



Once in Royal David's City...

Dear Readers

Sai Ram, I am sure a lot of you will have already started your festive shopping for Christmas. Having just come back from an uplifting trip to Prashanti with the youth (see the special feature), it feels strange to think that all the magical moments were only two weeks ago! November also saw the month of Akhandā bhajans and of course our Beloved Bhagawan's Birthday, I do hope you all managed to read HIS divine discourse as Swami took the point of mentioning 'London'! As we approach the sacred day in 16 days time, I know that a lot of Centres and Groups will be celebrating Christmas at their meetings, please do take time to think of those who are not as fortunate as ourselves to have something or someone to share this time of year, do see if you can help in any way you can. Jesus Christ was born in a manger, surrounded by cattle. The Star of David shone brightly and led the three Wise Men to see the 'Messiah'; I wonder how many then really thought that this child born on 25 December was a special soul who had come down on Earth to help mankind? How many people did not know that or misled others into believing that he was NOT the messenger of God? I wonder how many people verbally abused HIM through the means of the Roman 'media' system which brought about his short life on this Earth... and then only did they realise who HE really was...

"We are celebrating the sacred festival of Christmas. We should celebrate it in the true spirit without entertaining petty desires. Jesus was the son of God. While he was being crucified, he said, "Oh father, let thy Will be done." When you surrender yourself to God's Will, he will take care of you. Do not develop superiority complex. Give up ego and pomp. Pray silently and sincerely. If your prayers are not answered, you can certainly question Me. God is not confined to a place somewhere in a distant corner. He always resides in your heart. He can accomplish anything. He is ever ready to perform any task, be it big or small for the sake of His devotees. All are His children. Hence, He will certainly answer our prayers. Jesus taught, "All are children of God." When you have such firm conviction, we can accomplish any task. You need not go through voluminous books. Fill your heart with love and leave everything to His Will. You will certainly achieve success in your endeavours. [25/12/2004 Discourse]

I wish you all a happy and Holy Christmas.

Love & Light, Shobhna Patel, UK Chair

National Office Bearers' Conference (NOBC) 2007

'Your life is MY message'

Yes, another year has gone by so quickly - almost without us realising it - and now the time has come to organise the arrangements for next year's NOBC scheduled for Saturday 3rd February 2007. One might ask some pertinent questions, such as, "Why should this matter?" "Who is eligible to attend?" "How would one benefit from coming?" and "How can one help to further the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation set up by Swami?" My response to all these questions would be that all those persons who currently are, or have been in the past, or wish to get involved in transforming themselves and society for the better - in however small a way - should attend the NOBC. *The NOBC is open to all active workers whether 'office bearers' or not.* The main purpose for holding NOBC each year is to update the delegates with news and highlights of the Organisation in both the UK and abroad, including the activities undertaken by various Wings and Regions over the preceding year and to put forward the Work Plans for each Wing for the forthcoming year (2007). It also gives you an opportunity to meet and share your views and ideas on matters concerning our future and how best to be involved in it. It aims to fully inspire and re-energise you to get involved in the various activities in your local Centre or Group. All wishing to attend the NOBC should give their names and the recommended contribution towards hire costs, food, brochure etc to their Centre/Group chair who has all the details. Due to limited places, there is a deadline before which one needs to send their names and allocation is made on a 'first come first served' basis. If you would like to have further information please contact your Centre/Group Chair soon! The NOBC Planning Group and the all National Council members look forward to meeting you at NOBC on Saturday 4th February 2007.

**Bharat Handa, National Service Co-ordinator,
AHFSL@aol.com**

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Region 1 Chanting Together

Regional 'Spiritual Awareness Day' and more

From the recommendations of the NSWCC the 2nd Spiritual Awareness day took place in Region 1. On this occasion the '9 Forms of Devotion' and the 'Gayatri Mantra' and the 'Sayatri Mantra' were presented and explored by the Region's Centres and Groups. They were divided into five teams and the subjects were presented in a variety of formats from power point presentations to drama/dialogue between groups of devotees but the message that came out was very loud and clear. The programme contained, in addition to the above presentation, devotional songs at the beginning and the end. A 'Question & Answer' panel at the end was arranged, answering and discussing - along with many members of the gathering - spiritual questions from those attending. Thanks to Mukesh Msanghrajka, Spiritual Co-ordinator for Region 2, who kindly consented to be a panel member for this event and gave enlightening answers to many of the questions.

The event was ably compered, summarised and concluded by Jonathan Wilcox from Wimbledon Sai Centre and by Maureen O'Hara from the Wandsworth Sai Group. The event ended with Aarthi as an expression of our gratitude to our beloved Lord. All Centres and Groups worked in unity.

'Akhand Bhajans' Annual 24 hrs of Devotional Singing

This took place as a Regional activity at Merton Sai Centre. Most of the Region's Centres and Groups participated and made it a happy and successful event.

81st Birthday Celebrations

Most of the Centres/Groups celebrated Baba's 81st birthday. Some of the Centres celebrated on a large scale with SSE children's programmes and by inviting guest speakers enlighten the event.

SSEHV

A 'Values Alive' camp took place in the Region for four days. It was a very successful event.

Youth Pilgrimage

The young adults from R1 who went on this pilgrimage were very happy with the spiritual journey and the spiritual practices like meditation that they acquired or deepened over the year. Some of the Region 1 male and female pilgrims were given the opportunity to sing at the Ashram and felt very honoured and blessed to do so.

Keith Sithsabesan, Chair, Region 1

Region 2 In The Spirit of Song

The month of November is a busy one in the Calendar of SSSSO UK. Starting with Ladies Day followed by 'Akhand Bhajans' and concluding, finally, with our beloved Teacher's Birthday.

The 'Akhand Bhajan' event held at the Dennis Jackson Hall, Wembley, began at 6pm with a few opening prayers. This was followed by devotional singing from various Centres and concluded with unity bhajans and Aarthi. The beautiful altar with a photograph of Swami with the biggest smile on his face, blessed all of us with his happiness & grace. Overall 400 people attended the evening. All participating Centres / Groups sang with sincerity, love and devotion showing 'unity, purity and divinity'. The concentration that was given to the rhythmic clapping and singing by everyone present, certainly chased the crows away from the trees and also chased away any vices perched in the heart. Everyone sang with a heart filled with love the names of Divinity. The ensuing vibrations were uplifting and Godly. The atmosphere was very spiritual all evening, and the volunteers worked to the best of their ability.

The attendance was good throughout the evening with people also taking the time to talk to each other over a hot cup of tea or coffee and snacks. There was a limited amount of time, but it was utilised well. Everything was done with simplicity and Swami appreciates this.

The global singing of holy songs is for the welfare of humanity as a whole. The evening went very well with everyone leaving for home full of bliss.

Pumi Tateri, Region 2 Information Officer

Region 4 United in Joy Akhand Bhajans

Akhand Bhajans were conducted throughout the Region on the weekend of 11th and 12th of November, with some Centres linking up for combined sessions. These varied from a few hours to twenty-four hours for some larger Centres. Many smaller Groups and Centres were invited to join in with the bigger ones, and this brought devotees together from all over the Region.

Birthday Celebrations

All the Centres and some of the Groups held Birthday celebrations, and the first of these was held on the 19th November, with the last one being held on the 2nd December. As the celebrations were spread out, this gave an opportunity to many people to attend several Birthday programmes. The Youth wing worked very hard, and was seen integrating and supporting many of these celebrations. This was in the form of musical presentation, chanting the Vedas, decorating the hall and by providing PA facilities. It was truly, a united effort, the programmes ranged from plays presented by SSE children and adults, to guest speakers who came and shared their experiences or gave inspirational messages. The days culminated in a cake ceremony, amidst singing of birthday songs.

Mukund Patel, Region 4 Chair

Sathya Sai Leadership Training Programme

The Sri Sathya Sai Leadership Training Programme (SSLTP) was a National Youth wing initiative following the First World Youth Conference in 1997. Since its inception, four cohorts totalling approximately forty candidates have successfully completed the course.

The fifth cohort graduated on the 5th of November 2006 in a ceremony the National Youth Pilgrimage 2006 meeting. The graduates were presented with their certificates and gifted a candle in a glass holder bearing the Mahavakya (great maxim) of Leadership – 'To Be, To Do, To See, To Tell'. This represents the flame of leadership and the torch being passed on to the graduates to go forth TO BE leaders. The 'Leadership' prizewinners also received a pen inscribed with the Mahavakya for Leadership. A 'Transformation' prize was also presented this year in the form of a shield that will bear the name of the successful graduate and be passed on to successful graduates of SSLTP in the future. The candidates are assessed throughout the course via written assignments, which are graded according to their ability to relate theory to practice, use of resources, critical thinking and presentation. The candidates were also marked at the end of the year for commitment to the course, attendance, punctuality, questioning (participation during the module days) and transformation. The latter being difficult to assess, this was done using feedback from other candidates on who inspired them, feedback from facilitators, mentors and the overall committee. At the end of the course a final assessment day was held where teams presented their project management assignment – a project proposal for a project of their choice to a panel of examiners. Each candidate was also interviewed to assess how much of the course he or she had imbibed and practiced. Those candidates that did not submit all assignments due to commitments that the SSLTP co-ordinating committee were aware of, were given an opportunity to redeem themselves during the interview process. Otherwise, candidates who had not submitted all their assignments and did not attend the interview were not permitted to graduate from the programme. Candidates that submitted all their assignments and had scored well were awarded honours. The male and female leadership prizes were awarded to the candidates that showed academic excellence. Final triumph for each candidate is self-transformation.

The graduates of SSLTP 2005-2006 were:

Rima Patel (Region 6 Youth Co-ordinator), Gita Pathmanathan (Region 2 SSE Coordinator), Mathan Arulvel (Region 3 Youth Co-ordinator), Akshay Patel

(Active youth – Region 6), Mahendra Patel (Chair of Bath Sai Centre), Yohan Pathmanathan (Harrow West Sai Centre Chairperson), Graduating with Honours: Shilpa Parmar (Spiritual Co-ordinator of Manor Park Sai Centre), Sima Mistry (Active youth – Region 6), Veekash Parmar (SSE Teacher of Region 3 SSE school), Anant Patel (Vice-Youth Co-ordinator Manor Park), Deviesh Tankaria (Active member of SITA).

The Female Leadership Prize was awarded to Iris Chetty (Youth Co-ordinator of Manor Park Sai Centre), the Male Leadership Prize was awarded to Prashant Mistry (Active Youth – Region 6). The Transformation Shield was awarded to Mathan Arulvel (Region 3 Youth Co-ordinator).

The sixth cohort will commence the programme in March 2007. If you are interested in applying, application forms will be available in mid-December from your centre chairs. The minimum age of applicants is 21 years.

Any enquiries – please email SSLTP@hotmail.co.uk.

Priya Balarama, SSLTP Co-ordinator

Sathya Sai Schools

Talks at every Group and Centre!

To raise awareness of our nation building projects, the two Sathya Sai Schools, we have planned 81 talks to be delivered to UK Groups and Centres. They need to be delivered by 31st May 2007 so if you haven't had your turn please give Prabodh Mistry a call on the number below. So far, they have been delivered at Hounslow, Wolverhampton, Coventry and Nottingham. The next one is planned for Birmingham.

Supermarket Shopping Vouchers

Several packets of the vouchers have been received from many centres and groups in Region 6 (only!). You can still send them by forwarding to your centre chair and Regional Chair. There are other ways to help Sathya Sai Schools, please contact your Regional Chair.

Prabodh Mistry, 01235 202660

Acting Sathya Sai Schools Co-ordinator

Sathya Sai Bookshop

19 Hay Lane

Kingsbury,

N. London

The bookshop has a **NEW WEBSITE** and is often adding to its collection of fascinating literature, CDs, videos and DVDs.

Please find it at:

www.srisathyasaibookcentre.org.uk

SPECIAL FEATURE

National Youth Pilgrimage 2006

On the 12th November 2006, 160 members of the Youth wing (predominantly 18 – 35 yr olds) along with some members of the United Kingdom Central council embarked upon a life-changing journey. After nine months of intense personal spiritual practice – and strict adherence to the Sadhana Programme, 160 youth (of almost equal numbers of males and females) were ready to receive from Bhagawan His endless flow of Love and Grace. A National Youth Pilgrimage is a unique experience filled with many facets and dimensions and this year was no exception. After conducting a Youth Service Camp in 2004 called 'Helping Hands and Healing Hearts', Swami asked for the UK Youth this year to conduct a 'Spiritual camp'. This was started back in February with each youth following the special Sadhana Programme that was designed to assist their personal transformation.

One of the many highlights of the trip was the UK Youth Conference that took place over three days in Prashanti. Swami directly initiated its planning and execution. This was the first time that any country from outside India had held such a youth conference in Prashanti. The three-day conference was entitled "Ideal Sai Youth". Swami further showered his blessings by sending the following eminent and learned speakers to address the youth: Dr Michael Goldstein, Dr Narendra Reddy, Sri Narasimhamurthy the Warden of the Brindavan Campus, Professor Anil Kumar and the three Vice Chancellors of Swami's Institute of Higher Learning, Sri Gokak, Sri Giri and Sri Venkatraman. These eminent speakers touched on many important and profound topics, which not only inspired our youth but also made them understand the important mission that lies ahead for them.

Swami also chose to shower his divine grace upon our National Youth Choir. The boys' choir was personally asked by Swami to sing in the Prashanti Mandir (inner Temple) on four separate occasions. The girls also received Swami's never-ending love and grace and were personally asked by Swami to perform on no less than Ladies Day morning, on the 19th November. Swami was extremely happy with the garland of songs placed at his Lotus feet and always seemed to want more. Furthermore, Swami blessed the National Youth Choir CD entitled 'Eternal Charioteer' which is now being sold in Prashanti. Swami also blessed the booklet of Youth activities that was specially designed for him and was very happy with the work that the U.K Sai Youth are undertaking back home.

The National Youth Pilgrimage also coincided with the opening of the brand new International Indoor Sports Stadium by the President of India. Our Sai Youth were given a special privilege VIP pass to attend on 23rd November, to watch a match played by the internationally renowned basketball players the Harlem Globetrotters. This was the icing on the cake for our Sai Youth. During the trip, many of the youth experienced a miracle of great love from Swami, the miracle of Vibhuti materialisation, which started manifesting on some of the badges worn by the Sai Youth.

Many Prashanti dignitaries and senior devotees commented on the excellent conduct of our Sai Youth. The discipline shown by them is worthy of emulation. Each one conducted himself or her self in an exemplary manner worthy to be called "Ideal Sai Youth".

Shitu Chudasama, National Youth Co-ordinator

'Love and Light' wishes you a very peaceful Christmas and a Blessed and Happy New Year!

Jesus: Be careful of people, because they will arrest you and take you to court and whip you in their synagogues. Because of me you will be taken to stand before governors and kings, and you will tell them and the non-Jewish people about me. When you are arrested, don't worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given the things to say. It will not really be you speaking but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. *Matthew 10:16 – 20*

Sai Baba: No one who has trodden that path, and engaged himself in that process has escaped calumny and cruelty. Mohammed, who sought to establish the primacy of the One Formless Absolute, had a large share of persecution, defamation and privation; Jesus who attempted to rebuild mankind on the basis of Love was crucified by little men who feared that their tiny towers of hate and greed would be toppled by his teaching.

Jesus: Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. *Matthew 7:6*

Sai Baba: The Lord is understood only by the *Bhakta* (devotee); the *Bhakta* is understood only by the Lord. Others cannot understand them. So, do not discuss matters relating to the Lord with those who have no *Bhakti* (devotion). On account of such discussions, your devotion will diminish.