

Region 4 (Midlands)

Leicester Diwali & New Year Programme.

The Diwali and New Year celebrations at Leicester were not one to be taken lightly! There were rows upon rows of mouth-watering delicacies offered as part of the Ankut, vibrant Rangoli patterns on display, and divas lighting up the sacred path. Devotees from all over Region 4 came and joined us on this special occasion and were joined by our National Chair Shitubhai Chudasama, Vice-Chair Mel Griffin, National Secretary Kiranbhai Patel and our National SSE co-ordinator Sister Vidyulata Narayan.

The day began with some beautiful bhajans, followed by talks from our esteemed international guests. Present on the auspicious occasion were Mr and Mrs Nimesh and Kamia Pandya from India.

Nimish Pandya is presently the District President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Mumbai and is a member of the Council of Management of Sri Sathya Sai Trust, Maharashtra. He is on the Sub Committee of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust relating to Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, India. He is also on the National Council of Sathya Sai Schools in India. He has been actively involved in the Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Programme for several years and has been associated with the Education in Human Values Programme since its inception.

Mrs Kamia Pandya is a two time Gold Medalist from Bombay University in Psychology and in Jurisprudence. Married by Bhagwan at Parthi and under



Bhagwan's Directions, she studied Law after marriage and changed her profession from teaching to pleading and is presently a practicing advocate in Mumbai. She has been a Bal Vikas Guru since the tender age of 17 and is presently the Deputy National Co-ordinator for SSS Bal Vikas Education in India. She has been an EHV Faculty Member right from its inception in 1981.

Brother Nimesh addressed the audience with his personal experiences that highlighted the divine nature of Swami as a Supreme Master and how Swami's whole life was his message. He told us why our Organisation differs from any Organisation in the world – because never before has an Avatar come onto Earth to tell mankind he is also God.

He then exhorted all devotees to take note of the following key messages of Bhagawan;

- It is first time in the history of mankind that an Avatar came on the face of the earth not to make each one of us his followers, Bhagawan was eager to tell us not only is He God but We are also God and that it is our destiny and he wants us to live that destiny and achieve it in this birth itself!
- The second most beautiful thing Bhagawan did was to disclose the simple address of God. Man has run helter-skelter to Temples, Mosques, Gurudwaras and different places in search of God but Bhagawan came and told us "Look Bangaru, look nowhere else. I am right here sitting in your heart and dealing with everything you have to do."
- The third most important thing that Bhagawan told us was very clear. He said, not only I am residing in you and seated inside your heart but I am the same god that resides in the hearts of each and every one of us!

It was Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba who for the first time in history undertook a massive evaluation exercise of making man the prime creation, for we have created a world where everything is valuable and we are least invaluable. Bhagawan changed that completely and made us the most valuable and everything least valuable in our lives! This is the gift and the grace of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Q: What is the devotion we must offer to Swami's Mahasamadhi?

Bhagawan did not define devotion as japa or dhyana or bhajan. He defined devotion as that in a human being, where the human being is at peace always both in happiness and sorrow. And that 'Samabhav' was the devotion that Bhagawan defined and expected from all of us.





Today it is a challenge for all of us to ensure we retain our peace both in happiness and sorrow at all times because that is the life breath, that is the devotion Bhagawan is expecting out of all of us.

He shared some profound words with us and gave us many practical anecdotes from his life, all in a jovial and down to earth manner.

SSE Presentation

The next item was a short presentation by the Group 2 SSE children on the characteristics/qualities of Lord Ram, his brothers Bharata, Laxman & Shatrugna, Mother Sita and Hanuman;

Lord Ram - Despite being a divine Incarnation, Lord Ram lived like an ordinary human being and faced the ups and downs of life. His pious personality and unperturbed devotion to the highest ideals of humanity reflect how an ordinary human being should lead their life, always adhering to the path of Dharma - righteousness.

Mother Sita - She represented loyalty, piety, saintliness, balanced nature, patience and forbearance. She was a symbol of sacrifice and the ideal woman.

Hanuman - Represents the ideal selfless devotee. He is the symbol for physical and inner strength, perseverance and devotion. Another name for Hanuman is 'Sankat Mochan.' Sankat Mochan' means remover of troubles. In the Ramayana Lord Rama turned to Hanuman to help him search for Sita.

Sister Kamla Pandya

Our next guest Mrs Kamala Pandya spoke of the importance of Balvikas/SSE in a child's life. And how once the seeds have been sown, they shall surely sprout! She also mentioned the integral role that parents must play in their children's participation in SSE classes. Mrs Kamala Pandya led a very interactive session with the audience with many interesting stories and lessons to learn from SSE.



She asked the parents of SSE children if they knew what was being taught in classes. Some answered with "Values" and "Swami's teachings" but she stated that parents should have more understanding of what their child learns and gains from SSE and how their support at home will bring out the best in their child.

She suggested that all office bearers and active members must sit in to observe SSE classes, so that they can understand the Values in more depth and be better equipped to reinforce the teachings at the centre as all members are role models for the children.

She also told us what the three S's in SSSO 'Sri Sathya Sai' symbolise;

1. **Silent Sitting:** this must be the start of each and every day (even if only for 2 minutes), to reconnect us with our Source and empty our mind of unnecessary thoughts.
2. **Self-Study:** reading Sai literature or any good books every day, even if it is only a paragraph to help us analyse our thoughts and motives, observing how we act and react with the world.
3. **Self-Audit:** at the end of the day we must reflect on our thoughts, words and deeds - we must endeavour to learn from our mistakes and continuously improve ourselves.



The whole atmosphere was light-hearted and engaging, with the added aroma of some amazing food! The programme then came to a close by the serving of Ankut Mahaprashadam of 54 different dishes offered to Swami by the devotees to celebrate the Gujarati New Year.

Youth Session

After the programme, the Youth were very lucky to have a Sathsang with both Hr Nimesh and Hrs Kamala Pandya. Their caring attitudes were easily seen as they attended to each person's questions with thought and support. They told us that the most essential ability a Youth should cultivate is to master the mind – we should be able to listen to our intuition and act on what it tells us, above all else. Brother Nimesh gave personal examples from his profession as a lawyer to convey that we can achieve excellence only when we listen to our inner voice and follow our principles with conviction, without hesitation or fear. All in all it was a brilliant day. The Youth session even overran because nobody wanted to leave!

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