



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

AUGUST 2020

"What is a study circle? It is not just reading books. "Circle, study circle" means taking a point and each person discussing what is the meaning of the point to them. Like a round-table conference. Each person gives their points of view, and finally values are derived from this. If there is just reading, there is doubt. But if each one gives his view doubts will be answered. The topic is viewed; the study circle looks at different facets. It is like a diamond with its different facets, but there is one facet that is flat, the top facet, and from this all can be viewed. To discover the top facet is the task of the study circle."

-Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, chapter XLII, by Dr. John. S. Hislop



Context

- Beyond the general aim of a study circle as explained by Swami, this national initiative is intended for SSE teachers as part of the ongoing enrichment efforts.
- More specifically, the objective of this initiative is to learn, understand, assimilate and practice being an exemplary teacher and human being.

Introduce & Invite

- Every month, the national study circle team will publish an excerpt from Swami's discourse to *balvikas gurus/educators*.
- The SSE coordinator will introduce the study circle initiative and invite a teacher to facilitate the study circle. This can be done on a rotation basis so that everyone gets an opportunity.
- Each SSE center/group will meet once a month to conduct the study circle at a time different from their Center/SSE meeting. This can be done via teleconference/ webinar/ zoom/ in-person when permissible.





Role of the Facilitator

- Set the **tone**- a) create a sacred and positive space; b) actively listen and acknowledge contributions and c) be open and encourage sharing of different perspectives.
- Stay on **topic**- Keep the focus on the topic; try to steer the conversation back to the main topic at hand in a friendly manner if you feel the discussion is veering away from the main topic or becoming less than a loving discussion.
- Keep **time**- Maintain an orderly progression of speakers. Help direct who is next if it's not clear by prompting those who have not spoken yet to share or by opening the floor to everyone. Recruit a timekeeper to assist you.

Conducting the Study Circle

- Read and reflect on the study circle material a few days prior to your meeting.
- **Total Time Allotted for the Study Circle: 60-75 minutes**
 - Welcome (~5-10 minutes): Invite Swami to join the session and seek His divine guidance.
 - Introduce the guidelines/housekeeping rules (see next section). Briefly check in with everyone regarding the Life Application agreed upon at the end of the previous session.
 - Read (~5-7 minutes): Choose a volunteer to read aloud the chosen discourse (one paragraph at a time).
 - Reflect (~1-2 minutes): Reflect in silence on Swami's words that have just been shared.
 - Sharing (~ 20-25 minutes): Ask each member to share at least one takeaway from the reading. [Keep in mind that it is acceptable to talk about associated topics; let the discussion flow freely and naturally. Encourage everyone to contribute, but try not to put people on the spot (no pressure or obligation). Balance those who have spoken with those who have not throughout the session.]
 - Questions (~ 10 minutes): Continue the discussion by reviewing the questions included in the Study Circle material.
 - Life Application (~ 10 minutes): Members will identify at least one action item or practical application to be followed either individually or as a group for the month.



Housekeeping rules for participants- The facilitator can introduce these rules at the beginning of each session.

- All participants should strive to share their thoughts as this can help others to improve their understanding. You may be the instrument Swami uses to help the group or a particular person in the group.
- There are no experts; everyone, including the facilitator, is a student walking along the same journey to better understand and imbibe Swami's teachings.
- All different perspectives are welcome. However, keep in mind the need for respectful and actionable discussion.
- Please don't correct or take sides regarding others' discussion points.
 - A better way to offer your viewpoint may be: "The way I understand it is ..."
 - If you need clarification on a difficult or unusual question, feel free to respectfully direct your questions to the individual.
- Please wait for your turn to allow for everyone to get a chance to share.
- Support the facilitator throughout the study circle.

Educare

The word *Educare* means to bring out that which lies within. In other words, the aim of *Educare* is to bring out the human values that are latent in every human being and translate them into action.

Our enthusiastic participation in these study circles and sincere practice of Swami's teachings will facilitate that process of *educare* and with that we have come a full C.I.R.C.L.E .

