

The SSE National Conference 2011

The National conference for SSE/Balvikas was held at the Merton Sai Centre in Wimbledon on the 29th Oct, 2011. The theme for the conference was "Living with God is Education, Living for God is Service and Living in God is Realisation."



We were blessed to have two eminent speakers, who have spent the major part of their lives dedicated to Balvikas/SSE and the Sai movement in India. Brother Nimish Pandya and Sister Kamala Pandya spoke from a wealth of personal experience of over three and a half decades in the Sai Organisation and Balvikas.



Brother Nimish started his talk with a story of the great master Confucius, travelling in a convoy of carriages through northern China, during the winter. The scrolls containing his teachings were in the last carriage, which unfortunately went through thin ice and drowned. A disciple of the master jumped into the freezing water at great peril to his life and dived repeatedly to retrieve the scrolls. The remaining disciples looked on in shock and terror. The disciple retrieved the last of the scrolls and dropped dead of exhaustion and hypothermia. When asked by the other disciples, the master replied, "All of you are willing to lay down your lives for the master, I am glad that at least one of you was willing to die for the message." How relevant this story is to all of us "devotees". Bhagavan has his own definition for the word "devotees", as He stated in his letter to His elder brother Sri Seshama Raju, written in 1947- as "One who has equal mindedness in joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain..."

He said the essence of SSE and SSEHV was in practising before preaching. The voice of God is the "Preranaa" or inspiration from within. The Conscience is the Master (When Swami tells us to follow the Master, Face the Devil ...) He illustrated this point with a beautiful personal experience with Swami. When we put this into practice it is Dharma (right conduct).

Following Dharma leads to Shanthi (Peace). This in turn results in Ahimsa (Non Violence) as understanding.

The Balvikas model is an inspirational model not an instructional one. The fundamental purpose of these classes is not merely to teach the child prayers, bhajans and stories and do silent sitting and group activities, but to train them from an early age to quieten their minds, in order to hear the voice of their conscience. When put into practice the children gain Self Confidence, attain excellence and acquire the quality of leadership. Harmony in thought, word and deed, i.e. Listening to the conscience is the way to attain peace.

He stressed on spiritual ego and referred to it as the "Snake of 99" (Snakes and ladders) being the most



dangerous. The sense of doership separates man from God. The entire talk was illustrated with personal experiences and insights gained at the lotus feet of Bhagavan.

This was followed by an interactive workshop based on the conference theme, where all the delegates got an opportunity to formulate three key take home messages.

All credit goes to the love and tireless work of Region 1, who provided a sumptuous feast for lunch and this was followed by a further inspiring session which included a lively panel discussion. The panellists were Bro. Nimish and Sister Kamala Pandya, Gowri Mylvaganam formerly National SSE coordinator and Karthik Prashanth an alumnus of SSSIHL.

There were three workshops with lively group participation on multi faith prayers (Roni Ramdin) Vedic chanting (Anand Venkatraman) and Child Psychology and special educational needs (Dr. Rakendu Suren)

Our second Keynote speaker Sister Kamala Pandya alternately made us laugh and cry with her loving message to the SSE teachers. She laid emphasis on the attributes required of a teacher being Quality, Attitude, Approach and Commitment. The quality of practising before preaching; the attitude of love and approach of Treating the Class – Handle with Care! And finally commitment. The name SSSBALVIKAS contains the sadhana essential for teachers; we need to do Silent sitting, Study of spiritual literature and Self introspection in the form of a spiritual diary for ourselves prior to implementing it with the children. The vowels in the word balvikas represent the three principle paths to God realisation i.e. Attitude of love-Bhakti marga, Introspection-Jnana marga and Action-Karma marga.



This was followed by talks by four alumni of the SSE programme in the UK highlighting how the programme had influenced their lives. The conference concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by the current national SSE coordinator Vidyulatha Narayan and a soul stirring rendition of Bhajans by the Sai Youth of UK.

Report from the National SSE Conference planning group