

# Love and Light

SSSSO (UK) – monthly update



9<sup>th</sup> January 2007

## 'Your Life is MY Message'

Dear Readers

Sai Ram, and a Happy New Year!

During December, we saw many festive activities taking place around the country, as well as visits by Santa Claus who was seen arriving at many Sai Centres and Groups to distribute gifts of human kindness. January for the SSSSO UK this year is an extraordinary month – with Bhagawan having given blessings for the first of the four Global Regional Education Consultations to take place here in the UK. We will be host to many office bearers from around the world including Dr Goldstein and Dr Reddy of the World Foundation and Prashanti Council; as well as members of the Global Education Committee. *(See next article on preliminary meeting)*

The 14<sup>th</sup> January is the traditional date in the Sai Calendar for the change of office bearers who have completed their term. I would like to thank those of you who have been 'Ambassadors for Sai', working at your Centre/Group/Region/National level in taking forward Swami's message through the nation-building projects. A circular will be sent out on the 14<sup>th</sup> January to confirm the change of Council members.

Bhagawan said in His Birthday discourse: *'Everybody has to surrender to Swami's love one day or the other. The name of Sai is eternal and changeless. One can speak whatever one likes. Boneless tongues can be twisted in any way. Stones are hurled only on a fruit-laden tree. Like a fruit-bearing tree, all noble people are subjected to many ordeals and difficulties. But when one firmly adheres to truth, nothing can shake one. Let any number of people fight against truth they can never win. Therefore, hold onto truth firmly, come what may. One who stands by truth is bound to be victorious. Therefore never give up truth.'*

I look forward to seeing many of you at the National Office Bearers' Conference on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February, which will be attended by Mr. Kishin Khubchandani, Zonal Chair and Mr. Ishver Patel, Central Co-ordinator. If you have not already registered, please see your Centre or Group Chair immediately.

Love & light

Shobhna Patel, UK Chair

## Sathy Sai Education in the UK

### Working Together in Harmony and Ecstasy...

January 2007 brings upon us new beginnings in many different ways. On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January, in sunny Pinner, the three strands of Sai Education in the United

Kingdom, namely the British Institute for Sathy Sai Education (BISSE), Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) and Sathy Sai Schools (SSS) came together for the first time. This pre-conference preparation for the 'European Regional Conference on Sathy Sai Education' (ERC~SSE), which will be hosted by the SSSSO UK from the 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> January 2007, began with Ishver Patel, Central Co-ordinator for the UK and Ireland, providing an overview and setting the scene for the day.

Carole Alderman (Director, BISSE), Sharmila Parikh (National SSE Co-ordinator) and Prabodh Mistry (Sathy Sai Schools) provided information on achievements to date and aspirations for the future.

There was an opportunity to discuss and share papers provided by Mr. Kalyan Ray, Chairman of the International Education Committee. The discussions will be amalgamated towards the ERC~SSE.

This was an exciting day for all... everyone is looking forward to this golden opportunity of working together to bring Unity in Diversity. **NB** A date for every educationist's diary – be they from BISSE, SSE or SSS – is the 10<sup>th</sup> February where information, papers and discussions arising from the ERC~SSE will be shared with everyone.

Sharmila Parikh, National SSE Co-ordinator

## Region 1

### 'Service Day' in December

On Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December, to commemorate Swami's 81<sup>st</sup> birthday, Region 1 Centres and Groups joined together in unity and hosted an event for one hundred elderly people from across the Region to attend an afternoon of food and entertainment.

All wings in the Centres and Groups participated in the event and the programme included performances from the SSE and Youth wings. This was the second time we have staged such an event and all involved saw it as a success. The highlight of the afternoon was 'Bingo Jingo' which brought everyone together and concluded the occasion. All the elders enjoyed the event and are looking forward to the next year's event.

### Christmas Lunch for a Homeless Shelter

On Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December, as part of an ongoing programme to cook and provide food for around one hundred and fifty homeless and less-privileged people, R1 provided a festive vegetarian meal, supported by our youth carol singing. The event continued our long-standing relationship with SPIRE, which has been in existence for over ten years where, on a monthly rota,

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all Centres/Groups are involved in cooking and serving a warm meal.

### Refugee Council

As an ongoing project, food items and presents for children were donated to the Refugee Council. Most of the R1 Centres and Groups participated in this project.

### Christmas Celebration

All the R1 Centres and Groups celebrated the birth of Christ. SSE children sang carols in the Centres and at local nursing homes. Some SSE children in the Centres acknowledged the birth of Jesus by putting on a Nativity Play to mark the occasion.

### New Year Celebration

One of the R1 Centres celebrated the New Year with special 'Midnight Devotional Songs', and another welcomed the New Year in with a 'Padhuka Pooja' and an invited Guest Speaker.

Keith Sithsabesan, Region 1 Chair

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## Region 2

### Christmas Celebrations

Over two thousand years ago, Lord Jesus was born as the embodiment of love and compassion to live among men with the mission of restoring love, charity and compassion to the hearts of men. *'Christ sacrificed his life for the sake of those who put their faith in him. The birthday of Jesus must be celebrated by all mankind, for such Divine personalities who are born with a purpose (karanā-janmas) belong to the whole human race. They should not be confined to a single country or community.'* (Sathya Sai Baba, 25 December 1978)

With a packed programme to reflect the sacred meaning of Christmas, the first 'Region 2 Christmas Celebration' was held on the holy night of December 24<sup>th</sup> with a gathering of over a hundred devotees in the midst of a cold winter night at Sai House in Harrow.

The hall was beautifully adorned with traditional Christmas decorations and Sarva Dharma symbols and the altar looked stunning with a magnificent golden arch embracing a picture of Swami within a brilliant background display of white and blue twinkling lights. A prominent picture of Lord Jesus placed above a nativity set and lit candles complemented the Christmas setting.

The programme started at 10pm with three Aums, followed by 3 Christian prayers – 'The Lord's Prayer', 'Hail Mary' and 'Glory be to God'. The first reading was on the prophecy and birth of Lord Jesus according to the gospel of St Matthew, followed by a ceremonious lighting of a sacred lamp in reverence to the light within to illustrate that Christmas is a feast of the inner light, a rekindling of the spiritual spark within us. Devotees sat silently with their eyes closed envisioning themselves on a journey to the holy place of Bethlehem, a pilgrimage within, whilst in the background there was a solo rendition of 'Jyote Jyote Jalate Chal...'.

ukccnews@hotmail.co.uk

After a play on love and service to mankind, depicting the parallel teachings of Lord Jesus and Sri Sathya Sai Baba, which was enacted by a disciple of Lord Jesus and a student of Swami; devotional songs were sung heartily – filling the atmosphere with divine vibrations and a sense of the spiritual oneness of all mankind.

The sacred night proceeded with a second reading on the life of Lord Jesus as declared by Swami followed by Christmas carols led by SSE children culminating with closing prayers, 'Aarthi' in English and the distribution of blessed food (Prasad) by Father Christmas.

A long time ago, Lord Jesus was born in a manger but today he wishes to be born within our hearts. Let the glory of the Universal Christ descends upon us and let everyday be Christmas because Christmas is about God and love – and love is the key to peace and happiness within all creation.

Satesh Melwani, Region 2 Chair

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## Region 3

### R3 SSE School Christmas Celebrations 2006

The Region 3 SSE School concluded the year with a beautiful celebration of Christmas. Nursery children enchanted fellow students, teachers, parents and guests with their rendition of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'. 'Group 2' students recounted the nativity story and students from 'Group 3' entertained us with their 'Disney version' of Charles Dickens' popular story, 'A Christmas Carol'. 'Group 4' followed this by relating the inner spiritual significance of 'A Christmas Carol' and the need to 'Love all and serve all', and to realise that 'every action has a reaction, reflection and resound'. Children then lit candles in glasses that they had painted with festive designs and proceeded to sing traditional and popular Christmas Carols with everyone joining in. The celebrations would not have been complete without Santa popping in to wish everyone a wonderful Christmas and New Year and leaving sweets and chocolates for all the children for having been: "Sohohooo verry good all year"!

Kishor Kumar, Region 3 Chair

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## Region 5

### Visit to Region by Leicester Sathya Sai School Head Teacher

Leicester Sathya Sai School Head Teachers visited the Region during the Christmas break – when most schoolteachers take time to relax and unwind! Our Sathya Sai School is different. Hoe and Usha Lim visited Preston, Manchester and Bradford in Region 5 to raise awareness of the work of the Sathya Sai Schools and how we can all get involved. Listening to Hoe's personal experiences with Swami, out in Zambia and here in the UK, we were all moved by how Swami has taken care of every little detail, from the setting up of the school to the OFSTED Inspection, where Christian and Muslim

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inspectors were sent to find out what 'really goes on' at the school! It's now clear to us that the Sathya Sai Schools belong to all devotees of Sai Baba and that we can all play a part – even if only to pray for them. When the Sathya Sai Schools representatives come to visit your Centre or Region – don't miss the opportunity to find out more and get your questions answered.

### 'Singing in' and 'Ringing in' the New Year!

This year – as for the past sixteen years – the Gita Bhavan Hindu Temple in Manchester invited the Sai Organisation to sing two hours of devotional songs on New Year's Day. The temple-goers and priests love our singing and the atmosphere it creates as the songs are so varied, devotional, and because of the discipline we maintain. Singers and musicians representing Centres/Groups from Bradford, Leeds, Oldham, Ashton, Bolton, Warrington, Sandbach and Manchester all took part and the event ended with the temple priests performing 'Sai Aarthi' as well as their own temple Aarthi. The temple had also prepared a beautiful garland for Sai Baba's photo that matched all the other temple deities and were happy for us to bring a chair for Sai Baba to sit on during the programme. What a wonderful way to start 2007!

Yogesh Solanki, Region 5 Chair

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## Region 6 Food for the Soul

'Region 6 Christmas Celebration' was held in Park Barn Centre, Guildford, on Saturday December 16th and was entitled 'Food for the Soul' (i.e. not just the stomach!). In a hall adorned with Christmas trees and decorations Swami's chair was placed, along with pictures of Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai and Jesus, on a stage bedecked with holly and ivy. The programme was interspersed with the reading of Lucas Ralli's Christmas Sai messages dating from 1994-1997. After multi-faith prayers and a rousing rendition of 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing!' Rajes Selvakumar, Region 1 Spiritual Co-ordinator, spoke about the power of 'The Lord's Prayer' and asked for a show of hands of those who recited this prayer daily, hardly any went up. Though this is a prayer that most Christians are brought up to say every day and one that Jesus taught. We celebrate his birth but don't follow his teachings. He went on to speak about Mary, as did Sunil Menon later, of how in her day she could have been stoned for being 'with child' out of wedlock, but her faith, trust and total acceptance of God's Plan personified the qualities we need to develop in our daily lives. The children from Southampton acted in a short play, tableau and sang Christmas songs for us. Several youth related their experiences about the National Youth Pilgrimage 2006, and about the honour of playing music in the inner Mandir in front of Swami. After a Christmas Lunch of nut roast, roasted potatoes, vegetables and mince pies, highlights from the film of

'Christmas at Prashanti 2005' were shown. Then, during the Carol Singing – and to the excitement of all the children (and some of the adults!) Father Christmas was spotted (in a very authentic white beard!), he came in with a big red sack and, after enquiring whether they had been good children all year, proceeded to give each child a present. Then he went right round the hall giving everyone a present and a cheery word. To end the day, Rosemary and Steve Perry performed Aarthi.

Philippa Malcomson, Region 6 Chair

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## Youth

### 'World Youth Conference 2007'

#### Calling all Sai Youth!

With the Divine blessings of Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, an International World Youth Conference will take place, in His presence, during the festival of Guru Purnima (29<sup>th</sup> July 2007). The theme of the Conference is "Ideal Sai Youth – Messengers of Sai Love". The Conference will last three days and is open to anyone aged between 16 years and 35 years. An International Planning Committee to co-ordinate the Conference has been appointed and blessed by Bhagawan comprising:

Shitu Chudasama, Committee Co-ordinator (UK), Ivan Baycevic (Croatia), Anjali Daswani (Hong Kong), Anuradha Kafle (Nepal), Maria Laura M.D. (Uruguay), Alvin Leo (Australia), Sudhakar Pant (Nepal), Deepa Samy (Malaysia), Daniel Scovill (USA) and Mathias Seitel (Germany). Swami has said that his hopes and aspirations for the future rest upon the shoulders of his Youth. The time has now come for us to serve Bhagwan and support his Divine Mission. Youth from all corners of the world will be gathering together in a spirit of Love, Unity and Harmony. Our unified presence in Prashanti will make Bhagwan very happy, as Sai Youth our only goal should be to please Bhagawan, therefore we must make every effort to attend and support this Conference. In February and March 2007, Pre-World Youth Conferences will be held throughout the United Kingdom with the aim of bringing together Youth from all parts of the country. It will be a programme to inspire Youth to practice Swami's teachings and at the same time enable them to become part of the worldwide movement to take Swami's mission forward. Please contact your Regional Youth Co-ordinator for further information.

Shitu Chudasama, National Youth Co-ordinator

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