

Anything but a Zoom session...

Another webinar!

I groaned at my roommate that I was not going to attend as I had attended a few in the past and didn't like them. He had been after my life for days.

Just attend it once. if you don't like the first fifteen minutes, skip it.

Poor me! I was stuck. I had to attend it or next time, he wouldn't do anything for me, that's for sure.

The day came...

On the 12th of January, National Youth Day, I tuned into the live session of the webinar. Only, it was called Sewa Samwaad. To my surprise, I had come across a session that is not named in English. I was a little confused about the meaning of Samwaad. I hardly remembered anything I read anything in Hindi these days. The internet is full of multilingual content but I seldom go to Hindi websites.

You can call it the effect of the current environment which largely accepts English as a medium of communication. Then I realised, had I distanced so much from the culture and language that it was difficult for me to understand a simple word?

Samwaad is a combination of two words-Sam+Waad. It will be unwise to translate it into English. The literal meaning of Samwaad in English is "dialogue" which doesn't justify the word. However, *Charcha* will be its closest meaning.

Why Samwaad is necessary

I spend half of my day inside a cubicle, I was curious why do we need a conversation?

When every piece of information is either available on Google or Youtube, I used to believe that having a conversation was redundant, it was so overrated. It was like giving too much importance to a topic. Besides that, meaningful conversations were rare. For me, consuming content was rather more important than conversation.

Guess what. I was wrong. A conversation can open the doors to new perspectives while dealing with a topic. To broaden your horizon and to comprehend something substantially, we must engage in a dialogue.

What is Sewa Samwaad?

Sewa Samwaad is a monthly webinar organised by Sewa International, where people who have contributed to nation-building are invited. Shri Ashok Goel Ji who is a Renowned Philanthropist & Social Leader opened the session with Dr R Balasubramaniam's introduction. Dr R Balasubramaniam is associated with development scholar, author and public policy advocate.

From the very first moment, it was evident that he had command over his subject. Speaking about Swami Vivekananda, he threw light on some key insights on the life and teachings of Swamiji.

He said that Swami Vivekananda's life could be a guide for the new generation. He worked for only 9 years, yet his impact can be realised even after so many years.

I could also relate to the point when he said that currently, our nation is full of potential as the average age of India is 28 years.

That's why he emphasised that youth must work towards building the nation. He added further that you didn't need to do mammoth tasks, a little contribution can create a big difference. Twenty minutes into the session, I was hooked. I tend to see my mobile after a few minutes but Dr Subramaniam's eloquence didn't allow me to move away from the laptop screen.

After a certain point, it felt like Dr Subramaniam was reading my mind out. The idea of leading a life on such a great ideology not only enticed me but also answered some of my questions. I could list down the questions that were unknowingly answered by him. Some of them are-

Q- What is social media?

A- It is not a distraction but a misapplied opportunity.

Q- How to serve our nation?

A- To serve your nation, it is not necessary to be a doctor or engineer. You have to be skilled and to be able to understand, comprehend and deploy that skill.

Q- What should be the moola mantra of my life?

A- Don't be tolerant of mediocrity.

Dr Balasubramaniam spilt the nuggets of wisdom throughout his speech. Suffice to say that everything he said could be a guiding light for all of us.

Conclusion

Kumar Subham (Director, Sewa International), who was hosting this session asked the questions on behalf of the listeners, Dr Subramnaiam patiently highlights the fundamentals of the problems with his sharp intellect and wit. His answers not only quenched my spiritual thirst but also helped me to look at things from a different perspective.

One and half hour session came to end and to my surprise, I was amazed how time went by. There wasn't a dull moment throughout the session. I didn't surf through the internet that night. An introspection was long due and that session gave me a chance to reflect upon my issues.

The next morning I found myself in a book market looking for a book- Voices from the grassroots authored by Dr R Balasubramaniam.

Sewa Samwaad so far

To create a discussion about the current scenarios, 6 Sewa Samwaad has been organised so far. What makes all of them interesting, is the topics and speakers chosen by Sewa International.

From sustainable development to tribal upliftment to women empowerment, Sewa Samwaad had touched upon the relevant ideas for discussion.

It will be interesting to see how this program unfolds in future. I hope that I will attend more of their insightful sessions.