

# Learning to “SEE” with SSE

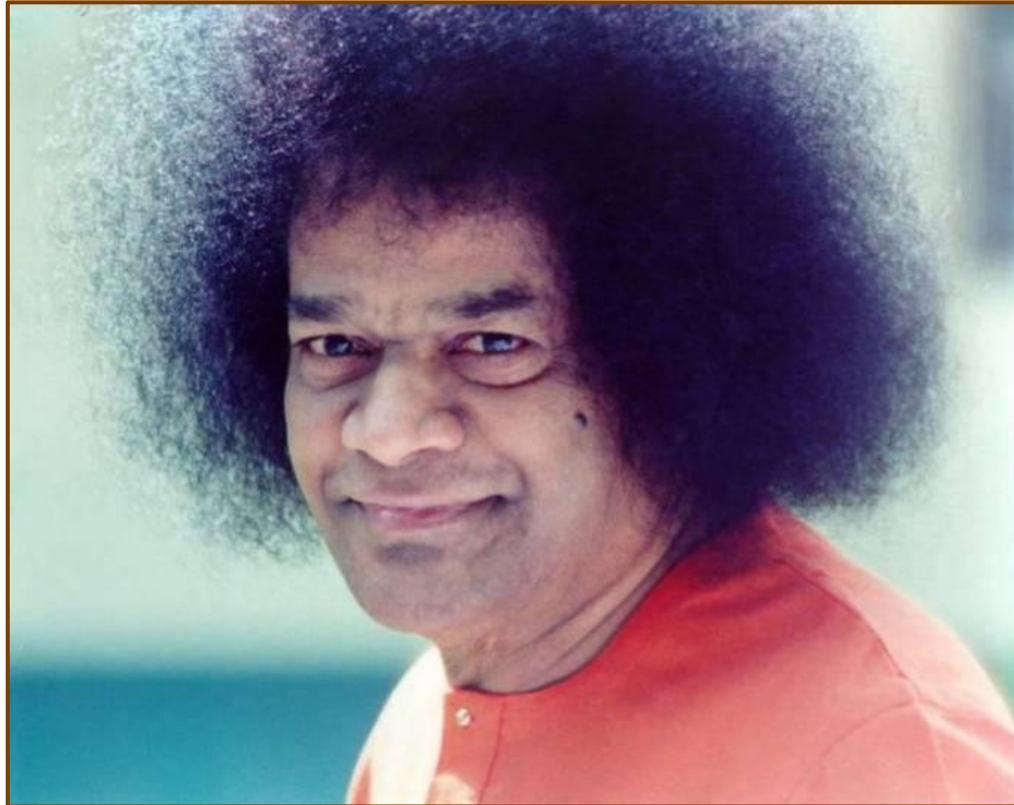
By Akshaya Ravishankar & Ajay Yekkirala (Region 1 YA Leadership team)

April 16, 2019



# Salutation

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# Why is this important?



# Swami's words

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“It is essential for students to understand why morality and spirituality have disappeared from society. Education without character, science without human values, commerce without ethics, and politics without truth are responsible for the erosion of virtue. Students have a duty to develop patriotism and restore these forgotten values. Today’s education makes one clever but does not instill virtue. Students transform their heads (*mastakam*) into books (*pustakam*) **without practising human values**. There is no benefit in turning your head into a book or vice versa. **Recognise the path of Truth and demonstrate it in day-to-day living. The world needs people imbued with integrity.**” - *Divine Discourse, May 20, 1991*

“All that you see outside is a reflection of the inner being. Good and bad do not exist outside; they are mere reflections of what is within you. **No one has the right to judge others.** Give up all that is bad in you and you will find goodness all around. As the colour of the glasses you put on, so is the colour of the world you visualise. The defect lies in your vision, not in the creation.” - *Divine Discourse, Nov 19, 1999*



# Motivations behind the retreat

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The primary question to explore: What is the relevance of SSE at the Group 4 level?

- Wanted to provide a “safe space” for SSE children to speak **freely** and **openly**
  - **No judgment space!**
- What are the pressures and stressors that they are going through currently?
- How can they use Swami’s teachings and the wisdom in the group to help?



# Motivations...

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- SSE kids are naturally responsive to YAs in general.
- There are some YAs in the region who are currently SSE teachers, and the students are responding well to having YA SSE teachers due to the closer age range, and relatability
- As Group  $\frac{3}{4}$  will soon be future YAs, it is important for them to be able to connect with them
- Create a home they can come to post graduating SSE, as well as have a resource for any questions they may have down the road.



# Retreat Overview

## Process and Feedback



# Overall Statistics

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- ❖ Number of YAs involved in planning: ~15
- ❖ All of the facilitators went through SSE
- ❖ Planning time ~ 3 weeks
- ❖ Modes of communication used to plan:
  - conference calls, emails, in person meetup
  - 2-3 YAs facilitating each workshop
- ❖ 5 Workshops:
  - 1. How to Procrastinate More Effectively (Time Management)
  - 2. Bikes are better than Bandwagons: Driving Solo on the Road (Managing Peer Pressure)
  - 3. Speeding Your Way to Success (Career Networking)
  - 4. Releasing the Pressure Cooker (Pressures at Home)
  - 5. Finding Your Self (Building Character and Integrity)
- ❖ Number of SSE Children from Group 3/4 in attendance from across the region: 26



# Schedule



Om Sri Sai Ram

## Region 1 SSE Group 4 Retreat July 21st and 22nd 2018

### ❖ Logistics:

- Even though this was a two day retreat, most students lived close enough to commute to the location.
- We ended the retreat early on both days to accommodate for transportation time.
- No adults were allowed during the workshops to ensure an open and safe space.

### Saturday - Day-1

#### Timing

8:30 am - 9:00 am  
9:00 am - 9:30 am  
9:30 am - 10:00 am  
10:00 am - 11:30 am  
11:30 am - 12:30 pm  
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm  
  
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm  
3:00 pm - 3:30 pm  
3:30 pm - 5:30 pm  
5:30 pm - 6:00 pm

#### Activity

Registration & Light Breakfast  
Bhajans  
Welcome & Ice-breakers  
**Workshop #1 - 'How to Procrastinate More Effectively'**  
Lunch & Cleanups  
**Workshop #2 - 'Bikes are Better Than Bandwagons: Driving Solo on the Road'**  
Games and role playing activities  
Break  
**Workshop #3 - 'Speeding Your Way to Success'**  
Students disperse (Students hosted proceed to Host Family's Residence)

### Sunday - Day-2

#### Timing

8:30 am - 8:55 am  
8:55 am - 9:00 am  
9:00 am - 10:30 am  
10:30 am - 10:45 am  
10:45 am - 12:15 am  
12:15 am - 12:45 pm  
12:45 pm - 1:30 pm  
lunch) & Clean-up

#### Activity

Breakfast  
Bhajans  
**Workshop #4 - 'Releasing the Pressure Cooker'**  
Short Break  
**Workshop #5 - 'Finding Yourself'**  
**A primer on managing finances**  
Announcements and farewells, closing prayers, Lunch (or brown bag



# Photos



# Photos



# Workshop 1: Time Management

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## Objective:

To discuss procrastination, and time management, and what hinders us from being productive. Also discussing burnout and the importance of “me-time”.

**Activities/ Modality:** Large group discussion

**Outcome:** Introspection of their own life choices and prioritization of important things.



# Testimonials & Feedback

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Feedback from SSE children:

## ❖ Time Management Workshop:

- **“ I really appreciated how accepted and safe I felt in this space. I also really enjoyed that the YAs could relate to us and were ready to listen.”**
- **“I loved how I could find ways to cope with this issue.”**
- **“The talk discussed topics and ideas that I had never considered before.”**
- **“I think the best part was them having us reflect on something for the first five minutes and then for everything we talked about we came back to that thought.”**
- **“I liked how we were not really forced to talk, The best part was the reflection.”**



# Workshop 2: Managing Peer Pressure

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**Objective:** Exploring what peer pressure is, and what are the scenarios that both SSE kids and YAs experience it. To have an open and honest space about various pressures and how to cope with them

**Activities/ Modality:** Experiments in being pressured to do the wrong thing - Solomon Asch experiment, etc, skits, videos, reflection in small groups. Real instances of peer pressure.

**Outcomes:** Understand why peer pressure works and methods to deal with such situations.



# Testimonials & Feedback

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Feedback from SSE children:

## ❖ Peer Pressure Workshop:

- “I liked talking/ sharing experiences with others and watching everyone perform their peer pressure scenarios.”
- “I really liked the slides they were entertaining.”
- “I loved how they did the skits at the end, it was fun and interactive.”
- “I really connected with my experiences at school and around activities I participated in.”
- “We talked about strategies and specific ways to combat peer pressure in different scenarios.”



# Workshop 3: Career Networking

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**Objective:** To have the YAs be a resource to SSE students interested in exploring and finding out about different careers and the paths that led to them!

**Activities/ Modality:** YA panel in a speed networking format. Students talked to YAs of their interest to get to know more.

**Outcomes:** Make meaningful connections with YAs so they can use them as a resource going forward



# Testimonials & Feedback

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Feedback from SSE children:

## ❖ Career Networking

- **“I really appreciated that the YAs were open about their career paths. I like how they said they could connect us with other people and their careers.”**
- “It was nice to get some guidance from people doing the same path that I want to go on.”
- “I really liked hearing the stories of how YAs got to their professions.”
- “Really helpful!”
- “I enjoyed talking to the YA's to get a better sense of the career that I want to pursue. I think there could have been a greater variety of careers.”
- “It helped me develop connections and relations.”



# Workshop 4: Pressures At Home

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**Objective:** To share and explore solutions to common pressures at home and to try to understand the parents and the child's perspectives. To also navigate advocating for yourself in a respectful way with your parents.

**Activities/ Modality:** Small group discussions, circle activity.

**Outcomes:** To realize that parents do not have manual on how to parent growing kids. Learn how to advocate for yourself with compassion - you are on the same team!



# Testimonials & Feedback

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Feedback from SSE children:

## ❖ Pressures At Home

- “I think this was the best thought through. Loved the experiment.”
- “I liked how many people experience the pressure I feel.”
- **“I loved the circle activity. It showed that we are not alone and tons of people go through the same thing.”**
- “Helped understand different perspectives on behavior.”



# Workshop 5: Character and Integrity

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**Objective:** Why do we make the decisions that we do? How do we uphold our integrity and character in situations that cause us to compromise?

**Activities/ Modality:** Concentric circle debates, discussions

**Outcomes:** Who am I? Identify your core values - what values would you live by?  
Dealing with guilt. Developing an internal conversation with Swami.



# Swami's Teachings

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A person or an institution is to be judged according to their integrity, whether their acts are according to the principles professed. The mind, the body, and the word - all three must work in unison. When work (*Karma*) is thus disciplined and regulated, automatically your senses will become sublimated and you will attain everlasting *Prasanthi* (inner peace). From this will arise *Prakanti* (the great light), and from that will emerge *Param Jyoti* (Supreme Illumination). That Illumination will reveal the *Paramatma* (Divinity) present within you! You must achieve that success by following the path laid out for you – conquer anger and desire, achieve love through the practice of incessant meditation (*Japa-Dhyana*), which will lead to the blossoming of the lotus of the heart and the emergence of Divinity from within you!

- *Divine Discourse, Nov 23, 1964.*



# Testimonials & Feedback

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Feedback from SSE children:

## ❖ Character and Integrity

- “I liked writing/ reflecting on ‘who I am’.”
- **“Loved everything. Wish we had more time to talk to the YAs.”**
- **“I enjoyed the debate. Perhaps we can have a longer one next time.”**
- “Loved the debate and how we had the chance to see both sides.”
- “Loved it so much!”



# Testimonials & Feedback

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Feedback from SSE children:

## ❖ Overall for the retreat

- “This was great and I loved being a part of it. I loved that it was conducted by YAs.”
- “Great program, wish there was more time for playing outside.”
- “This was great, thank you.”
- “I loved the fact that this was conducted by YA's. It was much more open and we discussed many great topics.”
- “Very well put together and gave us wonderful amount of tools for college and beyond.”
- “I really enjoyed this retreat because it allowed me to talk about hard topics I can't talk about at home because I feel as though my parents won't understand. So this was amazing and very helpful.”
- “I enjoyed this retreat and I hope we are able to do it again.”



# Challenges

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- ❖ Building trust in the room!
- ❖ Finding a way to keep everyone engaged, but also making it relatable.
- ❖ Being able to cover the topics, without the sessions being too long or boring.
- ❖ There are students who just entered high school, as well as those who will soon be graduating seniors. While a four year gap may not seem like much, there are certainly different pressures that each age group faces in high school.



# Challenges

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- ❖ Discussion as a modality - what are the best modalities?
- ❖ Being okay with silence and long awkward pauses during guided discussions and knowing how to navigate that silence.
- ❖ Learning to be comfortable in the safe space and opening up takes time, towards the end of the retreat everyone was comfortable but was hard to get them to open up.



# The Way Forward

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- ❖ Based on the fantastic feedback from the students, we know that this retreat had a meaningful and powerful impact on them.
- ❖ After the retreat, there was feedback from parents that their child tried to strike up more open and honest conversations as well as tried to put some of the things talked about in the workshop into practice.
- ❖ In our feedback survey, we asked the children who attended what they would like to see as topics if this was to happen again.
- ❖ **Topics need to come from the G4s - highly encourage group 4 teachers to ask their students what is relevant to them or what they are struggling with, and use those answers as a starting point for topics.**



# Q & A



# Coming up next in May ...

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Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

PRASANTHI NILAYAM P.O.  
ANANTPUR DT. (A.P.)  
PHONE NO : 30.

## PRAYER

Oh! Lord! Take my love and let it flow in fullness  
" Take my hands and let <sup>or devotion to thee</sup> them work  
incessantly for thee  
" Take my soul and let it be merged in one  
with thee  
" Take my mind and thoughts and let them  
be in ~~some~~ tune with thee  
" Take my everything and let me be an  
instrument to work.

With Love and Grace  
Baba.



# Thank You and Sairam

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