

## Innovative Management of Sathya Sai Schools

*R. Hira*

November 21, 2001.

Dear delegates from 47 Sai Schools. Greetings and Pranaams at the Divine Lotus Feet. At the Central Coordinators meeting during the 70th Birthday we all were wondering what is the most precious and permanent gift of offering at the Lotus Feet. An action plan was drawn out for the 75 schools adopted as well directly managed to implement Sai Education Programme. Today it is a dream come true, an earnest prayer answered, where we have recorded on his 76th birthday over 2000 schools have been exposed to Human Values of which 47 are directly managed by the Institute or devotees or the SSSO. It is the grace of SAI and efforts of all dedicated workers to witness and experience this milestone of the 1st Sathya Sai Schools' world conference.

To start the schools is easy but the greatest challenge is to continuously improve and achieve the highest standard. For this purpose, our session for management is vital. Academics and Administration are the two wings, equally important to reach our goals of the best school in every country. My first prayer to all of you is to have a clear goal that we have to build the best reputation and be conscious of the importance for spiritual styles and management rather than the conventional styles. I have divided my presentation into 2 parts:

- First is Administration (I have prepared a booklet "Suggestions for Innovative management of Sathya Sai Schools"; 30 copies are available at the registration counter – one for each country).
- Second is examples of Sai Style of Management.

There are all kinds of prototypes for school management systems – from Harvard Business School or the Indian Institute of Management, etc. But, we have to adopt, learn and abide only by the "SAI BABA MANAGEMENT STYLE", which is unique and effective. Swami has shown the example of management of educational institutions since 1936, when he as the manager Himself, used to sing a song "Let our daily journey move on and on with Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema". So the first rule of Sai Management is:

- Sai School Principal now or in the future must be a qualified Human Values specialist. (It is necessary to sponsor the man ahead of the project.)

Of special importance are the many unwritten, but valid rules of Sai Management. At this conference I propose that we take a decision of conducting more research and publishing a small booklet on the management style of Sai Schools. This would eliminate the potential confusion and assist all new schools as well.

Another issue that comes to mind is, one Sai school representative mentioned to Baba we are facing difficulties to continue the school. Without asking, Baba arranged for providing financial assistance directly to the overseas schools. Later on Baba told me and Jumsai he arranged the money. This shows the love, concern and great interest of Swami. However this should not happen again – we should never bother Swami for financial resources. I therefore suggest that for every Sai School we should adopt a self-sustaining system for financial resources, which are provided by the Patrons of the school, the board of trustees or voluntary contributions from devotees. In exceptional cases, requests could be made to central co-coordinators or zonal chairman to make arrangements.

So the second rule of Sai management is to first make a budget, then arrange resources and only then to commit for the schools. Also it is important to mention here, it is not advisable to recruit teachers or other staff with no or low salaries. Our high standard must not be compromised due to the lack of money. Therefore the third rule is to lower or balance the operation costs by using retired experienced and devoted teachers and staff as done here in Prashanti. (The teachers are older, more knowledgeable and mature). This policy of recruiting devotee teachers will add great strength to our schools.

The power of Sai name and the love of devotees for Sai can achieve any task. Few years ago, one of the Sai School directors casually mentioned to me, the primary school children walk back and forth 7 kilometers each day. This was due to no public transportation and lack of financial resources. Immediately the heart of one devotee melted by imagining that lord Sai himself in the form of little children was walking 7 kilometers to school in the hot sun, so he purchased a school bus and sent to that school which was effectively used. Therefore the 4th rule of Sai management is to discreetly search for human and capital resources within the national or international Sai Organization. This incident signifies that even basic amenities and comforts are not available to majority of the children.

Poverty continues to exist in larger measures. For this Baba puts a question, when there is no rain, the tree by the roadside continues to nourish, while in the Paddy field plants die. The reason Swami says is that the roots of the tree have gone deep down to collect the moisture in the subsoil, while paddy roots are shallow. So the 5th rule of Sai management is that school managers and teachers have to go deep into the roots and resources of the self, on which all great institutions are built.

Swami said that he had no money to start the first Bukapatram School and Easwarma gave her gold chain as a resource. How many of us will do this? This is the lesson of self-commitment to the cause – Each of us and our lives are the capital, which if worldly, will attract infinite support of the society. The flagship schools of Sai are to be the models of sacrifice and selflessness, which is the highest power that will attract the support of all – when the mission of management is dharma or righteous cause, all resources are bestowed.

From this episode and the gradual unfolding of the Divine educational plan in the past 5 decades, I say with conviction that the role and potential of SAI organization to do various kinds of seva in SAI Schools is immense. And, I pray that we take a joint decision to call upon all the 5 wings of the S.O. to make intensive cooperation with SAI Schools. The SAI Schools project in all countries must receive first priority of seva from all devotees, and S.O. SAI School seva is a long term permanent seva project or rather a life work and the objective of making the whole world into Prashanti Nilayam can be achieved only through SAI Schools. This SAI School seva is the golden bridge or link between SAI Devotion and SAI Seva.

The management has to emulate the SAI style – so how does Baba himself manage the schools? Swami is himself the principal and chancellor.

“Baba lives amidst His students, personally ministering to their every need in sickness, health, in time of sorrow and rejoicing and for a good quality of life for them, of simple living and high thinking. He knows them by name and about them. He counsels them and receives their petitions and helps them to overcome their problems. He personally conducts tutorials of groups of students sitting near and around Him, teaches them, gives them spiritual instructions, widens their knowledge and horizons, tells them stories out of the past and present to explain things. He goes to their hostels to do spot checks and have direct personal experience of their living conditions. He enters the hostel kitchens, seeing the menus and ensuring enough nourishing food is being provided. He participates in the activities of the students, even composing musical scores, bhajans and authoring plays for them to perform.

He personally spends time as the Director and Drama Master for the student plays to be performed; as the Conductor and Music Teacher of the students’ orchestra, as the Chief Coach in games, sports, gymnastics, acrobatics; indeed in everything, everywhere and at all times His life is their life, never for Himself. On the occasions of convocations and/or passing out of college and schools, Baba is always present, personally hands out the awards, has photographs taken along with the students, exuding His love and care for them and making it a memorable occasion for their later lives. He places the students who have completed their education by identifying the aptitude of each of them – some to do doctorates before getting into the working life, some as members of the faculty and teachers in His educational institutions, some to work in the administration of Prashanti Nilayam and Brindaban and some to go out into the world.”

If we have to conceptualize the SAI management system – It can be called the “Gurukul System” or “ The Guru’s Family System”, where the disciple becomes a spiritual child of the teacher. The ancient Gurukul theories, which are now adopted by Baba are ageless and timeless, equally practical and applicable in this era of space age and technology.

SAI has said my students are my treasure. This is an important statement for management of SAI Schools - Our precious students in all SAI Schools have to be treated as treasure.

The term my students are not restricted to the 3 campuses of Brindavan, Anantapur and Prashanthi but comprise all Sathya Sai Schools everywhere to those who follow Sai principles.

This proved by Swami great compassion and sense of equality by giving the diplomas with his own divine hands to overseas students. Also as sister Kanu mentioned in her ladies’ day talk, that a little girl’s illness was cured by Swami in 9(?) weeks rather than 36 weeks required by the doctors. There are others incidents like Swami appearing to the students in Thai school or manifesting his divinity in a six months old Canadian (?) Sai School, where he proved that he was omnipresent by extending (?) Newer garland to 75 inches from the smaller original one. These and other incidents earnestly urge upon overseas and distant Sai schools to unconditionally accept Swami’s policy of equality and omnipresence, provided there is this factor of faith in Sai by members of school management. Treasure represents treasury – the investment of faith creates the treasure of young & pure hearts.

So spirituality is the only true root and origin of anything and everything from which all things begin and are derived. It is therefore imperative that all Sai schools be conscious of the aim and goal of management in spirituality. One day the president of India had written a letter to Swami saying the completion of super specialty hospital in Prashanti Nilayam was a miracle. So one lecturer told Swami that this achievement would make an excellent case study for our M.B.A. students. Baba paused looked at the lecturer and said –“No, it is not management” (that achieved this), -and then raising his eyes he recited a sloka-.

***Na Karmana, Na Prajaya Dhanena,  
Thyagenaike Amrutatwa Manshu.***

Not by action, not by progeny, not by wealth, but by sacrifice alone can immortality be achieved. **The lay point in Sai school management is Tyaga**, which is sacrifice, selflessness and renunciation of self-interest that enables the manager to achieve the impossible. So we have to renounce “my style” to SAI style of management and then as Baba said the hospital will survive 1,000 years not because of the bricks and mortar but because of the eternal spirit of sacrifice,

and so too our every Sai school will also survive a 1000 years. Each of you has done so much of noble sacrifice and selfless work. Sai is so happy with all our work.

In his historic divine message opening of the Sai University He announced, “ The main purpose of establishing the Institute of Higher Learning was to help them cultivate self knowledge- Self Confidence, so that each one of them can learn self-sacrifice and earn self realization. He defined the goal as spiritual upliftment, self discovery and social Service through love and detachment” – This is the goal of every Sai School management.

**In January 1968 Dr. John Hislop asked Baba – “Why does Baba love regular schools?”** Swami replied – “Religious schools would appeal only to the religious, whereas Baba’s task is **to raise the general public into devotion and spiritual life**. He further said: One aspect of Baba’s task is to reform education and if that were impossible he would not have incarnated. Now having come be assured the task will be accomplished. But not as fast as impatient humans would like. By an intensive TV campaign a change can be made fast, but it would only be temporary. The change that Baba is bringing about may be slow, such as his colleges – but the methods will be effective.”

The divine clue from this revelation is that most of the 47 schools today shall become colleges & universities and let us pray that by 94th Birthday or earlier we have at least 5 S.S. Universities in the 5 continents to achieve Swami’s mission.

There are 3 important lines of thought that arise out of Baba’s definition of a manager and those to be emulated. These 3 lines suggest that a manager with a good head, and a large heart is one who raises his sights to look at and reach out for the ever broadening horizons, beneficial to human beings, considers himself as an active catalyst, encouraging and contributing to Baba’s 5 fold path of 5 human values, benefiting nations and societies. This is the definition of a Sai manager.

One day I told Swami, we should have a school for training the office bearers of the S.O. Do you know what he said – “NO SCHOOL”, because office bearers are doing seva, which is born out of love and love is born out of devotion. You don’t school people in devotion – it is the self-effort and urge to simply serve and merge. To a question asked from Swami: “who is a real student”, the answer he gave is: “ The Teacher”.

Then he said, "I shall be the student which my pupils can emulate". This must be the motto inspiring the teacher. Such a teacher has surely recognized his duty. Then he further said: "The Teacher must come down to the level of the Student, if he does not and still continues to teach, the fate of the student and the school is best left to the imagination." **He finally said: "This is the process called DESCENT."** As the management – so is the teacher, and as the teacher – so is the pupil.

And in this context, I suggest we pray to Bhagwan to give one common motto to all SAI Schools, whether Love All, Serve All, or any other.

The Sai University Motto is **Sathyam Bruyath, Dharma C.... – which is Speak the truth and act in Dharma.**

- While summing up my presentation, I would like to emphasize that the globalization of SAI Schools must not dilute the principles of Sai Management, which is the reason to host this conference in the divine presence.
- We must all have the constant consciousness that it's not an ordinary school but it is the Sathya Sai School, where each student and teacher has the fortune and privilege of coming directly in contact with Supreme Divinity.

That we are not managers of schools but seekers of truth through school management. School management is the means

**END OF EXTRACT**