy life. Every time, one asks me the secret behind the success, I proudly mention Balvikas and also share them the part of story that inspired me for that particular project.

I was taught about the lives of great men and women, and I found that the men and women who got to the top were those who did the jobs they had in hand, with everything they had of energy and enthusiasm and hard work. The key to complete a task was simple, I just had to tell myself that I could do it because the difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra, and that extra is the extra confidence that’s all needed. Only after getting hold of the disciplines that I learnt from the lectures, I noticed the space between stimulus and our response. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our scope of wisdom, growth and our freedom.

*“The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will.”* This quotation by Vince Lombardi, one of my favourite American football players, strikes in my head when I feel discouraged. People tend to think that happiness is a stroke of luck, something that will descend like fine weather if you are fortunate. But happiness is the result of personal effort. You fight for it, strive for it, insist upon it, and sometimes even travel around the world looking for it. You have to participate relentlessly. If someone would ask me the reason for my confidence on my design, I would just smile and reply them that I have already faced a lot of failures and now I know how to not face them again. And even if I fail again, I already know how to overcome it because I have already experienced that too. I always say this to my students; The key to success is failure. I mean, only after we fail till, we succeed, we enjoy the true value of that success. Only after we understand the depth in our mistake, we value the heights of the success. Success is every minute we live. It’s the process of living. It’s stopping for the moments of beauty, of pleasure, the moments of peace. Success may not always be destination that we should reach. Success can also be the quality of the journey.

The motivation developed from my regular presence for lectures by my Balvikas teacher encouraged me to focus on the subject that I loved. My profession, architecture is in a way related to the lectures absorbed in my childhood. I can surely say that the simple stories narrated by her were to develop common sense in a broader way. Architecture is all the same. Transforming a space to a liveable place is just adding common sense into design and getting into life. Hence, the designs developed for my clients today, are somewhere defiantly rooted to those simple childhood stories.

My experiences with Balvikas classes and numerous other lectures conducted in relation have taught values needed to live a meaningful life. The morals made me a gentleman. I could clearly see the advancement in my performance and all the difference reflected in my daily routine. The daily routine helped me evolve into a better being. Balvikas classes defiantly didn’t just teach me to just pray or do bhajans but gave me reasons to do so. The lectures didn’t elaborate on the existence of God, rather they politely forced me to think and answer sacred questions.

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Most importantly here, I have learnt that there is nothing noble in being superior to my fellow man. True nobility is being superior to my former self. With all the success I have attained by being a member of Balvikas, I wish to spread the knowledge and skill to as many as possible. I promise to encourage the younger generations to attend Balvikas classes and streamline their thoughts into a good mould before they explore the contemporary world.

*Service is divine - It makes life worthwhile.*  
**Sathya Sai Baba**

**Sri G. Vamsi**  
Hyderabad



## BALVIKAS A LESSON IN SURRENDER

**M**y journey of Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas is filled with golden moments. It is a beautiful bouquet of sweet memories which has had a great impact on my whole life. Whenever I recall these moments, it never fails to leave a smile on my face. Indeed how fortunate I was to be able to tread on this royal path !

I still remember the day when my elder sister introduced me to Balvikas classes. At that time, being a small child I did not realise the significance of attending the classes. So, I started weeping and my sister had to drop me back home. After a month or so, she convinced me and took me again to the Balvikas class. This time she told me that if I go to Balvikas class regularly, I would become a good boy and I would be able to be nearer to God. So listening to her, I held my tears and sat quietly. This was a turning point in my life. Slowly and gradually, my desire to go to Balvikas class increased and I started liking it and used to wait eagerly for the next Sunday. I soon picked up the shlokas, stotras and bhajans taught by our Balvikas gurus. Stories with good moral values helped me in my moral upliftment. I was a tongue-tied, extremely shy boy from the very beginning. Stage fear was such a thing that talking in public, gave me the jitters.

I would love to express my humble gratitude to our Beloved Bhagavan Baba for introducing me to Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas and to my gurus who gave me a platform and all the courage to overcome stage fear. Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas classes helped me a lot in my studies too. Silent sitting, japa, **regular chanting** of Gayatri mantra helped me in concentrating and in making my **memory sharper**. This helped me in transforming myself from being an average boy to a good student. Whenever I have any problem, I have learned to surrender everything to HIM. I now realise that chanting the name of Swami gives us enough strength and courage. I know that prayers offered to Swami with a pure heart will always be answered. I would like to narrate one such incident.

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः ।  
तत् सवितुर्वरेण्यं ।  
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।  
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

It was in the year 2015 that I was to appear the HSLC examination. Everything was going on very smoothly. Then, one day my grandmother who was a Sai devotee and with whom I was very close took ill all of a sudden. When her illness was diagnosed, we came to know that she was having brain tumour and had to go through a major operation. The chances of her recovery was very low. The world turned upside down for me. My family was in deep financial and emotional stress. I then gathered some courage and with all my heart I prayed to Swami and my prayers were answered. Not only was the operation a success but despite so many problems I managed to pass my exams with first division and my grandmother also recovered from her illness.



Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas (SSSBV) has moulded me in all spheres of life. Now that I am an alumnus of SSSBV, I make time to render seva in the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation. I remain thankful to Swami for this wonderful gift and am grateful to my gurus for being there for me, ever guiding me in ups and downs of my life. Indeed, Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas has given me a life enriched with the golden moments in all walks of life. Let us all be worthy of Swami.

**Pankaj Acharya Chhetry**  
Manipur

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## BALVIKAS MAKING US WORTHY INSTRUMENTS

The moment I joined Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas, my golden time in life started. It was not difficult for me to understand the basic values as my family had already been long-time devotees of Swami. My parents were my first Balvikas Gurus. I remember it was in the year 1985, when I started going to Balvikas classes. Very few around me had the knowledge of such type of programmes; some even had misgivings like whether the organisation might charge money or have lectures only about Sri Sathya Sai Baba. On such occasions, my parents cleared the misconception of these people because those days only a few knew about Baba.

Initially, when I joined Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas, I did not understand exactly how I could practice the values in my daily life. Only when I started interacting more with other people, I realised how easy it was to apply the Balvikas tools to differentiate between good and bad.

When I grew up, I saw my parents being active in the organisation. I was always inspired to do seva watching them in action. But because I had physical disability I used to pray to Swami to give me an opportunity to be a worthy instrument in His Divine Mission.

God listened to my prayer and gave me a precious gift of serving as Balvikas Guru. A lot of things that I did not understand as a child, I understood as a guru. I realised the importance of Balvikas as new lessons unfolded along this journey. So, becoming a balvikas guru was the golden moment in my life.

I have received so much love and support in the last fifteen years as Balvikas guru that I am eternally grateful to Swami for giving me this chance to serve Him. I think we all should acknowledge that everything happens in our lives because of His blessings, and whatever good we achieve, is because he works through us.

**Narendra Kumar Gautam**  
Madhya Pradesh



THE HEART FULL OF COMPASSION IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD. DEVELOP COMPASSION. LIVE IN LOVE. BE GOOD, DO GOOD AND SEE GOOD. THIS IS THE WAY TO GOD.



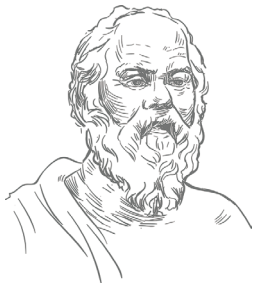
## BALVIKAS A BOON TO MANKIND

As we grow along in life, the definition of 'golden moment' changes for us in life. At one time, it might be our birthday party in childhood, at another, a pay hike at work. But nothing - time, age, situations, or belief - can change the identity of balvikas as 'golden'.



I was fortunate enough to be born in a family that was active in the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation. As if that wasn't enough, I, like many of my peers, was also in practice of silent sitting, of singing bhajans, public speaking, being inclusive of religious beliefs, all in the name of Swami. Fortunately, I see these are the things we need most in the world today that helps youngsters like me to cruise along with ease in this atmosphere of stress.

A golden moment sometimes comes to you not as an event, but as an epiphany, a moment of sudden and great revelation - like truth that dawns upon you and opens up a whole new world. I recognised one particular moment as Golden only because of Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas. I was reading and watching documentaries about wars and their impact on the world as a part of my studies in Literature. It was all too disturbing and all too saddening. Everything that those writers, artists and thinkers presented in their works as solutions and anticipated results of wars through their poetry and criticism were sublime thoughts.



The more I was required to think about them as a part of my research, the more I realised I agreed with the great thinkers as if they spoke my thoughts. I realised many of my peers might think the same too. I started connecting these thoughts to my own upbringing and realised that we as Balvikas students, have learnt the same concepts as those of great thinkers and philosophers who wanted to heal the world. Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas is this amazing boon to humankind that turns kids into humans of the sublime way of thinking, yet in a very grounding and simplistic manner. We were not literature students as kids, but we understood a lot of what these philosophers understood because of Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas.

Compassion, tolerance, culture, patience, kindness and oneness are qualities that we have imbibed as balvikas students; and those that have helped in making a difference in society.

**Nishtha Joshi**  
Madhya Pradesh





## BALVIKAS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON



THE POSITIVE MATERIAL OR  
THE MUNDANE ASPECT OF  
LIFE, THE ANNIHILATION  
OF THE AGITATIONS OF  
MIND AND THE SPIRITUAL  
PROGRESS FROM ME TO  
WE TO HIM, ALL BECAME  
EXTREMELY FAVOURABLE  
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BALVIKAS.

**B**ABA'S SANKALPA IS VAJRA SANKALPA. 50 years ago when He willed to transform and reshape the world, Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas came into being. Millions of people of varied age groups across the globe became the recipients of His bountiful grace.

Such is the effect of His resolve that many a lives have changed for better forever. In the midst of free play of power, money, ego, luxury, lavishness, greed, jealousy, anger, hatred, rat race, falsehood and other downbeats, Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas is a beacon of non violence, peace, true to oneself, dharma towards others and self, caring, compassion, sacrifice, loving and helping.

I was then one year old when this phase of transformation began. At the age of 10, I was introduced to formal class of Balvikas where Discipline, Devotion and Altar of Bhagavan Baba and everything else associated with it became a part and parcel of my life. Teenage, adulthood, marriage, a daughter, work, home, friends, relatives, travel and money, all became synonymous with that one class of Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas.

And the revolution has been tremendous. The positive material or the mundane aspect of life, the annihilation of the agitations of mind and the spiritual progress from me to we to Him, all became extremely favourable because of Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas.

The world of Balvikas is what everyone must aspire for. This platform is God's garden, our Baba's garden. The flowers of Namasmarna, Jyothi Meditation, Bhajans, Veda Chanting, Prayers, participation in Seva Activities, being in Good and God's Company are spreading the fragrance far and wide. We surely are the most fortunate and the chosen ones to bask in the glory of Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas. Let's all pledge to be the part of this legacy and carry forward this eternal light.

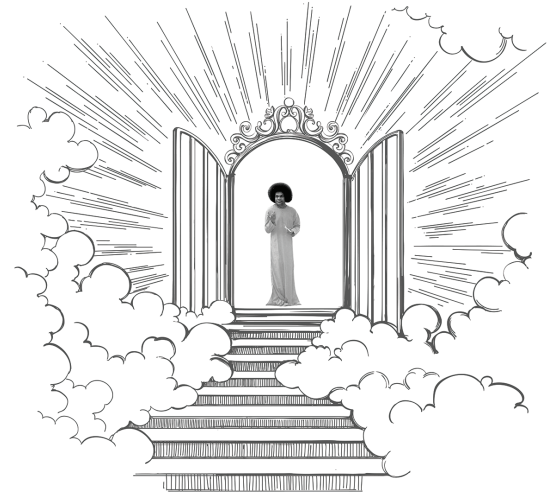
Ajay Kumar Sood  
Haryana

## BALVIKAS FOSTERING DAIVA PREETI

The point of time when the Kaliyug Avtara inspired me to become a Guru, an instrument in His Divine Mission was the most momentous moment of my life. I embarked on the glorious journey with Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas. Every class that I conduct, every time I see the spark of wonder shining on the innocent faces of the children as they share their experiences with the DIVINE – like when a child narrated how her lunch box had dropped on the floor but not a morsel of food fell out as it landed straight because she had just chanted the Gayantri Mantra. So also two brothers told us how they had spiritually charged their homes by praying everyday and by making their father not only stop eating non-vegetarian food but also say prayers before his meals - these innumerable, priceless experiences fill my being with an unbelievable sense of satisfaction, of fulfilment, a profound feeling of blessedness and the deepest gratitude.



MORALITY IS A MARK OF A HUMAN BEING.  
TRUTH IS THE RULE. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE  
PATH. SACRIFICE IS THE GLORY. THESE THREE  
ARE THE HALLMARKS OF HUMANITY.



The bliss of these magical moments no other worldly activity can provide. The culmination of many such beautiful times with Sai Balvikas came when the children of Haryana performed in Bhagwan's Divine Presence in Prashanti Nilayam. How to describe those blissful moments when we got a chance to be in close physical proximity with the Lord as He lovingly interacted with the children and allowed us to touch His Lotus Feet. Being connected with Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas gave us this experience of Heaven on Earth. Swami's many assurances to all His Gurus are the 'Mantras' of my life – bringing the euphoria of 'Daiva Preeti' into my every thought, word and deed, ushering in my inner transformation, showering Grace on me and my near and dear ones, inspiring my two daughters-in-law to become active Gurus, making every moment with Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas a golden moment.

Nandita Mohan  
Haryana

## BALVIKAS AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

On taking a trip down the memory lane, when I think of few experiences of my life that I shall always cherish, most of them take me back to the experiences gained as a student of Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas.

I remember, my mother making me join Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas Class when I was 4 years old. Our Balvikas Guru's sweet welcoming smile, followed by chanting of Om and other shlokas, listening to beautiful stories, playing value games, and learning to sing Sai bhajans together was so enchanting, that from that day onwards, I used to eagerly look forward to Fridays when I would attend Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas Class. Each and every aspect of the class, was so beautiful, that each learner could connect to and enjoy at least one activity in the class, as it addressed to each learners' interest. The group activities and games, taught us the very basic social skills, that prepared us beautifully for the outside world right from that tender age.

I truly am grateful to Swami, for having given me this blessed opportunity of being a Balvikas Student. The whole journey, has been so blissful, that it is difficult to select one experience as the best of all.

Nonetheless, I would like to share one activity which as Balvikas students we got a chance to be part of, and that helped me become aware of my own strength areas, in turn leading to increase in my self-confidence as a child. The theatrical performance that the students were made to be part of, and was dedicated to Mother Eshwaramma on her death Anniversary, every year. Our Balvikas Gurus so lovingly helped us work on our skills, in order to ensure each one of us performed our level best and dedicate the performance to our beloved Baba. Those rehearsal days for me, are the best memories of my Balvikas years, which I would cherish for my life time, also because it was through this that I generated a keen interest towards performing arts and theatre.

Through the whole process of preparing for the theatrical performance, we got to learn such important core values of life and social skills like, teamwork, cooperation, patience, respecting each other's opinions, dedication and discipline. These are helping me and all the Balvikas students, to handle varied kinds of situations in life event today. It was experiential learning in a true sense.

Further, these experiences, values and lessons learnt, are helping me immensely in working with students of all age groups, in my career as a guidance counsellor.



I can go on and on, as the experiences are endless, and my heart is filled with gratitude for our beloved Swami, as I am writing this article. I thank Swami and my Balvikas Gurus for blessing me and giving me this opportunity to be able to attend the Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas Classes, and feel his presence within me, making me feel strong and confident from within. Thank you, Sai Ma.

**Sukriti Vasisht**  
Delhi NCR



## BALVIKAS A PILLAR OF SUPPORT

**S**ri Sathya Sai Balvikas is the class where we get to learn and imbibe innumerable good values, it is the class which transforms me into a good human being, it is the class where I get lots of love and affection from my Balvikas guru.

It has been four and a half years, since I have been attending this class and there has been a lot of improvement in myself. Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas teaches us also how to balance our different activities, this I think has been one of the most valuable things that I have learnt here. I really enjoy the Veda chanting and learning the Sanskrit shlokas. Both these activities attract me a lot.

The very first time I went for practice for Easwaramma Day, I thought of myself as a fresher, a newcomer. But after a few days, I found myself making new friends and my new gurus looked after me as if I was their own child! I always pondered on the thought that I did not have the privilege of meeting Sri Sathya Sai Baba, but whenever I attend Balvikas class and meet my gurus, Baba has always made His presence felt.

After one year of attending Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas, I joined the Summer Camp. Uptil now this has been my most unique camp experience ever. Here everything was a special learning. There were various activities such as dumb charades and moral quiz etc. I remember especially how my friends and I made a chocolate smoothie and a choco cake nut crunch ! It was indeed a memorable day.

This year for Easwaramma day. I got the opportunity to participate in the main play as a narrator. This was the first time I had such a chance. We had many practices and so many details were taken care of to make the play a masterpiece. Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas truly is a path to perfection. After all the ultimate aim of Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas is to produce the best out of the children.



One of my favourite things in Balvikas is the stories and experience shared by my Balvikas gurus. Each story leads to another and each experience reveals lessons that are imbibed by us students. To guide me through the difficulties of my life, my parents have always been there. But to accept difficulties as a challenge, Baba and my gurus have always been there. Baba has said, “Life is a game, play it”.

Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas has helped me to live a simple life. It has been my pillar of support in all these four and a half years. It has given me new opportunities and a new dimension to life.

I would like to quote a few lines from Raidas ke padh. “Prabhujī tum chandan hum paani, jaaki ang ang bas samani.” According to this, Baba is sandalwood and I am a small amount of water. When sandalwood is rubbed in water, the smell of that sandalwood permeates the water. Similarly, going to Balvikas has helped me to inherit good characteristics from Nature, from my gurus and my Baba.

Baba, I am happy as I believe you are always with us.

**G. Kavın Rajan**  
Delhi NCR

## BALVIKAS A GUIDING BEACON

Indeed every moment with SAI is golden, penning down memories of Satya Sai Balvikas is an opportunity to relish my foundation years learning core human values of Love, Truth, Peace and Sacrifice. Balvikas Classes had glorifying impact on my inner self where at a tender age I could differentiate between good and evil. Here, one could wonder, how a child between the age of 5-14 years can understand virtues and vices?

The answer lies in Balvikas classes where basic tenets of human values are inculcated through legends, narrations of incidents from life of Great men and Baba's life, besides stories from our scriptures. Balvikas classes were free from socio/economic and religious prejudices which was the first step towards inculcating value of oneness. Swami says that humans are embodiments of divinity and love and thus He used to address all as "Prem Swaroopaa" - embodiment of love.



There was a story in china katha, in which Krishna upon looking at a bird calls it one time as crow and on other as duck, to which Arjuna dutifully nods in agreement. Krishna then curiously asks as to how Arjuna is not applying his mind and only following his words. Arjuna says - O lord! I may be wrong in what I see but you cannot be wrong in what you say as I have all faith in you. The story gave a message of faithfulness which is required among all to understand and follow the divine.

In another story of 'Karagre vaste Laxmi', we get the message of the value of good karma and importance of our pious hands which we require to perform all noble deeds.

Through these Balvikas programmes, the importance of faith, prayer, and honesty was embedded into my consciousness. Now at this stage of youth and productive years, these virtues are helpful in intricacies of life and I can certainly call them GOLDEN Moments. Balvikas serves as a beacon which shows the way of "Transforming self to transform the world".

Ashutosh Nath Jha  
Bihar



## BALVIKAS SOURCE OF ENERGY

**A**s I think back on my journey through Balvikas, I discover that I am flooded with golden memories from start to finish.

The journey began when I joined the Balvikas fold at the age of 8. At the age of 12, I was given the golden opportunity to participate in a drama to be presented at Puttaparthi before Swami. We were involved in intense practice day and night. On the last day of practice, we gave our best performance and lined upon the stage for the final scene. I was looking straight ahead when my eye was attracted to an orange aura of light reflected on the glass ventilator of the auditorium. As I focussed on the light in awe, Swami's smiling face appeared ! I cried out and screamed in joy and excitement 'Swami has come'!! We all realised that Swami in His infinite mercy had come to bless us with His divine darshan. This golden memory will forever be etched in my heart.

We realised how meaningful the appearance was when the Onam festival was cancelled that year and we lost the chance to present the play. I was not in the least bit disappointed. Swami had already seen the drama, Why would he want to see it again?!!



Swami started His work of reforming and reshaping me from the moment I joined Balvikas. Balvikas introduced me to the presence of the divine Lord within. When preparing for my group II exam, my Guru narrated a story and ended with these golden words of advice. 'God has given you two hands - one to help yourself, the other to help others. The essence of service thus took root in my heart and I took a firm resolve to become a Doctor and serve the community to the best of my ability.

With Swami's grace my desire materialised. As a Doctor I encounter illness, death and sorrow on a daily basis. Through Balvikas, I have acquired the spiritual energy to face these situations with fortitude, to express empathy towards my patients, to treat them with love and compassion. The joy I receive through service is priceless. I stand apart from others. This is the golden influence that Balvikas had on my life.

**Dr. Prapancha P. Nair**  
Kerala

## BALVIKAS CHARACTER BUILDING

“If I could go back and do it all over again, I would”. Balvikas was, is and will always be a part of my life. Balvikas has changed everything in my life and Sai Maa today is my best friend, my biggest source of strength, and my guiding spirit on this life path.

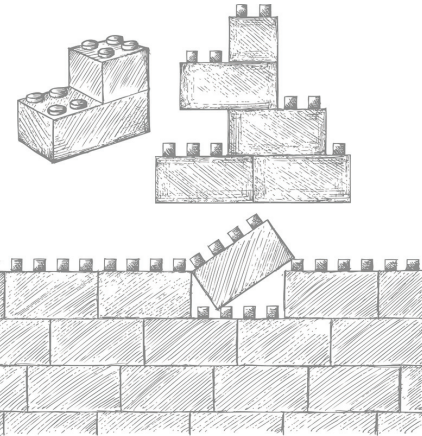
Down the memory lane, I fondly remember the Easwamma Day celebrations, when I was just five years old and got an opportunity to play the role of Gajendra in the play ‘Gajendra Moksha’- the elephant who asks Lord to be with him even after his death and attains moksha, the ultimate realisation of spiritual life.

“Anyatha sharanam naasthi, tvamev sharanam mamah”

At that time, that play was too hilarious for me as I played the role of an elephant. However, now I realise the significance of the message. We should ask God for HIS eternal love and support because all other things have an expiry date. But how? Have faith in HIM and HE will be there for you always. Here, I cannot but recall another incident that will always be imprinted in my memories. I was at Kulwant Hall - a young child waiting eagerly with a rose in my hand for Swami. I was in the fourth row and when Swami came, I tried to get up to him but alas! the Seva Dal stopped me. I was sad but the omnipresent Swami sensed everything and the next moment HE stopped just a few steps away from where I was sitting and cast a smiling glance at me and blessed me. The incident taught me two important values - Discipline and Faith. Have constant faith in HIM.

The values that my Balvikas Gurus taught me have always helped me take the right step forward in life. This incident happened when I was in ninth standard and I am sure most of the children of my age group must have faced the same situation sometime. My school exam was going on and to my utter disbelief I saw some of my classmates going to the toilet and carrying chits with them, of course, for cheating. The paper was tough and I too had this temptation but then, I remembered what my Balvikas Gurus had taught me - Care for remarks and not marks. And, needless to say that I sailed through the exams smoothly with good marks and also remarks.

Music is my life and the first lessons in music were at the Balvikas classes. The sweet bhajans from the Eternal Guru - each bhajan would motivate me to sing even better and connect to him. The training in bhajans gave me the opportunity to sing in Kulwant Hall not once but twice in 2016 and 2017 - a dream cherished by every Balvikas Student who is interested in music.



The Balvikas Classes have taught me that when you put the two keys of karma and bhagya in the lock, you succeed. I know that the Balvikas teachings will always help us to excel in the field of karma and Sai Maa’s blessings will always shower saubhagya and we will succeed.

With this prayer “Janam Janam Mere Saath Raho Hey Sai Nath Bhagwan” I thank Divine Mother for everything.

**Himankini Mishra**  
Rajasthan

## BALVIKAS A HOLY PILGRIMAGE

*I do not give things to people in order to make them richer;  
I give in order to foster devotion and faith in them.  
I give whenever it is desirable to turn the afflicted  
towards the God path.”*

– BABA

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And so has Swami given me a role in His mission – by anointing me as a Balvikas Guru. And what a blissful journey this has been over the passing decades. As I look back trying to put pen to paper about a few scintillating moments, I find myself recalling all those wonderful moments with Bhagavan in His physical form, Bhagavan in dreams, those experiences with Balvikas students and their journeys – and suddenly all memories seem to be gushing in, at an unstoppable speed. How do I simply pick this over that?

I have been blessed with amazing mentors in my journey as a guru and it must have been divinely ordained that way, as all of them have always asked me to seek Him within – and so I have always tried my best to internalise Swami – find the Sai within – and my practice of talking to the Indweller continues till date. My weekly travels to my Balvikas centre from my residence are nothing short of pilgrimages to Parthi for His Darshan - I would be running short of ink and pen if I were to record the innumerable instances where He has made me aware that He is waiting for us – the Balvikas Guru and the students - in the class, much ahead of our entry into the centre. Every preparatory session by me as a Balvikas Guru has been an experience of Swami's Sparshan – through every lesson plan He sends His subtle energy which goes directly into my inner self; as otherwise how can I explain the surreal feeling of contentment and happiness every time I prepare my lesson plans for my Balvikas class.

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I WOULD ADVISE YOU TO PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE ACTIVITIES AND METHODS BY WHICH YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE, THROUGH THE BALVIKAS, TO THE BLOSSOMING OF TALENTS LATENT IN THE CHILDREN, THE EXPANSION OF PROSPERITY OF THE NATION AND THE SECURITY AND WELFARE OF SOCIETY



Every additional class, either for talent-search sessions or cultural or simply because the child needs extra time with the guru, is my Sambhashan with Swami – it is He who counsels the child and sometimes even the parent in dilemma, it is He who scripts the elocutions, essays and song lyrics and drama dialogues; but all the while giving the feeling that I am the doer; so goes my endless conversations with Him: “Swami is the content and narration in sync with the theme, or should I tweak it a little bit? / Oh Swami – I am stuck here – do help me proceed further.../ Oh Bhagavan what do I do to help the child in confusion – please guide me and help him out”... The Karuna Moorthi lovingly holds my hand tenderly and goes on to teach me that He is the Divine writer and that I am only acting out my role. And it would be foolish on my part if I fail to comprehend that these lessons suffused with the highest truth are apparently personalised messages to uplift my spiritual consciousness. Thus superficially speaking, the role a balvikas guru might merely entail conducting weekly balvikas classes, preparing for the classes and generally guiding the students to follow the human values. But what is deeply entrenched in this whole process is a grand design by my Beloved Bhagavan, and I am forever grateful to Him for bestowing such countless golden moments in my journey as a Guru in Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas.

“I bring you close to Me, so that your thoughts and mind are centred around Me, and your story becomes My Story!... but My Story is to make you - Storyless!” says Mother Sai . As I conclude this humble offering to my Loving Sai, at this moment, I am indeed Storyless, as every Golden Moment in my Balvikas is about finding Him and Him only within me and around me.

**R. Vimala**  
Tamilnadu

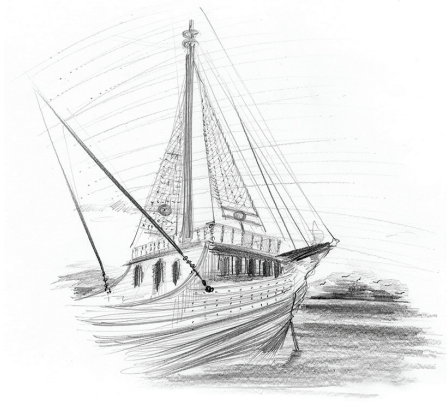
## BALVIKAS MY JOURNEY WITH SAI

‘Sai Ram’ had already become the first utterance of the day in my family even before I was born. As a toddler, instead of playing with a doll I would like to play with the photo of Baba. At times I would babble out the bhajan imitating others singing at home.

The divine Journey soaked with the quest for spirituality started at the age of five when I was put into “Balvikas”. I did not know then what to do, how to do and why to do. But there was an incessant chant of ‘Sai Ram’ in some remote corner of my heart. An unknown love towards that figure on photo was in constant run.

I was amazed to listen to Baba’s miracles during His childhood days from my Balvikas Guru. The inspiring words of my Guru along with some interesting stories helped my spirituality sprout into a sapling. I waited fervently for the arrival of Sunday for the next Balvikas class to listen to some miracles, stories and sayings of Baba. I would learn slokas from the Gita, extracts from Veda by heart to applied in my life.

Fantastic were the days of my Balvikas participation in different competitions like extempore, debate, song, dance etc. - enacting roles like Krishna, Nachiketa, Laxman and getting applause from the audience would help my spiritual flight take aerie routes. Receiving prizes on different stages across the state added fuel to the flight. Salutes galore to my Guru and the Balvikas for igniting the ‘Quest for Sai’ in me.



When I became aware of my own existence, when the sapling of spirituality started spreading its branches in me, I yearned for answers to some questions like – “Baba, do you really love me? If yes, how should I know this? Do I really deserve to be your child? Why don’t you talk to me... etc.?” I looked expectantly at the photo with tears trickling down my cheek. But so loving, compassionate was Baba that He would answer by dropping flowers from the top of the photo.

My journey with Sai is still on as I have taken the responsibility of a Balvikas Guru in Samithi. When I understood that Balvikas is the best way to realise how life should be lived, based on values, I have never been distracted from my path. I started diving deep into the children to make them discover their essential being following the guidelines of Balvikas. The “Educare of Balvikas” is the best way for the school-going children to get them transformed. This is the only education that makes every child recognise the divinity hidden in them. The discipline I have learnt, the essence I have got from Balvikas help me amazingly to attract the tiny tots.

By the grace of Baba, my life runs in its own course at the moment without being harmed or harassed by any mundane modern or material spirit. The Sai-soaked life has offered me a life of simplicity and sacrifice without fret or worries to anyone around.

Still do I drink the lees of my life nourishing the Golden moments and memories I have left far behind.

**Bedamati Nayak**  
Odisha





## BALVIKAS LOVE IN ACTION

The journey through Balvikas had been the journey towards purification. That winter morning was a Sunday. I don't remember what date and year it was. However, reminiscences are sculpted as an epitaph on the walls of my heart, which could never be washed away in the waves and surges of life. Balvikas students and Sai devotees had all gathered in the campus of the Sathya Sai community centre on the KVK Road for Narayan Seva.

Three Omkars, followed by a garland of beautiful Sai Bhajans marked the beginning of the Seva session. The percussion of Bikas bhai on dara, enchanting voice of Soni bhai and many others turned the ambience into a pious one. Along with the melodious Bhajans, under the supervision of respected Harish uncle, we were ready for seva.

At first, the elder brothers from Balvikas were given the chance to serve the Narayana, and we the students of Balvikas Group-II were silently watching what was going on. Until now, I had always seen the Narayans with their toes and fingers bandaged in withering cloth. Now before me and my friend, for the first time the cotton and dressing was removed.. "Yuck! How filthy they are!" One of my fellow friends at Balvikas grunted in a low voice.

And I added, "Leprosy is a dangerous disease." I continued, "I have heard from my mother that slowly all the fingers and toes melt away." Sairam Manmath bhai warned which meant that we should be silent. A Balvikas Guru does not have to give imperative instructions unlike a school teacher. "Sairam" simply meant that we had to place our forefinger before our mouth and zip our lips. He always warned and smiled thereafter. Turning around, I saw that Sister Prava and Prakash bhai were worried about the breakfast of Balvikas students participating in the Seva . "Stand in a queue. Have you taken your food ?" The signs of concern on their forehead indicated their love for us. Sister Prava was not only a sister but a mother, when we were outside home.



Harsha bhai came with a basket full of Dettol (antiseptic liquid), cotton, bandage and ointment tubes. Placing the basket down he said, "Now ! It is the turn of the group two students. Whoever wants to do Narayan Seva, come forward." Even though I was standing in the front row, I didn't know why my foot was not moving ahead as if something within me was holding me back. Harish uncle could sense my hesitation and read the furrows on my forehead. He called me close to him and said, "What happened? Why are you so worried?" Harish uncle was a doctor by profession and I knew it well that he had the answers to my inquisitive expressions. Therefore to satisfy my curiosity, I asked a question, "Sairam uncle! Is not this disease contagious? How could I touch the wounds of the Narayana with my hands? What if I get contaminated?"

Harish uncle gave a brief smile and firmly said, "No! Leprosy doesn't spread like that, the bacteria that cause leprosy, cannot even cross and penetrate the human skin. However, it is believed that these bacteria can spread through the snot of our noses. Still, there is no reason to fear. Remember that from contamination point of view, this Bacteria is even weaker than the virus responsible for common flu. In other words, it means that you might catch common cold, if a friend of yours is suffering from cold and is sitting beside you. But, you will not get contaminated by touching this person now. They need help. Due to lack of Seva and personal care their wounds are growing in size. They first need to be cleaned and they must be dressed. Now, look at me how I am anointing the ointment. Nothing will happen!"

Putting on a pair of gloves, Harish uncle demonstrated how to clean and dress those distorted fingers.

Thereafter, I took a cotton swab, dipped it in antiseptic liquid and started to clean the wound of one Narayana. I could see the smile on his face. As I was cleaning the wounds, my heart was getting cleaned too. The disgust, the fear, the obnoxiousness and many other purse were being cleaned away. My heart was feeling a kind of happiness that I had never experienced before. I felt as if I was serving God in the Narayanas, service not for the sake of others but for our own salvation.

Today, I was able to realise the meaning of the sentence written on the wall of the Cuttack Sai Centre - "Service to Mankind is Service to God" and "Why fear, when I am here?" These two sentences often drew my attention. I felt good to read these rhythmically arranged phrases spoken by Bhagavan. I used to gaze at them for a while and believed in the efficacy of Swami's declarations.



**Pradipta Sundar Moharana**  
Odisha

*Note:*

*The Arts in the article are own creations of the author.*



## BALVIKAS UNITY OF RELIGIONS

As Balvikas students, we were introduced to the world without religious and societal division. We were taught to believe in only one Gospel, i.e. the Gospel of LOVE. “Love All, Serve All” is the eternal mantra to be followed. “Live life with love” was the prime agenda taught through different moralistic stories and Shlokas.

We were taught about different religions that eventually preach the same thing. There is one religion i.e. of Love. UNITY was basically the target set forth to achieve. Attending these classes made me respect other religions and understand their traditions and cultures. We made acquaintance with different religions and their scriptures, also array of meaningful shlokas, Not only were we spiritually enriched but our confidence increased manifold. Being a balvikas student means being an all-rounder. I was made to take part in different competitions. The competitions as the name suggests were not made to compare and make the kids compete. They were meant to make us confident of our skills. All of us would be awarded with prizes irrespective of the level of our performance. This way all of us used to be happy and not be jealous of each other. This became a way of life, to be satisfied with our skills and try being better, not to compete with others but for self satisfaction.



BHARAT STANDS FOR ALL THAT IS SACRED. SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, IT HAS BEEN A MODEL AND AN IDEAL FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD. THERE IS TRUTH IN THE AIR OF BHARAT. THERE IS DHARMA IN THE DUST OF BHARAT. THERE IS LOVE IN THE SANDS OF BHARAT. AND THERE IS COMPASSION IN THE WATER OF BHARAT.

It has been an immensely amazing journey so far where the Balvikas teaching have been like guiding Light through tough as well as good times. I am thankful for Baba's grace that we had excellent teachers who honed our different Life skills.

**Shubhangi Kala**  
Dehradun



## BALVIKAS SPREADING HAPPINESS

I have been associated with Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas since 1991, the year in which I had lost my brother. With the grace of Swami, we got to know about Sri Sathya Sai Organisation at the moment when we all were plunged in deep sorrow. There started my journey with my beloved Sai Maa. I spent 9 years in Balvikas. It was really a blissful experience to be a part of Balvikas classes. The lessons of Balvikas classes have made drastic changes in my life. I started following the path of Love All Serve All, Help Ever Hurt Never and Ceiling on Desires. Bhagvan's dictum "Your Life is My message" became the goal of my life. Gradually, I started assisting my guru in taking Balvikas Group I and II. I started contributing towards Samithi's programmes like Bhajans, Narayan Seva, Study Circle, Prashanti Seva and Balvikas training camps.

Meanwhile, I got married. My in-laws did not believe in Swami. I missed all the activities of Sai Samithi. But I did not lose my heart and continued praying to Swami for His grace and making me an instrument for His Divine Mission. One day, Swami came in my dream. I was sitting in Swami's small room in Prashanti and He told me, "Go and take Balvikas classes at home". With the consent of my family, I started taking classes at my home. Now, this was the time to recollect all my learnings. Gradually, Swami gave me an opportunity to take part in Samithi's programmes like Bhajans, Narayan Seva, Study Circle, and Vidyajyoti programme etc. With the passage of time, I have realised that the Balvikas classes have developed my overall personality. Swami's teachings have given me such self-confidence, positivity and sense of satisfaction that I never feel depressed in my professional as well as personal life. The path of five human values and 5 D's, taught in Balvikas classes have made my life simpler, easier and happier. I humbly thank Swami for making me a part of His wonderful Divine Mission. I dedicate all my achievements at the lotus feet of Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

**Dr. Silony Gupta**  
Haridwar



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## BALVIKAS BLOSSOMING OF EXCELLENCE

**M**y humble salutations at the Divine Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Baba. I feel honoured and It is my good fortune that I am sharing my life's experience at this 'Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas'. Perhaps, it's been an evolution in my life since my early childhood, when Swami picked me up as a small bud of flower in HIS vast valley of garden. This small bud was nurtured with the Water and Soil of Love and teachings from my Balvikas Gurus. Besides the principles of 'Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema and Ahimsa', Balvikas classes taught me how to be compassionate, tolerant and disciplined. When I look back in my life, the principles of Ethics and Leadership qualities inculcated by my parents and Balvikas Gurus have helped me in shaping my character. As a businessman and as a Trustee of Swami's State Trust, Swami helps and guides me at all the levels and shows HIS presence always at the time of need.



**“ Living with God is Education,  
Living for God is Service,  
Living in God is Realisation.”**

-Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

As the ultimate aim of Balvikas is to let the child realise that divinity dwells in him, I wish this movement of Balvikas started by Swami should engulf the whole world so that the world becomes a better place to live where there is no hatred, envy and other evils. I thank and pray to Bhagavan to always be with us and this Balvikas movement should continue for many more millenniums.

**Atul Soni**  
Punjab



## BALVIKAS IGNITING SPARK OF SEVA

**B**alvikas is not just a programme. It's a way of life. It's the foundation of character-building that starts with short moral stories and value-based games, which gradually reaches beyond boundaries and soaks into the sub-conscious mind with faith, positivity and compassion.

“Karagre Vasate Lakshmi” taught me God and Goodness resides within me, I learnt it by laughing and playing in my younger years. Bhagwan Baba’s Chinna Kathas, came along the way with my inner self, they continue to boost my morale when faced with situations in my day-to-day life. By the time I reached the 3rd Group, various field work projects and seva activities instilled in me the spirit of Teamwork and taught me the beautiful value of Compassion. Swami’s motto of Love All Serve All struck a chord in me and inspired me to take up a profession in which I could forever serve my fellow human beings.

I learnt empathy which helps me in my profession as a Doctor to understand my patients’ need and thus aid in their better healing. Whenever I am faced with a difficult moment in my profession, I do ‘Namasmarna’ and pray to Swami and surrender the case to Swami to do the best for the patient, and it’s miraculous to see the difficulty disappearing before my eyes. This feeling of devotion and surrender to the Divine is what the Balvikas movement is about.

I express my Heartfelt gratitude that in this whirlwind of stress and chaos, I have Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as a true friend, father, mother, philosopher and guide in the roller coaster ride of life! I am what I am because of Swami. My whole life is encompassed by golden moments because of the Divine gift of Balvikas.

**Dr. Dipty Ojha**  
Uttar Pradesh





## BALVIKAS INNER MORAL COMPASS

Let me admit here that I did not take to Balvikas like the proverbial duck to water. I found the idea of giving up cricket with my friends for one day a week a pain. I rebelled against going, continuously. But that didn't stop my Guru from persistently prodding me to attend classes which is a testament to her immense capacity for compassion and love for the task of moulding children.

For me, Balvikas meant interacting with a wide set of people – whether it was in the preparations for cultural festivities or for special occasions. This allowed me to slowly but surely come out of my shell into the world in a profession that requires constant engagement with people in difficult circumstances. On many occasions, as a lawyer, clients and sometimes fellow lawyers will push you to do the wrong thing. I have tried to be guided not just by the letter of the law but that internal moral compass built over the years which gives me the strength to resist when I am asked to do the wrong thing.

I suppose where it really helped me was to learn to develop an inner moral compass. Of understanding right and wrong not just simply because of what I'm told but learn to test it on different aspects and seek the truth for myself and more importantly, to learn to develop values as an inner moral compass. Balvikas to me was not just about learning a simple set of stories, or lessons, or shlokas or bhajans. Our gurus made sure that we understood the underlying meanings and the reasons for each of them. That spiritual education was not just about memorising by rote but about trying to get to the inner meaning and putting it into practice.

It is perhaps eighteen years ago that I last attended a Balvikas class as a student. I have changed a lot since then and so has the world around us. If at all one has to maintain one's sense of balance and perspective in the world as it is today, perhaps holding on to that inner moral compass is necessary – one that Balvikas gave me.



Alok Prasanna Kumar  
Karnataka

## BALVIKAS FOUNDATION OF LIFE

I remember being extremely shy in there, barely participating in any balvikas activities. I barely even understood anything going on in class. But never did I not want to go to class. Every Saturday, I was looking forward to being there.

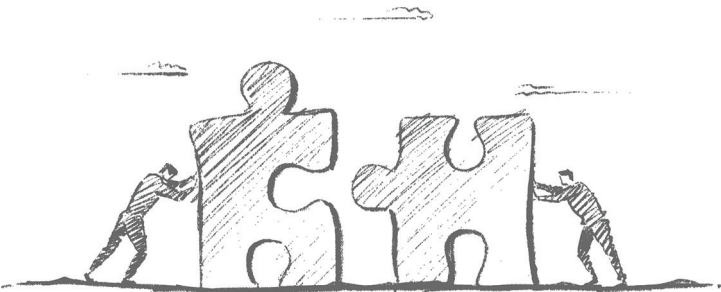
One very important practice Balvikas taught me was seva. To help ever and hurt never. To perform service as a routine in life. To make time for creating a little change in somebody's life, not only for them, but also because the euphoria and satisfaction received from the act are unparalleled.

I have received much from Balvikas. It shaped my mind as a child and it nurtured my heart as a teenager. It taught me very important qualities such as anger management and time management. Swami taught me to see God in everybody and to treat everyone with love and respect. Matru devo bhava, Pitru devo bhava, Acharya devo bhava and Athithi devo bhava. I have learnt to love everybody and everything. One of the things I struggle most in life with is believing the fact that everything happens for the good. I remember picking a debate with my Guru about it. But Swami has made me realise on numerous occasions that this in fact is true. Talking to Swami casually and in a friendly manner when I'm alone is my little secret. This habit has prevented me from making many bad decisions in life.

I got an opportunity to speak in Parthi for the annual alumni meet. I was the youngest speaker, and I was very intimidated by the distinguished speakers who spoke before me. They recounted their experiences, the miracles they witnessed in life and their physical encounters with Swami. There I was, without any such big 'miracles'. My mention of a 'miraculous' incident was of my lost book being returned to me in my 7th standard before my exams. Surprisingly, I got a huge round of applause for that particular incident and at the end of my speech... overwhelming.

IT TAUGHT ME VERY  
IMPORTANT QUALITIES SUCH  
AS ANGER MANAGEMENT  
AND TIME MANAGEMENT.

Smitha Srinidhi  
Karnataka



## BALVIKAS MENDING LIVES

In Japan, there is a form of “repair art” called Kintsugi. The word comes from the Japanese words Kin (gold) and Tsugi (join). It literally means, “join to gold”. Kintsugi is also known as Kintsukuroi, meaning “mending to gold”.

The Japanese believe that broken pottery pieces are not useless or meant to be thrown away or to be kept hidden. On the contrary, they believe that breaks and chinks add to the value and that imperfections should be embraced. And so, they take a mix of liquid gold, liquid silver or lacquer dusted with powdered gold to join the pieces of any broken or shattered pottery.

The scars or breaks on the pottery become highlighted with the gold and form beautiful shining patterns of their own. The broken pottery becomes even more precious now, thanks to the shining golden scars.

The philosophy behind it is a break does not signify the end of the world. And that each scar is precious because it signifies age, experience, and finally wisdom that lets the inner light shine. The cracks with gold in between thus signify the openings through which the inner light can shine.

Why did I mention Kintsugi? Because Balvikas is real life Kintsugi. Balvikas training does not simply stop at holding us together when life at times breaks us up. Instead, it pushes and motivates us to make us realise that every break is an opportunity, an opening, to let our light shine through.

It was the beginning of 2013 and my Balvikas Guru called me and said that I have to give a talk in Kulwant Hall during the All India Balvikas Alumni Meet on 13th January, 2013. I quaked inwardly at the thought.

On the D-day as I faced the audience in the humongous Kulwant Hall, I felt the nervous pangs gnaw at my gut. I started to speak and I heard my own voice quivering at the outset. As I continued to speak, simultaneously the thought occurred to me, “I am not facing the audience alone, Swami is facing them with me.”



Suddenly, the rest of the speech became easy, for I felt Swami’s strength coursing within me.

It was the year 2016, a lot had changed in my life. I was older, went through some tumultuous times that threatened to break me, but couldn’t because no matter how big the problem, Swami always made sure that He appeared bigger in my eyes, thoughts, and prayers. He must have been pleased to a certain extent with me for suddenly that year Mrs. Santwana Baruah again called and said I had been selected for the Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas Achievement Award to be given during the Balvikas Alumni Meet of 2016. I was stunned for a while and wondered ‘why?’ Things were a little tough for me the preceding year and nothing seemed excellent in life from any angle whatsoever to me!

And right at the beginning of the very next year, Swami suddenly decides to give me an Excellence Award! I looked at Swami’s picture nearby and said, “You are the Mother of ironies too!”

Yet somewhere deep within me, I felt that Swami was watching me throughout and this was His way of telling me, “You are under My direct watch!” So it was not so much the award as the feeling that He chose to give me the award during a testing time to let me know that no matter what, I am worthy enough for Him. And that’s all that matters.

THE YEARS OF BALVIKAS  
TRAINING I RECEIVED AS  
A STUDENT - TRAINING  
WHICH TAUGHT US TO GET  
CLOSER AND CLOSER TO  
GOD, SUDDENLY AT THIS  
MOMENT BORE FRUIT. I  
KNEW THAT SWAMI IS AS  
CLOSE TO ME AS I THINK  
HIM TO BE.

As I prayed in the evening, I felt tears slid across my cheeks and I whispered, “Swami you’re making me feel like a winner even when I feel like a loser!”

Pat came the reply, “You’re a loser only if you lose Me!”

The years of Balvikas training I received as a student - training which taught us to get closer and closer to God, suddenly at this moment bore fruit. I knew that Swami is as close to me as I think Him to be.

The Master Alchemist was working on this piece of lead to change it to gold. I could almost hear Him saying, “Bangaroo”, in His soft, tender voice.

A year later, I again received another chance to offer Arathi after the bhajans at Parthi, during the Balvikas Alumni meet of 2017. I closed my eyes while waving the flame around Him, and suddenly I felt His watchful eyes me,

“My eyes are always open,” I heard Him say. And suddenly I felt His eyes smiling brightly in my heart, as the Arathi flames in the bowl crackled and danced merrily.

I looked at the flames and for an instant felt the lines of separation, of duality - of the alchemist being separate from the gold begin to merge...

With a start, I realised, that the alchemist, the process of alchemy, and the gold are one. That the dancer and the dance are one, that the dance cannot be separated from the dancer. Nataraj is the dancer and we are the dance!

And I was home again.

Anuja Pathak  
Assam



## BALVIKAS LIFE CHANGER

Prior to cruising through my invaluable sojourn with Balvikas, I would like to offer absolute gratitude to my parents and my Balvikas Gurus, for, the most precious moment in my life was when they introduced and linked me to Dear Swami... my Beloved Lord - Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas in true sense is the 'vikas' or development and expansion of the as-yet-tender, fledgling mind, body and soul, nurturing of the hitherto fragile essence. The curriculum has a life-changing impact as well as a lifelong impression on the impressionable psyche of a young individual. The well-integrated progression from one group to another is utterly seamless, and the fruits are realised in the years to come when confronted with real-life situations. Through early years conditioning, just like gold which undergoes immense processes to be churned into beautiful ornaments which are worn to enhance the beauty of a person, BV aligns one's persona to the inner beauty of values, instilling courage to assimilate the facts in a situation, take decisions and walk the path of righteousness under any condition or circumstance.

The concept of Daivya Preeti in Group 1, Paap Bheeti in Group 2 and Sangha Neeti in Group 3, blossoms divine feelings in a child's soul. Balvikas programme actually deepened my understanding of our culture, rituals and religion. It broadened my understanding of the major religions of the world, their practices and their refined integration with each other, while being in sync with the maxim of Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man.

It imparted the true reasoning behind certain rituals and their inner significance, clearing a lot of curiosities at that tender age, which were otherwise brushed aside with an unsatisfying explanation that as these were practised by our ancestors, we need to follow them.

It also taught me to love my motherland, understand and respect our great culture. It fuelled an avid interest and helped me learn about the great Saints of our country and their contribution to the entire humanity, overcoming the boundaries of religions, especially to mention the Guru-Shishya parampara of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda.

The indelible impact Balvikas created on my individual self, till date refreshingly gushes as two wondrous streams harmoniously reining me in, while blending and enriching the river of my life and living.



BALVIKAS HAS PROMINENTLY  
IMPRESSED UPON MY  
GROWTH AS A HUMAN  
BEING THROUGH MICRO  
AND MACRO LEVELS

The importance of Service to Man as Service to God and The Eternal Concept of Karma.

Balvikas has prominently impressed upon my growth as a human being through micro and macro levels -

Personal... Family... Society... Creation.

It has granted me confidence to live life as it's supposed to be lived - Simple Living... High Thinking, enormously influencing my thinking and reasoning abilities in personal as well as professional life.

Where Family is concerned, BV has led me to understand the significance of being part of a family, to respect and value parents, elders and each member of the family.

As regards Society, it inculcated respect for every individual while inspiring me to be aware of the divine spark in each one.

Balvikas kindled within me the spirit of Oneness existing in the entire creation, to have reverence for the Universe and everything in it, all life... knowing the Source to be the One Almighty. Finally, it blessed me to love Beloved Bhagavan as my Father, Mother, Guide and the closest and best friend ever. These golden moments in Sri Sathya Sai Balvikas are the most valuable treasure, residing safe in my heart, to be cherished through all my journeys in life.

**Sangram Bhimsen Kondel**  
Maharashtra

## BALVIKAS TRYST WITH DIVINITY

God is the greatest gift one can ever get in life because the ultimate goal of each and every being is happiness. And, as Bhagavan Baba puts it, “Happiness is union with God (alone).” The Balvikas movement is a magnificent and most-needed one because it introduces the being to God at an early age so that the being can benefit lifelong. It was Balvikas that led me eventually to become a student of my dear Lord, my Swami, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. As His student, I gathered many enlightening episodes and I wish to share this which conveys a beautiful aspect of His love and message.

Once Swami narrated an analogy to my classmate in the interview room which is poignant and heart-rending. Swami told him,

“You know, when you organise a marriage, there is an order in which food is served. First, the guests are served with all the delicacies. It is that the relatives have their food. After them, the close family and the couple have their food. If there is food remaining, the workers and helpers at the wedding hall are given food to take home for their kith and kin. If food still remains, the beggars and poor people nearby are called and given food. And then, if there is still food remaining, it is thrown. The dogs and crows come and eat them.”

At this point, Swami made a statement that wrenches the heart.

“My condition when I seek Love is like that of the crows and the dogs! People offer their love and devotion to everyone they find and only the discards are offered to God.”

At this point, the boy was in tears. But Swami only had a gentle smile. He also gave an assurance,

“If anyone offers their love to God in their youth, they earn the right to demand from the Lord anything, anytime. Youth is the most sacred time in life which should be offered to the Lord.”

Love is all that the Lord seeks...

**Aravind Balasubramanya**  
Puttaparthi





## A PSYCHOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE IMPACT OF BALVIKAS EDUCATION ON CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN IN INDIA - A SYNOPSIS

The purpose of this research was to study the impact of Balvikas education on children's character development. As BV education focusses on the practice of specific values in life as an implication of character development, Rokeach Value Survey was used to measure the application of BV related values.

The current research had a sample of 26,371 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 Balvikas boys between the ages of 10 and 16 years, 7,031 Balvikas girls between the ages of 10 and 16 years, 2,971 Balvikas gurus with a 5+ years of teaching experience, 2,193 Balvikas alumni who had graduated from the programme in the past five years and 7,639 parents whose children are currently in the Balvikas 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 BV related terminal values and nine other societal terminal values; nine BV related instrumental values and nine other societal instrumental values.

It was assumed that if there was a positive impact from BV education, the respondents would rank the BV related values as greater in importance than the other societal values in the Rokeach Value Survey.

26,371 

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Lives Impacted

14 Indian States 

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(East, West, North & South)

7 States 

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Urban Population

7 States 

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Rural Population

6,537  Balvikas Boys


7,031  Balvikas Girls

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Aged between 10 and 16 Years

  
**2,971** Balvikas Gurus  
+5 years of teaching experience

  
**2,193** Balvikas Alumni  
Graduated from the programme in past five years

  
**7,639** Parents  
Whose children are currently in Balvikas Programme years

AS BV 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 BALVIKAS RELATED VALUES.

Statistical analysis of the data indicate that all the five groups, BV boys, BV girls, BV gurus, BV alumni and BV parents, ranked BV 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 BV related terminal and instrumental values amongst the groups.

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

There was a closer proximity and agreement on BV related values amongst the Gurus and the BV parents. This does show a positive impact of the Balvikas 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.

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





THE END OF WISDOM IS FREEDOM.  
THE END OF CULTURE IS PERFECTION.  
THE END OF KNOWLEDGE IS LOVE.  
THE END OF EDUCATION IS CHARACTER.

- *BABA*

**Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Trust**  
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