

### **SLIDE 1 – Module 7 Title**

- Module 7 of the SSIO Orientation Programme is specifically about Sathya Sai Centres & Groups which Swami has described as the very heart of the SSIO.

### **SLIDE 2 – Module 7 General Outline**

- In the first part of the module, we will begin by recalling the purpose for which Sathya Sai Centres & Groups have been established. Then we will dive into the aspect of Universality both in its essence and expression. Next we will take a closer look at devotional meetings.
- In the second part of the module we will go through important highlights of the Office Bearers' Selection Process and the planning of activities and other relevant aspects within the Sathya Sai Centres & Groups.

### **SLIDE 3 – Title: Purpose of Sathya Sai Centres & Groups**

- So let us first remind ourselves why Sathya Sai Centres & Groups have been established.

### **SLIDE 4 – The Purpose of Sathya Sai Centres & Groups**

- In previous modules we saw that the purpose of the SSIO is no other than to help humanity recognise and manifest its inherent divinity. We also saw how the inspiration of Sathya Sai Baba's example and message of love and selfless service has resulted in the establishment of nearly 2,000 Sathya Sai Centres & Groups in over 120 countries throughout the world.
- If we recall, when Swami was asked the question by a Sai student during an interview in January 2011 *"Swami, how can we earn your grace?"*, He said: *"Look here, God is like a massive generating station, producing grace... it is not so easy to connect to God directly... that is why I have instituted Sai Centres. Sai Centres are like a distribution system, which is connected to Swami who is the generating station. To connect to the distribution system, one needs a home. The home should be well prepared. Spiritual discipline and practice is the wire that connects the person to the Sai Centre."*

### **SLIDE 5 – The Purpose of Sathya Sai Centres & Groups**

- *(Read through slide)*
- Additionally, every Sathya Sai Centre around the world is an essential part of the SSIO and shares a dynamic vision with other Sathya Sai Centres around the world in serving the Sathya Sai Mission. Thus, whilst every Sathya Sai Centre serves the needs of its local community, it also maintains a global perspective of the work of the SSIO and participates in it.

## **SLIDE 6 – Quote: I want that every Centre...**

- *(Read quote)*
- Here Swami places emphasis on how Sai Centres should be places suffused with love in order to spread love. Therefore, Centres & Groups ought to be places where we practice, inspire and promote love in an ambience of love.

## **SLIDE 7 – Title: The Universal Nature of the SSIO**

- Let us now dive deep into the aspect of the universal nature of the SSIO.

## **SLIDE 8 – Universality of Outlook**

- Sathya Sai has said: *(read quote)*. To understand this aspect of universality better, let us take a closer look at the origin of the word Universality and its Latin root. As we can see, the word universality comes from the Latin word 'UNIVERSALITAS' which means 'common to all'.
- Sathya Sai Baba came for the transformation and spiritual upliftment of all people. In fact, when He formed the Prasanthi Council, He asked every member to go to every corner of the world to share His message. This does not mean that Sathya Sai Centre members should persuade others to become Sai followers. Rather, Sathya Sai devotees have a sacred duty to share, accurately represent and live His message of Universal Oneness and Service.
- So, the layout and practices in Sathya Sai Centres should represent this universality – care is taken to avoid misunderstanding that one or more religions are favoured or should be followed by members. We must remember Sathya Sai Centres and spiritual Centres and not religious centres.
- In this sense, when He asks us to 'develop universality of outlook', it is an invitation to experience that which is 'common to all' irrespective of religion, status, gender, social status, etc. *(Read through rest of slide)*

## **SLIDE 9 – Universality of Outlook (continued...)**

- *(Read through slide)*
- So once again, this aspect of universality refers not only to the essence of what we feel in our hearts, but also to what we project and reflect to our respective societies in the venues our activities take place in.
- The SSIO guidelines set out the ideal principles, structure, practices and activities of the SSIO, including aspects such as what the Centre premises should look like, the altar, etc.
- Similarly, Sathya Sai Baba has indicated that Sathya Sai Centres must reflect the local culture of the country. He said we should not uproot the "spiritual trees" planted in other countries. We should take the essence of His teachings and grow them in all countries.

- Therefore, Centre premises should be neutral in accordance with the guidelines set by Sathya Sai Himself.
- For this reason, Sathya Sai Centre meetings, activities and practices should always reflect this message of universality, and every member or guest should embrace it and understand it, thereby promoting unity amongst all. No predominance is given to any single religious tradition or belief.
- Ultimately, these Guidelines are to be implemented with understanding and love, as love is the source, the path and the goal of all Sathya Sai endeavours.

#### **SLIDE 10 – Aspects to Consider at Devotional Meetings**

- *(Read through slide)*

#### **SLIDE 11 – Title: Office Bearers' Selection Process**

- Now we shall move on to seeing the office bearers' selection process.

#### **SLIDE 12 – Quote: Each officer bearer must take an oath...**

- Before that, I would like to just go through a couple quotes which we have already come across in previous modules, however are of utmost importance when recalling our service within this spiritual organisation.
- *(Read quote)*

#### **SLIDE 13 – Quote: Do not doubt your destiny...**

- As we saw in the anecdote of the leaf that fell into Swami's crown on hair, and some of the students contemplating that scene thought to themselves how fortunate the leaf was to enjoy such proximity with Swami, and Baba lovingly turned to them saying "*It is not the leaf, you are the fortunate one!*".
- *(Read quote)*
- So as Sathya Sai reminds us, any service opportunity we are given as office bearers within His Organisation is indeed a call for spiritual exercise, a reminder of us being under His care and direction... a golden opportunity!
- We should be good examples, by working hard with dedication and diligence. Swami says 'serve all and be nothing'; we must let go of the attachment to our desires, so that we may learn to serve in the 'SAI way'. Let us recall that the ultimate goal of every officer is Self-transformation.

#### **SLIDE 14 – Office Bearers' Selection Process at Centres & Groups**

- We shall now focus on how officers are selected and not elected within the SSIO, more concretely within the Sathya Sai Centres and Groups.
- *(Read through slide)*

- If there is a YAs section or Ladies section in the Centre, then along with the five officers, a YAs representative and Ladies representative are also selected.
- An accurate selection of officers is extremely important as officers more than all, represent the SSIO and the Sai Name.
- Selection should not be influenced by self-elimination and self-application. If members are reluctant to take a position we should motivate and sensitise them to accept it as a Divine gift. If members are eager to have a position and start personal campaigns promoting themselves to be selected, it means they are still ego-centred and therefore not ready to hold an office.
- This brings us to the main characteristics of a good leader which we covered in Module 5. In the SSIO we use the 5 vowels criteria. Our International Chairman often reminds us of the 4 'As': *Ability* (the skills to perform the tasks); *Availability* (have the time, interest and enthusiasm to participate); *Affability* (be cheerful, have a positive attitude and be a good team player); and *Accountability* (in discharging their duties righteously, lovingly, with self-sacrifice and being accountable for their actions).
- I would like to highlight the last two, the 'O' and 'U'. 'O': officers should be *Outstanding* and see *Oneness* in all. 'U': officers should practice *Unity* and *Understanding*.
- Therefore, love, discipline, purity, patience, understanding, perseverance, etc. are key qualities. As office bearers within the SSIO we should grow in wisdom, and give up our ego. For this, discipline is indispensable.
- If we want to be excellent examples of Swami's Teachings, we must remember, in all our actions and words, to follow our heart however also to use our fundamental discrimination.

#### **SLIDE 15 – Office Bearers' Selection Process (continued...)**

- *(Read through slide)*

#### **SLIDE 16 – Title: Planning of Activities & Other Aspects**

- At this point, we will move onto talking about the planning of activities in Sathya Sai Centres and other relevant aspects.

#### **SLIDE 17 – Participation in Centre & Group Meetings**

- *(Read through slide)*

#### **SLIDE 18 – Aspects to Consider when Planning Centre Activities**

- *(Read through slide)*

- It is worth reminding ourselves, that Baba tells us never to leave His SSIO, particularly when disappointments or disagreements surface, as they inevitably will from time to time.
- Officers undergo many tests; these serve an important purpose and so should not be a reason to give up our duties. Tests cause us to open our minds and hearts, to listen to the views of others, they teach patience and perseverance and they build fortitude. They teach us that all happens at the right time and by His Will alone.
- Unity is a fundamental asset in the SSIO and Sathya Sai Centres, so officers should strive to avoid frictions, factions and factions among members.

### **SLIDE 19 – Financial Matters**

- We will also just briefly touch upon the financial aspect now coming to the end of this module. As we clearly know, one overriding principle guiding the operation of all Sathya Sai Centres is to have as little to do with money as possible. *(Read through points on slide and then read quote)*
- Projects and activities are carefully planned and thoroughly discussed by the Sathya Sai Centre officers to ensure that the projects are within the resources of the Sathya Sai Centre. Once a project has been agreed upon, provisions are made for members to anonymously contribute if they wish to do so. If there is a shortfall, either the officers may make up the shortfall or the project is cancelled. Costs associated with the rental of space for Sathya Sai Centre meetings are handled in similar fashion. In no case shall a public appeal be made for any funds, donations, or contributions in cash or kind. A pure intention to serve and the communication of adequate information to members / devotees about service projects will bring forth sufficient funds.
- We should not be disappointed if some activities/events are to be cancelled. Baba always told us to love His uncertainty. Particularly when the way forward cannot be seen, as officers, we should have faith and surrender to Him, so that He may manifest His work in every aspect of the SSIO.
- With everyone's united effort and His grace, all projects will be completed only according to His Will. Thus, even if the outcome is not what we wished for initially, there can never be failure. With this understanding, there is no place for impatience or anger *(which are born of the ego)*, there is only a need for acceptance. Officers can be confident that the Lord receives every service offered with a pure motive and that, in return, He showers His grace abundantly.

### **SLIDE 20 – Financial Matters (continued...)**

- *(Read through slide)*

**SLIDE 21 – Quote: Love All, Serve All; Help Ever, Hurt Never**

- So, to sum up this module, let us remember that the Sathya Sai Centres and Groups are the main instrument through which the objectives of the SSIO are achieved. They are also like sub-stations through which His love and teachings are shared and spread towards our local communities. As such, Sathya Sai Centres & Groups should reflect universality and as Sathya Sai office bearers and members, we must strive to reflect the lemma "*Love All, Serve All; Help Ever, Hurt Never*" in the way we conduct ourselves.

*Om Sai Ram*