



Summer Holy Days

Dear Readers, Sai Ram!

If, like me, you have not been at Prashanti Nilayam yourself over the past month, I'm sure you have avidly been reading snippets about two events there involving significant numbers of our UK Organisation's devotees.

After glorious Guru Purnima came the Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference that was attended by nearly 70 UK delegates, I look forward to hearing first-hand accounts of their experiences there and hope that these will be encapsulated for you in the next issue of 'Love and Light' on the 9th September. A very large contingent of our Organisation's youth and adults were guided on a spiritual visit to the feet of our beloved one, by Sri Ajit Popat, in response to Swami's personal invitation. On behalf of SSSSO UK I should like to thank Sri Popat and members of the Heart Valve Bank Trust for putting together such a meaningful and significant trip that will live long in the hearts of those who went. Late July and August is a fairly quiet time in our Organisation with people taking the opportunity of summer vacations to visit Swami. At the end of this month we have our National Retreat restored again to its place in our calendar and with the highlight of having Phyllis Krystal as its Key Speaker. Your Council has been preparing a draft version of the promised 'Handbook for Office Bearers' that will soon be circulated electronically to all Centres and Groups for your additional questions and suggestions. This is hopefully a very useful resource that will augment the very respected - and quite indispensable - Organisation Manual and attempts to answer those regular questions that keep coming round each year in Centres and Groups. It will come complete with a Resource CD. Your prompt feedback is crucial on this. We aim to have hard copies printed and distributed for Swami's Birthday this year. Over the weekend 5th - 7th September five members of your Central Council will be attending a Conference of the European Zones in Athens. We are honoured to be invited as guests and will learn much from and share much with our European hosts I'm sure. We shall certainly take your love with us to them!

Love and Light,

Rosemary Perry, National Chair

UK WEBSITE: www.srisathyasai.org.uk

National Sathya Sai Retreat:

**"You Are Me, I am You,
We Are One"**

22nd to the 24th of August

After a two-year gap, the National Sathya Sai Retreat is again taking place this year. The planning group has put together the two-day programme. Booking closed at the end of July.

The programme, which includes workshops, talks, Keynote Speaker: Phyllis Krystal plus many other activities promises to be a very spiritually uplifting weekend.

**Ramesh Mistry for the
National Retreat Planning Team**

SSE National Teachers' Day 2008 Important Notice

National Teachers' Day 2008 will now take place on **Saturday 30th August 2008** at **Winston Churchill Hall**, Manor Farm Site, Pinn Way, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 7QL. Please note this **revised date** in your diaries. It will be a wonderful opportunity for Teachers, Teaching assistants, office bearers and all those involved in Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) to come together to celebrate, learn, share ideas and be inspired for the next academic year. The Speakers are: Sri Ajit Popat, Dr Veeru Rao, Ishver Patel, Mrs Karunes Ratnasingham and Rosemary Perry. Further details and registration forms are available via Regional SSE coordinators after 9th June.

**Lakshmi Puvanendran,
National SSE Co-ordinator**

Youth

Sri Sathya Sai School, Leicester, 'Grand Forces meets Grand Designs' Review!

Sri Sathya Sai Baba exhorts his students that "Educated man must realise that he has more obligations than privileges, more duties than rights. He has to serve the society amidst which he is placed." Baba also reminds us that service must start in our homes and in our local communities to help meet the needs of the society that has given us so much.

Nation building projects are often talked about and the most sustainable and long-term project is helping children to blossom

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into noble and dedicated human beings. The Sri Sathya Sai School in Leicester is one such place where the children are being nurtured to become selfless and loving participants in creating the nation of tomorrow.

Between the 12th July and 27th July 2008, the Youth Wing of our Organisation undertook to organise and execute the renovation and refurbishment of the Sri Sathya Sai School in Leicester.

The principle was to allow any youth or adult who wished to volunteer their time and energy, to provide selfless loving service in the form of painting, decorating and general maintenance work. The more complex work, such as the building of classrooms, lighting etc. was overseen by professional builders, who were also Sai volunteers giving their time and expertise, with the able assistance of some enthusiastic youth.

After several months of planning in which the exact needs of the school were detailed and the professionals and resources were matched, the project began. In essence the goal of the 2 weeks was to create a new classroom space on the second floor of the school, to refurbish the corridor, science, library and Information Technology rooms, to create covered decking in the nursery area in which the children could play outside and to create an office for the Headmistress. Artistic murals whose designs would appeal to young children as well as having inspiring quotations that highlighted the philosophy of Sri Sathya Sai Education were to be created on the outside walls surrounding the nursery.

The youth and adults who engaged in this project worked tirelessly from 8.30am in the morning to 10.30pm at night, all in different shifts, on a daily basis for 16 consecutive days. The parents of the children in the school provided great assistance not only in helping in the renovation work but also in providing food and drink for breakfast, lunch and dinner. For some of the working youth, they had sacrificed their holiday time and personal resources to ensure that this work was completed to the level of perfection that Sai Baba inspires in all of us.

The type of work involved included hoisting up many long panels of wood from the outside of the building because they were too long to be brought up the stairs inside. These panels were then cut and drilled to construct the partition walls for two of the classrooms. Originally this area was simply unused empty space on the second floor with the walls painted in a very gauche bottle green colour. The walls needed to be re-painted and this involved a very patient process of sanding

down the old paint, salt-washing the walls and then applying PVC solution and then finally applying the new paint. The walls of the room were quite high and to reach the upper areas required the construction of scaffolding.

The front entrance to the school was refurbished with real care and attention and the corridor and interior walls of the other classrooms were similarly refurbished and re-painted. A beautiful coat of Prashanti light blue now adorns the walls of these classrooms and a magnolia white is in the IT room and corridor. Wooden laminate panelling has been carefully put down as the classroom and corridor flooring.

In the car park area, the old weeds and roots were uplifted and graffiti removed from the walls. In the nursery area, the artistic murals were designed by the youth whose passion for art now found a noble and purposeful expression. With the quotation and theme from Sathya Sai Baba, 'Play is the beginning of knowledge', adorning one of the walls; and an underwater theme with various sea creatures smiling lovingly on another. And with quotations such as, "Whatever the question, the answer is love", and "Always be truthful and you will always be happy", providing inspiration not only for the children but also for the adults; the previously raw brick walls with weed and grime attached have now been transformed into a fun-filled and uplifting environment in which the children can play.

Beneath the physical aspect of the refurbishment and renovation work on the school there has been a deeper spiritual dimension at play. Swami reminds us that, "Hands that help are holier than lips that pray", and that, "Selfless service is the highest Sadhana", ('Sadhana' is any spiritual exercise to cleanse and purify the heart and mind). Everyone involved in this project had to put into practise Swami's teachings in every task they undertook. Not only were we learning practical skills such as how to assemble scaffolding carefully and safely, how to strip old paint and apply new paint, and how to make shelving; but more importantly everyone was working together silently in unity and with their actions lovingly dedicated to Baba and their minds focused on their work.

Thus, what might be ordinarily perceived as a tedious paint-stripping job, was transformed into Sadhana and 'one-pointed' attention when the divine name was silently chanted within thereby allowing divine vibrations to permeate the atmosphere. The most striking

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feature of the whole project was the love that was experienced by everyone. Everyone had set aside their own needs to work for the needs of the school and the children. Virtually no-one had any direct personal connection with the school itself in terms of being a parent or a teacher there, indeed some had come from different parts of the country to volunteer their time and energy and yet the dedication and love with which the work was carried out was as if each person was a trustee for each brick and each child on behalf of the school.

It is hoped that the work that began in July can continue and that others may be inspired to visit the school and offer their services and resources in whatever way is needed. The reward is quite simply the experience of pure unconditional love and peace of mind, in other words a deeper connection with each other and with God.

It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. One of the greatest needs in our society is the need for the blossoming of human values in our local communities so that love and respect can once again be part of neighbourly relationships. To support our Sri Sathya Sai School is to transform our limited love beyond ourselves, our immediate family, our locality and to reach out to future generations of our collective community.

Neil Bisarya [Submitted by Mathan Arulvel, Nat Youth Co-ordinator]

Region 2

Guru Purnima Celebrations 2008

Region 2 held Guru Purnima celebrations on Friday 18th July, at Dennis Jackson Hall, London Road, Wembley. The programme was well attended: the hall almost full to capacity. The programme began at 7.30pm with 3 Aums, followed by the formal welcome. Yohan Pathmanathan guided us into a short meditation helping everyone to connect to a higher level of inner peace in order to remain concentrated on the evening's focal point of Guru Purnima itself.

Following on from that was the chanting of Vedam and then all the participants were led together in the chanting of the Gayatri Mantra 21 times, with the intention of sending positive healing vibrations to our environment, community, country and world. This was then followed by the offering of yellow coloured rice to the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, our Guru and Lord, as each name of the Sai Paadam was extolled. The significance of the rice offering is to declare that one does not wish to be re-born and that this must be the last birth just

as a rice grain cannot be re-planted to grow more rice crop, the grain signifies the end of its cycle.

After the offering of gratitude and love to the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan the congregation was led into devotional singing, nine bhajans were sung followed by a medley and closing prayers. The programme concluded at 9.30pm.

Written by Senthil Kumarathevan, Region 2 Spiritual Co-ordinator and submitted by Subita Mahtani, Region 2 Vice-Chair

Region 3

Seeking Values in Traditions and Cultures: A Workshop facilitated by Dr Suresh Govind

(Hosted by Region 3 with attendees from Regions 1, 2 and 3)

Sunday 15 June 2008, in the early hours of the morning saw young SSE children, their parents, SSE teachers and office bearers from Region 2 and Region 3 attend the much-anticipated workshop to be conducted by Dr Suresh Govind from Malaysia. He is well known for his dynamism, motivational and enthusiastic talks, and his commitment to the promotion of human values in life.

The hall in St Andrew's Primary School, Totteridge was already filled with an energy that was then further charged with children's prayers and singing. The objectives of the day were simple:

1. To introduce basic fundamentals of the teachings of Swami through symbolism and the meanings found in past cultures and traditions.

2. To empower the students with the concept of love for their parents as being an essential to gain success in life.

By the end of the session, participants had gained a sense of pride and a deeper understanding of their respective cultures and traditions, and felt empowered enough to apply these eternal values in their own lives.

The programme aimed to take us all on a journey of discovery – finding the values embedded in our traditions and culture, and to seek out their relevance in leading us towards a joyous and successful life. This journey's primary focus was on the basic principles of symbolism and the meaning infused in the Hindu tradition.

In the traditional style of a lesson, participants put pen to paper to absorb all that Suresh had to say. His talk looked at life in the 21st Century 'life-lessness'. We have more and more gadgets to make our lives easier but because of this we use our brains less, carry out fewer challenging activities, thus resulting in fewer neural connections

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being made... we don't even use 2% of our brain's capacity. Albert Einstein - considered the cleverest person in the world, only used marginally more than this. Our brains are constantly crying out to be used! The bottom line: do something today that you would find challenging. Create more neural connections. Get smarter!

We discussed the things that are needed to be successful in life – it boils down to 'skills' and 'attitude' – having the skill only results in 20% success, whereas attitude confers 80% success (the Pareto Principle). This then led on to defining the difference between tradition and culture. For example, tradition is 'what you wear' and culture is 'knowing how and when to wear it'. In this day and age, if students can understand this fundamental difference then there should be no confusion over the two terms for any given situation that arises.

Suresh then linked Dharma to the inner symbolic significance of the paraphernalia surrounding Lord Ganesh. Some examples of these included the 'lotus' reminding you to live your life like a lotus – taking in only what is good from murky waters. The 'rope' (stem) indicates the hold that Lord Ganesh will have on you and that keeps you from harm once you surrender yourself to Him.

Once the 'disciples' in the hall were sufficiently educated in the art of living a Dharmic life, three groups, consisting of 'Students' (children and youth), 'Mothers' and 'Fathers' were formed, and then discussed 10 things that they would pledge to do to ensure that Dharma was maintained in their homes. After much deliberation, these three groups presented their pledges to the audience who showed their appreciation for the insight and inspiration provided by these groups. The young students' promises and their deeper understanding of how to live a Dharmic life particularly impressed Dr Suresh Govind. The parents also paid particular attention to these promises to ensure that they would be adhered to!

Towards the end of the day, Suresh explained how success in life depends solely on the happiness of one's parents. There is a need to show parental reverence when one embarks on any aspect of life if one is to be successful; this concept was explained through personal glimpses and anecdotes from Suresh's own life.

He then explained the power of prayer – from the moment we awake until the moment we go to sleep. God is always listening.

Finally the day concluded with a question and answer session – this left everyone hungry for

more - so Suresh has promised to come back and do a retreat with us in the near future – watch this space!

Written mostly from notes provided by Lakshmi Puvanendran, National SSE Co-ordinator, and submitted by Sunthar Uthayanan, R3 Chair

Region 3

SSE School Sports Day

The school held its annual sports meet at Drapers Field, Leyton on Sunday 6th of July this year. The teachers, students and volunteers were faced with 'Summer Showers at Drapers Field' but all of them held to their belief in Swami and prayed for better weather. The steely determination of all the teachers, the children and the helpers ensured that all the events took place right through to 1pm - despite the strong winds and intermittent heavy showers. The highlight of the day was the novel event of 'tug of war', which was most enjoyable, creating the right mood and appetite for lunch, after which the presentation of awards took place and the Sports Day drew to a close at about 3.15pm. As the weather then picked up a little, children and families stayed behind to enjoy some rounders – the girls, and some cricket – the boys. The winning house was 'Space House' at this year's meet. Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone who helped or assisted in one way or another, especially members of the FOSSE team who did sterling job, as ever, looking after everyone's needs during the day. All in all, it was a fun day and it would not be amiss to say that we all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves...

Written by Vickneswaren Krishnan, Region 3 SSE School Co-ordinator, and submitted by Sunthar Uthayanan, R3 Chair

Region 4

Birmingham Sai Centre – July Celebrations

Although the earlier part of July saw more rain and uninspiring weather, matters picked up just as the SSE year was gearing towards its summer holidays. Warm weather and sunshine poured in on the day Birmingham Centre celebrated its last day of SSE classes on 18th of July with a 'Fun Day'. About 40 members attended and everyone, from the most energetic child to the most elderly person played various games such as penalty shootout and cricket. The SSE children were then presented with gifts to mark the start of their summer vacation followed by

refreshments that were prepared by the ladies wing.

And more activities were held on the 19th in our Region. A small group of devotees volunteered to assist at a church, which was also having a 'Fun Day' and then breaking up for the summer vacation. They helped in providing vegetarian food while the speakers talked on helping to save the environment and also fat free cooking and keeping a healthy diet. Thereafter everyone met at the Broadway school for the start of the Gurupurnima celebrations. Already a number of devotees had come earlier to set up the altar and scene. The programme commenced at 3 pm with omkars, gayatri mantras, 108 names of Swami wherein everyone performed a 'Paduka (sacred sandals) puja by offering petals whilst the names were being chanted, chanting of slokas and group devotional singing followed.

As the event unfolded, workshops were held on the theme 'You said YES to me'. Then came the guest speaker who spoke at length on the meaning of Gurupurnima.

The end of the Gurupurnima celebration saw a short session of meditation followed by the Aarthi. Everyone was then treated to delicious refreshments and prasadam (blessed food) served by the ladies wing, which had prepared most of the items earlier in the morning... The Centre celebrated 'Global Service Day', on Sunday the 20th. When most of the UK was fast asleep, about 12 cars left early in the morning to 3 ashrams of the elderly in Birmingham. There were 23 residents that were picked up and taken to see the Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple of the UK built in Tividale, Oldbury, West Midlands. The elderly were assisted at the temple to have darshan of the various deities. The weather seemed a little dull but our elderly's hearts were filled with Love & Joy. They also took part in Mendi and other activities that were organised by the Temple. South Indian breakfast was served and thereafter, happily, everyone who had made the effort to attend was able to partake in a medical camp organised by the Temple authorities. Not everyone had a clean bill of health though! And all 'sevadals' took on board their health issues seriously. Prasadam was served to all. The day ended by returning the elderly to their homes and the volunteering families rushing to have a good nights rest after 3 full days of fun and activity.

Written by Raju P Gadher and submitted by Ramesh Mistry, Region 4 Chair

Region 6

SSSSO UK Bone Marrow Awareness and Blood Donor Pitch at

Southampton's 6th Mela Festival - Saturday 19th July, 2008

The Sri Sathya Service Organisation UK [SSSSO UK] joined the 6th Annual Mela Festival in Southampton City to promote the awareness and importance of donating Bone Marrow and Blood across all communities especially a the need for donors to come forward from the Islamic, Sikh and Hindu communities.

Flickering away in the background was a rich cultural fusion of South Asian art, food, music and dance which was further enhanced by the educational activities that came together to provide a vibrant and satisfying experience for all. Our pitch, supported by the members of Southampton and Portsmouth groups, worked collectively to serve members of the public intrigued to understand our drive and energy for promoting this valuable service.

Some 22 members volunteered their time to join our pitch in an effort to increase the total number of donors currently registered with Anthony Nolan Trust [ANT] and National Blood Service [NBS]. As most of you are aware SSSSO have been running the Sri Sathya Sai Leukaemia Awareness programme throughout the UK in conjunction with ANT since February 2000. There are 3 million Asians living in the UK, but only 1% of this population to date currently donates blood or bone marrow!

Our 'Journey' to the 6th Mela Festival

On April 17th, this year, Bharat Handa, National Service Coordinator, Beverley Kissoon, R6 Service Coordinator, Davendra Ojar, Portsmouth Chair and Viren Patel, Southampton Chair were invited to the National Blood Service Offices for a meeting with Geoff Anderson, NBS Regional Manager and Daljit Heer, NBS Coordinator. It became apparent during our meeting that NBS had a strong need to obtain more donors from the Asian community and felt that a mutual relationship could be established with our Organisation that would assist in the process of achieving this objective.

This meeting inspired our Southampton and Portsmouth Group Chairs, Viren Patel and Davendra Ojar to consider a shared service activity which would involve the setting up of a mobile or static blood donor clinic[s]. They are at present working alongside NBS to

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implement this service and continue with their team in the background to build strong relationships with local religious heads from the Islamic, Sikh, Hindu communities and, with Inter-faith groups.

Through their team effort they have provided NBS with 32 new donors of which 12 have so far registered. This campaign is ongoing and will continue to gain momentum in preparation for a Free Walk-In Health Awareness Clinic scheduled for the latter part of this year in Southampton.

Our coverage was further heightened, when Radio Station, 'Unity 101', invited us to share a joint platform on a live talk show with NBS. Bharat Handa, SSSSO UK National Service Coordinator and Zeeshan Asghar, National Communication Coordinator for the NBS spoke on 'Community Hour' a programme hosted by Shobhna Phillips. This platform offered members of the public the opportunity to: address key concerns, understand the donor procedure and eligibility, discuss the reasons for lack of donor uptake and cover how each person can join the ANT and NBS registers.

This successful show paved the way for a second programme, hosted by Unity 101 on the 17th July, 2008, in which NBS and respective religious heads from the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities further encouraged their captive audience to come forward and help a 6-year old Sikh girl requiring bone marrow transplant urgently.

Naturally, SSSSO UK supported this campaign and directed potential donors on the day of the Mela to the Singh Sabha Gurudwara (Sikh Temple) where, on Saturday 20th July, doctors from Southampton General Hospital and ANT would be present to take samples.

In full flow of the day our pitch was periodically visited by many dignitaries and we have named here but a few: The Right Worshipful Mayor of Southampton - Councillor Brian Parnell and the Mayoress, Dawn Buck the Head of Patient and Public Involvement - Southampton City Primary Care Trust, Vinod Desai MBE, Chief Executive - Art Asia, Mrs Jayantha Gunatillaka, Director - Art Asia and Ram Kalyan, Project and Station Manager - Unity 101.

Finally, our 22 volunteers encouraged:

- 56 potential donors to consider joining the Anthony Nolan Trust or the National Blood Service Bone Marrow registers;
- 14 to join the National Blood Service register as blood donors;
- 12 donors joined the National Blood Service register on 19th July whose names

were registered by Southampton and Portsmouth members prior to the Mela.

This event was successful due to the selfless love generated by our volunteers and the need to carry out collectively Swami's work with tolerance, team spirit, understanding and acceptance of others. This understanding provided us all with the unique opportunity to be and to harness the individual role we play in being part of this sacred organisation. This was beautifully captured by one of our volunteers:

"It was a perfect day, a day spent with special people who provided us with an opportunity of learning on all levels – truly a blessing."

Beverley Kisson,
Region 6 Service Co-ordinator

Region 7

Guru-Poornima Celebrations

Region 7 celebrated Guru-Poornima Regionally on Sunday 20th July in Cardiff. The theme for the day was "Unity, Purity and Divinity" and the focus of the day was on 'Service'. The event began with wonderful Vedic chanting, 21 Gayatri Mantras and bhajans, which were extremely energising. The main speaker for the day was Bharat Handa, National Service Co-ordinator, who spoke from his heart firstly about the significance of Guru-Poornima and then about Swami's core message of "Service to Man is Service to God". He spoke about Service activities carried out nationally and those particularly by Region 7 and as everyone knows about the vast numbers of beautiful baby blankets, cardigans and clothes, and ...definitely not forgetting the stunning teddy bears made by Region 7 for the charity "Something Beautiful for God" and the Easwaramma Trust in Prashanti. To continue the theme of 'Service' after the talks there were 'Workshops Related to Service Activities'. The workshops included making flower arrangements, potting plants, sewing knitted pieces to make baby blankets, sewing baby squares for wrapping little newborn babies in India and card making.

After the celebrations were over, a small group of devotees took the beautiful flower arrangements, and chocolates to a local Nursing Home in Cardiff called Nazareth House, which is run by nuns. The Nursing Home is a beautiful building with lovely well-kept and stunning gardens and the nuns were very caring and loving too. The nuns and the residents of the Home were delighted to receive the flowers and the chocolates and as one resident said "it made her day"!

Nirmala Pisavadia, Region 7 Vice-Chair

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Sathya Sai Bookshop

The bookshop has a regularly updated website.

Please visit it at:

www.srisathyasaibookcentre.org.uk

DVDs are often being compiled and released along with new interesting books.

The SSSSO UK Website

is to be found on:

www.srisathyasai.org.uk

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BISSE

British Institute of Sathya Sai Education

Information on the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Programme can be found on:

www.sathyasaiehv.org.uk

“Merge yourself with the whole of Creation; allow the whole of creation to enter the portals of your mind in one happy family reunion. Envy, which like a mistletoe saps vitality out of all spiritual practices, can creep in only when you feel your neighbour as different, distinct, disturbing. You do not feel your hand as a nuisance, because it is yours, a part of you. Your neighbour is also as much you. All men are lamps lit from the same flame which is God.”

Sathya Sai Baba

Love and Light SSSSO UK
Significant Diary Dates 2008
Please ask your Centre or Regional Chair for details

Month	Date	Event
August	16 th	SSLTP in Reading
August	22 nd - 24 th	National Retreat Stourbridge
August	30 th	National SSE Teachers' Day
August	31 st	UKCC Quarterly Meeting
September	13 th	NWC Meetings
October	11 th - 12 th	UKCC Vision Weekend
October	18 th	National Spiritual Day
November	19 th	Ladies' Day
November	23 rd	Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Birthday
December	6 th	UKCC Quarterly Meeting
December	13 th	NWC Meetings