

# **Sathya Sai International Organization (SSIO)**

## **Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) Conference**

**August 1-3, 2015**

## **Conference Proceedings & Recommendations**

*“Bal Vikas (Sai Spiritual Education) is the primary basis of the great movement to restore righteousness (dharma) in the world... The ideal of the program is to raise a generation of boys and girls who have a clean and a clear conscience.”*

SSS v14:3, June 6, 1978

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# Introduction

## Conference Overview

Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, Senior leaders of the Prashanthi Council and Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, Senior leaders of the SSIO, SSE & SSEHV educators, National and Regional education coordinators, teachers, trainers and Sathya Sai Youth involved in the SSE programs, came from over 50 countries (across all the SSIO zones) to attend the Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) Conference (Aug 1-3, 2015). The conference was organised to deliberate on the present state of the SSE program, learn about the desired state, and develop the future framework for SSE worldwide. By Bhagawan's grace the conference presented a quality program including special guest speakers, an interactive and engaging networking fair, unifying theme song, and educational workshop sessions.

The conference was in organized in three parts:

1. Pre-Conference Preparation  
A number of pre-conference activities were undertaken including the preparation of the [Concept Paper](#), [Video Conference calls with each SSIO Zone](#) (password 11zones@ssio), [Conference Website](#), Online Registration, [Conference Booklet](#), [Delegate Reading materials](#), [Theme Song](#), and [Networking Fair](#). These activities integrated the efforts of SSIO senior leaders, education committee, conference task force and delegates, SSE/SSEHV educators, and Sai youth from across the world.
2. [SSE Conference](#) at Prashanthi Nilayam (Aug 1-3)  
A brief summary of the three days are discussed in the next section.
3. Post-Conference Follow-up  
Activities include the conference summary, conference proceedings, and the proposed recommendations have been undertaken to derive the benefits from the all the efforts.

## Conference First Day

Sri S. S. Naganand, Trustee of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust opened the meeting with an inspiring address, pointing out the importance of early spiritual education that lasts a lifetime. In his inaugural address, Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman of Prashanthi Council, emphasised Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's key teachings on Ideal Sai Education. Dr. Reddy also emphasised the importance of ideal student, ideal teacher and ideal parents. Dr. Pal Dhall, Chairman of the Education Committee, clearly set the objectives of the conference, urging delegates to lay a solid foundation and establish a launching pad for the next phase of SSE. The afternoon programme of the first day featured a well-organised tapestry of workshops based on the conference focus areas. The participants divided into groups to deliberate on the best practices in areas such as curriculum development, SSE alumni, expanding beyond the Sai center to the community, and SSE administration and governance.

## Conference Second Day

The morning of the second day began with the inspiring keynote address by Mrs. Geetha Mohanram. Delegates were treated to a bouquet of delightful anecdotes describing her spiritual journey under the guidance of Bhagawan Himself from the tender age of five. She stressed on the foundation of faith in Baba and described Him as the ideal spiritual teacher in every way.

The afternoon session was dedicated to the SSE Networking Fair showcasing the breadth and depth of the SSE programme. The purpose of the fair was to give the delegates a forum to showcase, interact, and share best practices, inspirational projects, and innovative ideas. Trustees of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, members of the Prasanthi Council, and the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, leaders of the SSIO, and over 500 conference delegates, attended the fair. Over 40 stations represented each of the 11 zones of the SSIO and countries from around the world including Argentina, Australia, Germany, Guyana, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Middle East, Nepal, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Southern Europe, Thailand, UK and United States. The colourful and well decorated stations presented special highlights, professional development for SSE gurus, parent/teacher awareness and education initiatives, SSE for special needs children, activities and games to make SSE fun, and much more. There was also a special presentation on the Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini programme by Sri Sathyajit Salian.

### Conference Final Day

On the third and final day of the conference, Sri R. J. Rathnakar, Trustee of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, gave an uplifting talk emphasizing the spirit of oneness we all share with Bhagawan. He kindly distributed special gifts as *Prasadam* from Swami to all the delegates. Mrs. Berniece Mead, National Education Coordinator of the USA, shared how she was personally instructed by Swami to spread Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) in the USA. Other speakers shared their personal experiences with Swami and emphasized the important role of parents, teachers, coordinators, educators, and the organisation in the development of a successful SSE program. The morning program concluded with Dr. Pal Dhall outlining the proposed resolutions from the conference and next steps to be taken.

### Conference Valedictory Function

The conference concluded in the evening of 3<sup>rd</sup> August with a valedictory function in the Sai Kulwant Hall. The programme commenced with a brief overview of the conference. Speaking first, Ms. Katinka, National Education Coordinator Netherlands reminded us of the power and beauty of the spiritual tool called Sathya Sai Education. She identified the areas of focus and emphasized the importance of love, teacher's commitment, faith in Swami, and the need to connect with the children. Ms. Berniece Mead then spoke of her Divine experience and His constant guidance in sharing His teachings through the SSE programme.

As a finale, all conference delegates in Sai Kulwant Hall joined together to sing the theme song, "I See You in One and All" led by Dr. Srinivas Raghavan from the United States. He introduced the theme song as a prayerful conversation with Swami composed by the Sathya Sai Youth of Southern Florida (USA) under his guidance. The song has been translated into many languages and the chorus line was sung in unison in multiple languages of the SSIO.

*"You Are My Everything Dear Swami  
You Are My Loving Lord Of All  
I See You... I See You... I See You In One And All."*

It was an inspiring conclusion, dedicated with love and gratitude at His divine lotus feet.

## Post-Conference Follow-up

In this post-conference report we present the conference proceedings and proposed recommendations based on aggregating the lessons learnt from the following sources:

1. Conference Summary & Learnings – input from the various speakers, workshop leaders, networking fair leads, and the delegates
2. Zonal Input Meetings – we held and recorded online meetings with senior leadership from each of the zones
3. Conference Task Force – members of the task force included Dr. Pal Dhall (Chair, education committee), Ms. Berniece Mead, Dr. Lalini Reddy, Dr. Viji Ravindran, and Dr. Srinivas Raghavan
4. Education Committee members

## Conference Proceedings

The proceedings of the three days of the conference are summarized below. The details are provided via the links to documents on our shared Google Drive:

- The [Conference Website](#) shows the program & Pre-conference activities
- Proceedings from the conference activities are available as follows:
  - Speaker PowerPoint [Presentations](#) for those who used a presentation
  - Proceedings of the Speaker Sessions
    - [Written summary](#) of the Conference Sessions
    - [Audio](#) in English
    - [Videos](#) in Spanish & Portuguese
    - Videos of the speaker sessions will be available shortly
  - Workshops
    - [Day 1 Workshop Proceedings](#)
    - [Day 3 Workshop Proceedings](#)
  - [Theme song](#) in multiple international languages
  - Group photos at [Poornachandra Hall](#)
  - [Directory](#) and [photos](#) of the Networking Fair
  - [Photos](#) and [Video](#) of valedictory ceremony

## Conference Recommendations

The strength of the SSIO SSE program lies in its rich diversity around the world. On the other hand, the very same diversity poses challenges in being able to come together. Therefore, our singular goal and focus post-conference is to unite the global SSE family, so we can come together, strengthen our faith and devotion to Swami, and help to shape the character of each and every international SSE student.

Based on wide consultations (SSE conference, pre-conference zonal meetings and post-conference review) we have put together the conference recommendations and a proposed action plan which provides a forward towards the goal of building unity in a new vision for SSE across the globe.

### Recommendation #1 – Unite Global SSIO SSE Family

Our singular goal and focus is to unite the global SSIO SSE Family so we can come together, strengthen our faith and devotion to Swami, and help to shape the character of each and every International SSE student

### Recommendation #2 – SSE & SSEHV

Define SSE & SSEHV clearly

### Recommendation #3 – International SSE Platform

Establish an International SSE Platform

- Platform will be built based on the following components:
  - Primary & Secondary Program Elements
  - International SSE Framework
  - Infrastructure & Governance
  - People & Resources
- Platform will host program modules to elaborate on the primary and secondary program elements
- Platform will get agreement on the Sai organizational interface (communication, approvals, protocol, etc)

### Recommendation #4 – Adoption

Adoption of the platform

- Primary program elements and International SSE framework will be adopted by all zones
- Secondary program elements will be optionally adopted as per local need and requirements
- Modules will be added to the platform on an ongoing basis
  - Each primary and secondary program element will have one or more modules as needed
  - Any zone can offer modules to the platform
  - Modules will be pilot tested and refined to improve upon it
  - Modules can be customized based on each zone's context and culture

## Recommendation #5 – Action Plan & Next Steps

### Development & Pilot Testing of the International SSE Platform

- Establish a pilot initiative with one or more interested zones to develop and test the platform during the year following Swami's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday (Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015 to Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016).

## Recommendation #1: Unite Global SSIO SSE Family

The main goal of the Conference is an emerging need to unite the global SSIO SSE Family so we may come together, strengthen our faith and devotion to Swami, and help to shape the character of each and every International SSE student. Presently, SSE programs around the world have been developed and adapted from the original Indian Bal Vikas program. The SSE program has wide diversity based on varying cultures, religions, and ethnicity represented in the various zones of the SSIO. The aspiration of the parents for character education rather than belief in Swami as Avatar has also influenced the content of the SSE programs. Furthermore, while not all the Indian diaspora who send their children for SSE are devotees of Sathya Sai Baba they do see the value in sending their children to the Sathya Sai Centers for SSE. In many cases this has had the effect of modifying the SSE towards SSEHV. Thus there is a need to unite our global SSE programs to work with the varying needs of the present & future SSE families.

## Recommendation #2 : SSE & SSEHV

The original SSE program started with the Bal Vikas program from India. Since then the SSE program has been evolving along different dimensions at a varying pace across the SSIO zones. While some countries hold closer to the original Bal Vikas program, other countries are more oriented towards the SSEHV program thereby creating the need to define the SSE & SSEHV programs in a clear and actionable manner.

Swami (SAI) is at the center of the Sai Spiritual Education program. Swami in His Divine discourse (See [SAI Video](#)) discussed the expansion of the word SAI as S - Service, A - Adoration, and I - Illumination

- Service (**Swami/God embodied in one and all**)
- Adoration (**Swami/God embodied in Form**)
- Illumination (**Swami/God embodied in His teachings**)

The SSE program emphasizes all three aspects of S (Service), A (Adoration), and I (Illumination) and aims at giving the students an all-round training including the devotional aspect (adoration of the Form). The SSEHV program emphasize S (Service) and I (Illumination) i.e., does not emphasize the devotional aspect. SSEHV is focused on drawing out of the innate divinity within each human being through the use of the five human values and five teaching techniques and the practical application of these human qualities in daily life. The program acknowledges all forms of God, the formless aspect of God and acknowledges that some may not believe in either.



The underlying objective of both programs is the development and practice of the innate qualities that produce good human beings. The SSE program embraces Adoration (devotional approach) and the SSEHV program develops it through Service and Illumination.

### SSE vs SSEHV Audience Segments

The SSE and SSEHV programs address different audience segments with some overlap. Students coming to the SSE program are from the following family backgrounds:

1. Devotee Family
  - a. Origin: Indian Sub-continent  
This is a primary segment for the SSE program. The majority of the students are children of Sai devotees who have their origin in the Indian Sub-Continent. Often the teachers are also of the same origin and draw their teaching content from familiar sources.
  - b. Origin: Native and not of Indian Sub-continent  
These are children of parents who are native to the country of residence. In few countries (e.g., Croatia, Russia, Germany, Brazil), the majority of the children are in this segment. However, overall they represent a small percentage of the total number of children in the SSE program worldwide.
2. Community Multi-Faith Family
  - a. Origin: Indian Sub-continent or other of spiritual background  
In some countries the SSE program includes children from families of Indian sub-continent who are not Sai devotees but interested in the teachings of Swami as well as the Indian culture. These children come for the classes and they may not attend the center devotional or service activities.
  - b. Origin: Native and not of Indian Sub-continent  
These are families not from the Indian Sub-Continent who are from different religious backgrounds (e.g., Christian, Buddhist, Islam, etc). Some centers reach out to these families through a mix of SSE and SSEHV classes.
3. Mix of #1 & #2

Students coming to the SSEHV program are from the following backgrounds:

1. Community Multi-Faith Family
2. Community Secular Family  
These are secular families of Indian Sub-continent or Native origin who may not have a religious or spiritual background. The focus here is mainly on the SSEHV program through values education.
  - a. Origin: Indian Sub-continent or other of spiritual background
  - b. Origin: Native and not of Indian Sub-continent
3. Mix of #1 & #2
4. School Children
  - a. Partnership Schools  
The ISSEs work on educating and training teachers to provide SSEHV based classes in public and private partnership schools.

b. Sathya Sai Schools

Sai Schools in the SSIO are oriented to providing an education founded on SSEHV.

The original SSE program used to have children mainly from Devotee Families. In the recent times we have a mix of #1 (Devotee Family) and #2 (Community Multi-Faith Family). The community multi-faith families may not be Sai devotees but they have faith in God and may be of various religious or spiritual backgrounds. Some of these parents may bring their children understanding the SSE program while others may send them for basic cultural and spiritual training. In some cases, the teachers avoid the devotional aspect and cover an SSEHV type of program. Yet in other cases the teachers mainly focus on Indian culture & spirituality. Therefore, it is important that teachers and coordinators know how to differentiate Bal Vikas (India), SSE (SSIO Sai centers), and SSEHV (SSIO community) programs and clearly communicate to the parents about which program they are enrolling their children. All families must understand the SSE program is dedicated to all three aspects of S-A-I and the children will be given an all round education beyond Indian culture & spirituality.

In this regard, we recommend that for community multi-faith families who come to the SSE program it will be optional (although respectfully invited) for these children and their families to attend the Sai center's devotional and service meetings. However, the center should not discriminate between students based on whether they attend the Sai center meetings. In many cases the parents of all the community multi-faith children wish to participate in major Sai center events (e.g., Swami's birthday, Easwaramma Day etc). In these cases, it is necessary for the local Sai organization officers to work closely with the SSE program to ensure they are inclusive and encouraging of all the children and families.

## Recommendation #3: International SSE Platform

The platform as shown in Figure 1 allows people of varying age, knowledge, skills, and talents come together and contribute in a modular fashion. The platform is expected to persist and grow over time.



*Figure 1 International SSE Platform*

Figure 1 shows the different components of the platform which allows different teams from across all the zones to participate and benefit. For example, the Language/Cultural interface is important to develop and grow our capacity communicate effectively across all boundaries especially in non-English speaking countries and beyond peoples of Indian origin in all countries. Additionally, certification by the International SSE program will have significant benefits and greater impact for all the zones.

The International SSE Platform serves as an umbrella over all the Zonal and Country specific programs. Adoption of the platform does not require replacement of existing programs.

In this document we discuss a brief preview of the platform, specifically focused on the primary and secondary program elements. A follow-on document will describe the platform in more detail.

### International SSE Platform: Program

The International SSE program structure will include the Primary and Secondary program elements as well as the International SSE Framework. The international program will aggregate and build a repository of good SSE content and resources including new and innovative

teaching techniques and pedagogy as well as training modules centered around content & delivery, classroom management, people and the SSIO.

### Primary Program Elements

These elements are foundational to the SSE program. These program elements also serve as measurable learning objectives at each stage of the program. A successful SSE program will adopt and practice these primary program elements and build upon this strong foundation.

The SSE program is focused around Swami, His life, and teachings. Coordinators and teachers who deliver the SSE program must understand and maintain this focus. While maintaining this focus, we refer interchangeably between Swami & God (see Table 1) since the program is offered to both devotee families (devoted to Swami and His teachings) and community multi-faith families (devoted to God). Although all participants (parents, students) must understand the program’s focus, it is expected there will be varied buy-in to these elements. Therefore, it is important for the coordinators and teachers to put together a suitably blended program to work with their local culture and context to empower the participants to bring forth their innate Divinity.

*Table 1 Primary Program Elements*

Primary Elements	Description	Chinna Katha (Parables)
<b>Faith in Swami/God</b>	Awareness of His life and message.	Faith: <a href="#">Pandit &amp; Milkmaid</a> His Life: <a href="#">His Story</a>
<b>Communication with Swami/God</b>	Prayers, silent sitting/meditation, affirmation.	<a href="#">Ask &amp; ye shall be given</a>
<b>Expression of Love for Swami/God</b>	Devotional singing, story telling, art, poems, service, and other forms of expression.	<a href="#">Bharatha’s adoration of Rama</a>
<b>Living with Swami/God</b>	Life application, fear of sin & morality in society.	<a href="#">Do your good acts here and now</a>
<b>Pleasing Swami/God</b>	Practicing the five human values and His teachings to make our lives His message: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unity of Faith, Unity in Diversity, 3HV, 3Ps.</li> <li>• Ceiling on Desire and other key programs.</li> <li>• Participating in community service activities.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Purity, Patience, Perseverance</a>  <a href="#">The Winning Smile</a>

### Secondary Program Elements

These elements are also foundational to the SSE program. These elements build upon the primary elements and help to foster an enriching and inspirational program. However, there may be considerable differences across the SSIO zones in how they practice these secondary elements and one size does not fit all. Hence these elements are offered in a modular fashion

to be adopted and evolved as needed to suit the local culture and context. SSIO zones can work towards gradually adopting the secondary elements at a suitable pace.

*Table 2 Secondary Program Elements*

Secondary Elements	Description
<b>Syllabus</b>	Due to our diversity a common syllabus will be highly unlikely to be accepted and adopted by all zones. Instead, modular and topic based syllabi adaptable to local needs can be provided as secondary modules.
<b>New Pedagogy &amp; Teaching Techniques</b>	New pedagogy and teaching techniques can be introduced to teach the children of the present digital age.
<b>Ethics and Discrimination</b>	Modules for teachers, students, and parents.
<b>Engaging and retaining SSE Alumni &amp; Sai Youth</b>	Program must create opportunities for alumni and Sai youth to be actively involved with the SSE program.
<b>Teacher/Parent/Coordinator Training</b>	Updated modular training for parents, teachers, and coordinators.
<b>Parent &amp; Family empowerment</b>	Modules for parenting, family development and practice at home.
<b>Unity and close cooperation between the SSE and other parts within the Sai Organization</b>	Fostering good understanding, transparent communication, and close coordination (e.g., cooperation among the three wings, officers, and ISSEs).

### International SSE Framework

By Swami's grace we are blessed with a great treasure house of knowledge and experience worldwide. The International SSE Framework (see Figure 2) offers an integrative approach to the SSE program and provide well rounded development of the students, parents, and teachers. In addition, the framework elements can be developed individually or combined (e.g., National/Sai Culture & Spirituality and Human Values Based Spirituality) to create effective modules for the program.

Students learn about Sai Culture & Spirituality through studying Swami's life and message as well as the culture and functioning of the SSIO. Teachers can apply good lessons from their residing country's National Culture & Spirituality to make the classes interesting and contextual to the background of the students. In this way the program can extend beyond Indian Culture & Spirituality to benefit students who span these cultures.



Figure 2 International SSE Framework

The Human Values based Spirituality offers the core teachings of the five human values and its application in our daily lives.

As the children get older they are interested in practical applications in their daily context and they seek to learn Practical Spirituality. They are motivated and engaged when they see the relevance of the program in the various contexts of practice in which they spend most of their time (see Figure 3, Figure 4).

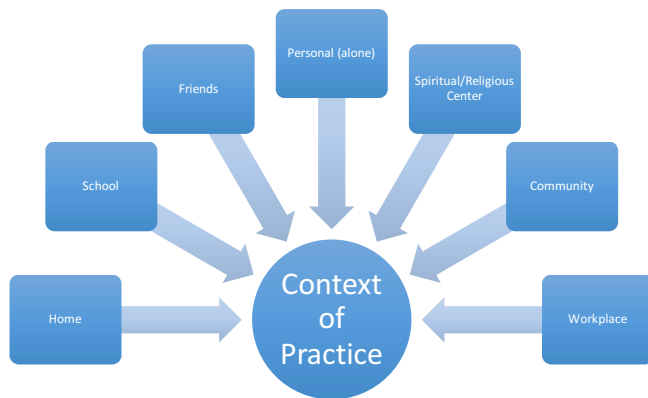


Figure 3 Context of Practice

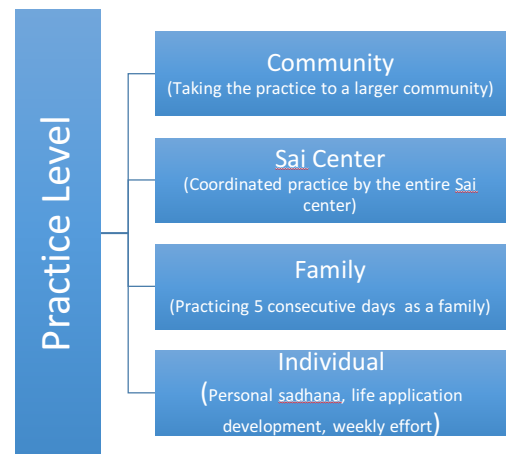


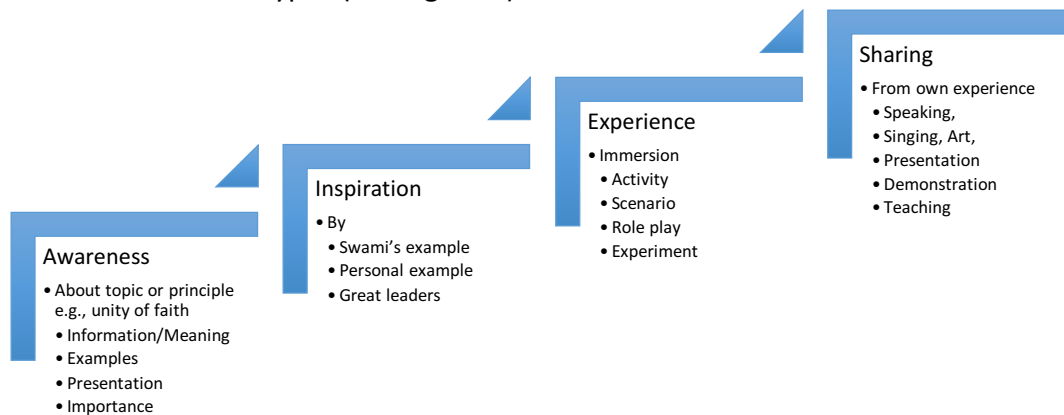
Figure 4 Level of Practice

Additionally, they can learn to practice at an increasingly more challenging level starting with the Individual, to include the Family, Sai Center, and the Community.

Swami has emphasized the importance of the good teacher who can impact many students:

*“Today there are three kinds of teachers. The first type consists of teachers who revel in “complaints.” They are the teachers with grouses of one kind or another. The second type consists of teachers who “explain”. They “explain” what the students have to learn. To the third type belong teachers who “inspire.” This category of teachers arouses the enthusiasm of students and inspires them to take deep interest in their studies. Such teachers are becoming rare these days.” – [Sathya Sai Speaks v16:13](#)*

Students in our program go through a process starting with awareness, being inspired enough to experience and share their innate Divinity. SSE Classes should expand beyond Awareness lessons to include all class types (see Figure 5)



*Figure 5 Class Types*

Teachers raise the awareness of the students and can inspire them through stories from Swami’s life, the life of great leaders, and their own personal example. By Swami’s grace they can gain their own personal experience through individual effort or sadhana. Allowing the students to share their own personal experience of the teachings builds in them the strong foundation of self-confidence upon which they can establish their life.

## **Recommendation #4: Adoption**

SSE educators and coordinators around the world are doing a tremendous job as evidenced by the variety and depth seen at the SSE Networking Fair at the conference. These recommendations build upon our strengths and aim to add all round value. The proposed international SSE platform is a flexible and adaptable tool designed to bring together the diverse groups of the global SSE family to share and work together. We expect to see a slow and gradual adoption/growth of the platform through the efforts of contributing countries from the various SSIO zones.

## **Recommendation #5: Action Plan & Next Steps**

We will seek the formal approval of the recommendations by senior officers of the Prashanthi Council, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, and the SSIO. Following the approval, the proposed pilot initiative will be responsible for developing the platform, primary, and secondary program modules as well as the following:

1. Central repository of resources usable by educators, coordinators, students, & parents.
2. Develop modular introductory, intermediate, and advanced training for educators.
3. Plan for coordinated involvement of parents.
4. Develop modular intermediate and advanced certificate programs for SSE students (e.g., on practical spirituality, Swami's life and message, expressing love for Swami).



## Conclusion

In conclusion we will correlate the elements of the conference and pre-conference activities with the approach presented in this document.

### SSE Conference & SSE Platform

The conference elements will be leveraged to serve as a good starting point for the SSE platform:

*Table 3 Correlating SSE Conference Elements with International SSE Platform*

#	Elements	Platform	Primary Modules	Secondary Modules
1	<b>Speakers</b>		Segments of the talks will be used as references for the primary program elements	Speaker videos will be made available to all
2	<b>Day 1 Workshop</b>	Some workshops will be integrated into the platform (e.g., Governance)		Some workshops will be converted to secondary modules
3	<b>Day 3 Workshop</b>	Some workshops will be integrated into the Platform (e.g., SSE Guidelines, International SSE Framework)		Workshops will be converted to secondary modules
4	<b>Networking Fair</b>	Directory of the station leads will be part of the platform repository.		Stations will be converted to secondary modules
5	<b>Theme Song</b>		Theme song project will become an example of Communication and Expression of Love for Swami	
6	<b>Booklet, Quotes, &amp; reading material</b>	Available to all via the online repository		

## **Acknowledgements**

We are eternally grateful to Swami for His Divine grace and blessings for giving us the opportunity to hold the SSE conference at Prashanthi Nilayam, His Divine abode. We are grateful to the members of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, chairman and members of the Prashanthi Council, the chair and directors of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, senior leaders of the SSIO, SSE conference task force, workshop developers/leaders, song writing/translation teams, onsite/online delegates from around the world, and the innumerable volunteers who supported the conference. We are grateful to the members of the events, media, hospitality, and IT committees for their tremendous work and support for the program.