

Love and Light!

SSSSO (UK) - monthly update



9th January 2009

New Year Resolutions

Dear Readers, Sai Ram!

Hopefully you have all benefitted from the recent Christmas and the New Year holiday time! Moving into a new year seems to bring a rising sense of making a new start – turning over a new page, and making some resolutions to hold to, in the coming year ahead.

Resolving to 'become fitter', to 'lose some weight' and to 'give up something' that ceases to suit our current life are all resolutions that figure high in the population. The word 'resolution' from the verb 'to resolve' seems to ask us to 're-solve' something – to find a solution ...again.

That is probably the reality of all resolutions; they are statements of intent being made based upon what we actually already know works – if we can only adhere to them.

Indeed, in this Organisation we all really do know all the answers. Our Divine Teacher has given us all the codes to live by – but we make it hard for ourselves by setting such high expectations of our behaviour and making the spiritual life complex and intellectual. Intellect is important but there comes a point where it complicates matters that should be simple.

The quest for the spiritual life sees so many of us striving for what we imagine is perfection ...then sees us being hard upon ourselves when we deem that we have fallen short of the ideal. This judging, that emanates from the ego, wrecks resolutions and causes us to sometimes denigrate valid achievements.

In the face of changing economies and iconic companies going bust, simplicity is probably going to be the order of the day.

Over the past two years, we, as an Organisation, have been trying to work within our resources and gauge the usefulness of our projects. This is going to be more necessary if the financial scene crumbles even more.

The Teachings we have at our disposal should make us the best prepared in society to put a ceiling on our desires.

However, is that the case? The coming year will undoubtedly see us shaping ourselves to suit the conditions, by losing some weight

(hopefully any ego), by losing too, that which is unnecessary. We are going to need to evaluate what is necessary and what is not. When these shifts take place and our focus is much more on our surrounding community and environment – in a simple uncomplicated way – then we see exciting spiritual growth.

Where Centres are working without any eye to glory and simply offering useful service to their surrounding society in a mindful and loving way without fanfare – there we see Swami at work – and there we see sustained love in action.

On November 29th we ran our first Regional Office Bearer Training Day in Region 1 – it was very well received.

More of these are being inked into our Calendar for 2009. They will be 'ROAD Shows' – 'Regional Organisation Awareness Day Shows' not just for office bearers! At these sessions as many Council Members as can be there will be there.

It was with great regret that I found myself – from 12th December to very recently, confined to bed rest with a severe back problem. May I offer my apologies to the organisers of various events that I had been scheduled to attend and speak at. Unfortunately I couldn't go. They were all events that were particularly dear to my heart. Sorry.

Office Bearer Changeover - January 14th:

Very sincere thanks to ALL outgoing office bearers from any post all around the country for serving and helping the wheels of this Organisation turn!

And:

Thank you to ALL incoming Office Bearers for offering your time and energy to support Swami's Organisation in the United Kingdom!

New positions on the UKCC 2009 are:

Region 2 Chair – Nilesh Khatri
Region 3 Chair – Gurmail Singh
Region 5 Chair - Dr Harish Thampy
Region 6 Chair – Bahnoon Agnew
Nat. Spiritual Coord. – Jey Sivaloganathan
National Service Coordinator - Vacant

All your Council Members - 2008 and 2009 - look forward to seeing you at our exciting conference on Saturday January 31st and throughout the rest of the year!

**Love and Light,
Rosemary Perry, National Chair**

National Conference 2009

"The Pilgrim, the Path and the Goal."

On Saturday 31st January 2009

*** Places still available! ***

Registration and Cost:

Regional Chairs have already circulated Registration Forms to your Centre and Group Chairpersons for you to complete and return.

We want to run a simple, cost-efficient conference and we have managed, by changing venue, to lower the £20 charge of previous years to £15 and, if at least 300 of you attend we can run a 'zero-balance' conference. We know that this is something that you will really appreciate ...but it can't happen without your support. The greater the support the better able we shall be to reduce the cost next year if at all possible.

Venue:

Broxbourne Civic Hall
High Street, Hoddesdon,
Hertfordshire
EN11 8BE

This venue has the capability of seating up to 550, as the main hall is very large. Therefore to maintain comfort and to assist food service (there is no dining hall but a large lounge) we shall restrict attendance to 400.

This conference is open to every member of the Organisation – please urgently contact your Centre/Group Chair or regional Chair if you would like to attend.

Our Guest Speakers:

Following on from the wonderful reception you gave to Dr Thorbjorn and Mrs Marianne Meyer at last year's National Conference, we feel delighted to announce that our Guest Speakers for 2009 will be: Dr Samuel and Mrs Sharon Sandweiss!

Here is a little about them both:

Samuel Sandweiss MD has been a practicing psychiatrist for over 40 years and is currently living in San Diego, California USA. He has been a Medical Director of a psychiatric clinic and has taught at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine in the position of Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry. He has written three books about Sathya Sai Baba, 'Sai Baba: The Holyman and the Psychiatrist', 'Spirit And The Mind', and the recently published 'With Love, Man is God'. He has served on the Sathya Sai Baba Council of the United States since its beginning in 1975. Dr. Sandweiss has been interested in the relationship of spirituality and psychiatry and how spiritual practices affect the mind and expand consciousness and love.

Sharon Sandweiss has been a high school teacher and has been an advisor/coordinator for the Sathya Sai Young Adult Program in their region. She was editor of Sai World Newsletter, a newsletter for Sai children ages 6-13.

Dr. Sandweiss and his wife Sharon, have hosted a Sai Baba Centre for over 35 years and they oversee Birth Day Publishing Company, which publishes books about Sai Baba by Western authors. They have a lovely family of four daughters who have had wonderful experiences with Swami. They have spoken about Sai Baba to audiences in many countries including Canada, Mexico, North, Central, and South America, England, Italy, Denmark, Holland, Germany, and Russia.

We Want YOU There!

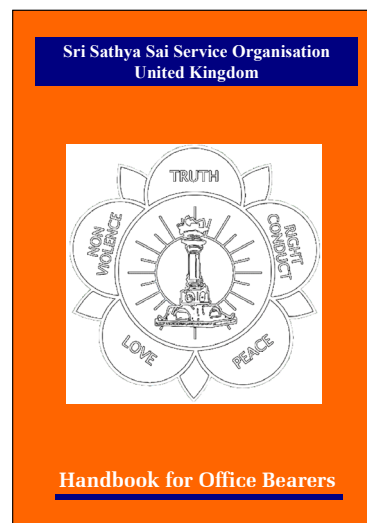
Your commitment and support will enable everyone attending to enjoy what we hope will be a marvellous day of celebration and looking to the future! Also, your immediate response in booking would help considerably...

National Conference 2009 PG

'Handbook for Office Bearers'

With 500 copies printed for Swami's Birthday and it being first released on 29th November at Region 1's Regional Office Bearer Training Day – we are now pleased to let you know that 6 weeks on and there are only 90 copies left! They have literally 'sold like hotcakes' at £2 per copy including a Resource CD. This little book that is a companion to the essential 'Organisation Manual' is a useful read for any member of the Organisation.

It may be that we shall print further copies of the HOB if necessary and we intend to update our Organisation Manual as well.



Limited availability at our National Conference

SSE Carousel Training

SSE Teacher Training and Refresher Course, Region 4 on Saturday 7th March

This training is available to all teachers, teaching assistants and those considering becoming an SSE teacher. A choice of 9 options for the morning and 9 options for the afternoon will be offered so that teachers, both new and experienced, will have an array of topics to choose from to enhance their teaching skills. Topics offered will include:

- Silence is Golden - How to practice and teach meditation effectively.
- Teaching towards Group 3 Year 2&3 Projects
- Teaching the Unity of Faiths
- Bhaja Govindam in essence (whole day session)
- Bhagwat Geeta Slokas in essence (whole day session)
- Effective Lesson Planning
- Curriculum awareness and implementation (whole day session)
- Prayers for Group 1 & 2
- Group Activities for Nursery and Group 1 (Primary)
- Effective use of drama and storytelling in SSE
- Writing songs, music and poetry for Sai
- Group Activities for Group 2 & 3 (Secondary)
- Be creative... (Arts and crafts for Nursery & Group 1 (Primary))
- Be creative... (Arts and crafts for Group 2 & 3 (Secondary))
- Assessment within SSE and Conducting Home Visits and Parent Teacher Consultations

The day will provide a wonderful opportunity for teachers to come together, network, share good practice, access training specific to their individual needs and enable them to develop their skills and knowledge further. Details Book via your Centre SSE coordinator shortly.

Group 3 Year 2 and Group 3 Year 3 projects: We welcome title suggestions for group 3 projects for the next academic year. Project 1 titles should be Sai Literature based analysis of a quote by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. This will enable students to research and deepen their understanding of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's teachings. Project 2 titles should be a practical topic for students to deepen their understanding of the Wings of the Organisation and how they interact. Email titles to sathyasaieducation@ssso.org.uk or via your centre SSE coordinator.

**Lakshmi Puvanendran,
National SSE Coordinator**

Region 1 Christmas Celebrations

On December 20th, Wimbledon Sai Centre at Riversdale Primary School, Wimbledon, hosted the Regional Christmas celebrations. The programme started with multifaith prayers, slokas, Vedic chanting and devotional singing.

The first play, performed by Brixton Students, exemplified the true meaning of teamwork and sacrifice. It was about a big turnip, which a farmer had difficulty pulling out, so he called on his family and fellow villages to help.

This was followed by Lewisham Sai Centre's offering of beautiful devotional songs and hymns.

Merton Sai Centre then followed this with a Nativity play.

Wimbledon Sai Centre finished the evening with a festive array of Christmas Carols.

Shitu Chudasama, UK National Vice Chair spoke on how youth and children should not worry and should surrender all of their problems at the Lotus feet of Bhagavan. He spoke further about the similarities between Jesus and Swami.

The programme then concluded with devotional singing and Arathi.

Father Christmas paid the children a special visit, bearing gifts of chocolate. Maha Prasadam was served to conclude the celebrations.

Raj Rajasingam, Region 1 Chair

Region 6 Christmas Meeting

On the 14th December at Chapel Hall I attended the Region 6 Christmas meeting hosted by Reading Centre. The afternoon started with the Gayathri mantra and 'Thought for the day'.

Bala Balaraman, a former National Chair, who has, for a long time, been working in an interfaith capacity, spoke to us on the subject of 'Jesus, from an oriental point of view'. He talked about his youth in Sri Lanka and how all the edges of the various religions merged, with many attending each other's festivals. He spoke of how Sri Ramakrishna found enlightenment through Hinduism, Islam and Christianity and declared that there was no difference - all paths lead to God.

The expansion that Swami talks about is that we will be able to accept all truths even those that differ from our own. Our special gift from Swami is that we know that all paths go to the divine.

We were told that when Swami Vivekananda looked for clarification of his own scripture he could understand it better through the scriptures of other faiths. Sai Baba demonstrates to us to celebrate all festivals. He says, "I have not come here to start any new religion, if you are a Hindu be a better Hindu, if a Christian, be a better Christian, if a Muslim be a better Muslim."

Masters cross all boundaries. At the Ramakrishna Centre they have pictures of Jesus and Krishna, they synthesise both cultures. Bede Griffiths who wanted to introduce Christian teaching in India introduced them in a Hindu context so as to be better understood.

We next participated in one of Reading's annual Christmas events, 'The Light Spiral'; this consisted of fir branches covering half the floor of the hall, all facing towards the centre, where a lit candle, slightly elevated represented the Divine. In the darkened hall with a film of Sai Baba running and carols softly playing and in a quiet and meditative atmosphere we each walked around the spiral placing our lit candles either side of the branches. Finally under the loving gaze of two large pictures of Jesus and Sai Baba the spiral was fully lit, illuminated from the centre candle to the feet of Baba, from the 'I' to the 'I'. Devotional songs ended the Christmas meeting that was so simple yet so powerful. Thanks to the Reading members who created such a poignant and memorable afternoon.

Philippa Malcomson, Region 6 Chair

Region 7

Ladies Day and Swami's 83rd Birthday Celebrations

On 22nd November, Region 7 celebrated Ladies Day in the morning and Swami's very special 'One Thousand Moons' 83rd Birthday in the afternoon. The venue was Patchway High School, Bristol where the Regional SSE School is based.

The theme for the Ladies Day Celebrations was "Sathwic Diet – Intake Through Our Five Senses" and as it is the ladies who normally cook, keep the homes clean, and monitor the environment, and look after the needs of the family in most homes – it was felt this was an important subject. Swami says: *"Many people think that sathwic diet consists of milk, curd and other things. We must try to know the real nature of sathwic food. Sathwic diet does not mean simply the food we take through our mouth, which is only one among our five senses, but also means the pure air we breathe, the pure vision we see through our eyes, the pure sound we listen to and*

pure objects we touch through our feel. All that we take in through the doors of the five senses may be described as the sathwic diet. All the five senses must be pure and immaculate. Then, we must endeavour to gain mastery over our senses."

The morning session began at 10.30 am with beautiful mantras and devotional songs all led by ladies who all sang beautifully. This was followed by a wonderful welcome song by the SSE Nursery children who brought a smile to everyone's face!

This was followed by an extremely interesting talk by Rosemary Perry, UK National Chair who had kindly travelled a long way to attend this event. She spoke on the importance of using our five senses properly and most importantly the importance of Sathvic thoughts.

This was followed by a powerful play by group 2 SSE children which portrayed lifestyles between two young girls – one leading a Sathvic life and another a completely non-Sathvic lifestyle (as most teenagers do these days!) and the consequences. The play very nicely led up to a very informative talk by Manavta Group – which promotes Sathvic Lifestyles. We were all deeply affected by this talk and felt each of us needs to make some adjustments and lifestyle changes to lead a more Sathvic life as Bhagwan so often tells us to do.

The morning session ended with a wonderful and energizing unison devotional song.

After a hearty and most delicious lunch everyone re-convened to celebrate our beloved Bhagawan's 83rd Birthday. The theme for the afternoon was "How to win the Grace of God". The afternoon started with Vedic chanting and beautiful devotional songs by Zita and Co (Anahata). Rosemary Perry spoke most movingly in the afternoon about her own personal life and how in all aspects of her life she had witnessed the "Grace of God". Everyone in the audience, both young and old was extremely moved by Rosemary's heart-warming and moving talk.

This was followed by a play by Group 1 SSE who portrayed the life of Vibhishana (Ravana's brother) who led a Sathvic life. There was then a presentation by Regional youth who had been on Pilgrimage (Sadhana Group) with Brother Ajit Popat. The youth using a wonderful PowerPoint presentation explained in detail their preparations before the pilgrimage, their wonderful experiences whilst in the presence of Swami and the personal changes they experienced on their return.

Now the moment everyone had been waiting for - the grand finale! Swami's Birthday cake was brought in and every sang "Happy Birthday" to Swami to the words of Madhvi's birthday song "Happy Birthday to you Sai Baba, Happy Birthday to you Sweet Sai! In the background the party poppers exploded and the bubble machine churned out beautiful bubbles to the delight and utter joy of the children present! Every heart in the hall was exploding with joy and happiness to share that moment with Swami's message resounding in their hearts and minds - "My Birthday is the day you establish me in your Heart"!

Thank you Swami for a most wonderful day filled with your Love and Light!!

Nazareth House

Nazareth House is a beautiful Nursing Home in Cardiff and is run by Catholic Nuns who care for 54 residents many of whom are very elderly and frail. On 21st December 2008 members of Cardiff Sai Centre sang beautiful Christmas carols to the residents of Nazareth House. This is now an annual event and the residents look forward to listening to the well-rehearsed Christmas carols and those who can love to join in!

Cardiff Centre had previously asked the nuns if they could buy presents for the residents and the nuns had suggested the kinds of items to buy. After the Christmas carols the Cardiff Centre said they wanted to give a Christmas present to each resident. The nuns helped in giving out the presents to the joyful residents. Some of the residents were too ill to come downstairs to the dining hall so we had to go upstairs to their bedrooms and we met three residents who had reached the amazing age of 100 years! Each of them was very special in their own way but we were amazed at gentleman who had a naval background and had wonderful stories to tell!

What a wonderful afternoon we had singing, giving presents and meeting some amazing residents who many despite their advanced years and poor health had a wonderful, joyful spirit about them! The nuns who care for them are also all very special and made sure we all had a cup of tea and piece of cake before we left!

Nirmala Pisavadia, Region 7 Vice Chair

Sathya Sai School Leicester A Celebration of Light

'Celebration of Light' was the theme of this annual function at our Sathya Sai School Leicester on the evening of Saturday, 20th

December 2008. It began with a beautiful and warm welcome with school prayers by the children. They then announced that in line with the theme of the evening they would be looking at seven world festivals of light. Overall, the evening lasted for two and half hours and it thrilled the audience with plays, songs, musical items and children's personal thoughts that provided deeper insights into the light festivals celebrated in different cultures and traditions and their link to human values. In between these were speeches from two key guest speakers: the Lady Lord Mayor of Leicester Mrs Manjula Sood and the Director of European Sathya Sai Education Institute, Dr Thorbjorn Meyer. The feedback received from the audience was nothing but positive, it was described as 'a superb evening, brilliantly performed by the children and it was wonderful to see children in beautiful costumes!' Above all it was the confidence shown by the children that became the key remark from those who joined the celebration.

The Evening Programme

The first item was a play about the festival of *Santa Lucia*, which told the story of Saint Lucy who gave up her life of luxury to serve her lord, Jesus Christ. She helped the poor and needy and demonstrated through her life that 'Duty is God and Work is Worship'. This play was accompanied with beautiful singing from the older girls who also compèred it.

Next was the African American celebration of *Kwanza*: which stands for seven values that contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture. Acting was accompanied by beautiful singing of an African song, to traditional African music.

The special guest of the celebration, the Lord Mayor of Leicester, Mrs Manjula Sood, then gave an honest and heartfelt speech and congratulated the school on its great achievements and successes to date. She remembered how the School had begun with only 7 children and despite facing many challenges; the school has grown and has progressed into a full primary and part secondary school. 'It gives me great pleasure to be amongst you this evening. By simply looking at the children's performance and the way they conduct themselves, I can safely say that the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programme based upon Love, Peace, Truth, Righteousness and Non-Violence has certainly had a transformative effect upon these young children'. Furthermore she invited the children to perform at the opening ceremony of the Special Olympics GB National Summer Games, which are to be held

between 25th and 31st July 2009 in the city of Leicester. These games are held every four years for people with learning disability – the last event was held in 2005 in Glasgow when some 8000 athletes took part.

The second guest speaker was Dr Thorbjørn Meyer (the Chair of Zone 7 of the international Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation in Europe, a member of the Prashanti Council and a member of the International Committee of Sathya Sai Education). He spoke about the importance of light and illustrated how it shines in all of us. He further narrated a story about how a dying sect of Christian monks was helped by a wise Jewish Rabbi. The story brilliantly illustrated how faith in oneself and unity among the sect helped to attract a younger generation of followers and ensured that the faith could be sustained for generations.

Following this the audience was treated to an excellent display of physical discipline and agility with a demonstration of Shorin-ryu Karate, with yellow, blue and purple belt students of the School. Then the older children showed the meaning behind the celebration of *Wesak*, which is a Buddhist festival. It showed how the Buddha became enlightened and taught us that all attachments are illusory and transitory and lead us away from the real purpose of life.

Celebration of light within the context of *Christmas* came next with our delightful little angels from the foundation stage classes of Love & Joy. It was lovely to see them perform and exude confidence as they spread their light, in line with Jesus' message, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'

Celebration of the Hindu festival of light, known as *Divali*, then followed from a different view. Here the children retold the story, as town's people of Ayodhya, of how Bharat was prepared to die if Rama was even a day late in returning to the throne. The girls from years 5, 6, 7 and 8 did an exquisite dance. The key message was that Rama was the light of Ayodhya and we too can let our lights shine by being as he was and by following the righteous path throughout our life.

Mrs Usha Lim, the head teacher then gave a summary of the latest Ofsted report, based on the School inspection that took place during the week of 2nd December 2008. Then, the children from years 3 and 4 enacted the story of the Jewish light festival *Hanukkah*. This eight day festival is

celebrated to remember how an oil lamp stayed lit for 8 days without oil and how the eternal flame continued to be lit forever to remind us that God is with us forever, that he is ever present and he will always protect us. Then the audience were taken to Thailand for the festival of *Loi Kratong*, celebrating joy and happiness by lighting lamps called 'Kratongs'. The older girls looked very elegant and full of eastern promise in their Thai costumes. The play concluded with a lovely dance with the 'Kratongs'. The significance of light in Islam is in the symbol of the religion itself, the crescent moon and star. The girls sang 'Let my heart reflect thy light Lord, as the moon reflects the light of the sun....'. In Sikhism *Divali* is also celebrated, as the 10th Guru was released from prison on this day.

The older boys danced on the stage in true Bhangra style and the audience spirit was lifted even higher.

As part of the finale all the children and staff of the School assembled on stage to sing 'We are the world'. Several children took on solo singing to the delight of the audience and also sang to the chorus in such a way that the whole hall reverberated with the feeling of oneness and unity among different cultures.

I would like to thank all the friends and supporters of the school, and especially the two Sai Centres of Leicester: the Narborough Centre and the Leicester Central Centre for providing a healthy yet sumptuous meal to end the evening! Above all, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for giving us all an opportunity to serve Him through the School. (Article prepared by Mrs Usha Lim, Head teacher of the Sathya Sai School Leicester)

Stop Press:

On Saturday, 29th November 2008, a viewing was organised for a property that may be purchased in Leicester. Such a property may be owned by the Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust UK and could, with agreement, be used and managed by the Organisation (particularly by Region 4 and Local Centres). A key tenant at this property would be the Sathya Sai School Leicester. This is a developing story.

Prabodh Mistry,
Sathya Sai Schools Coordinator, UK

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 National Website
is to be found on:
www.srisathyasai.org.uk

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Love and Light SSSSO UK
Diary Dates 2009

Month	Date	Event
January	14th	Change of Office Bearers
January	31st	SSSSO UK National Conference
February	7th	NWC Meetings
February	14th/15th	Regional Conferences
March	1st	UKCC Quarterly Meeting
March	8th	NWC Meetings
March	14th/15th	Regional Meetings
April	4th	Joint Region 1,2,3 & 6 Multi-faith Day
April	19th	'ROAD' (Regional Organisation Awareness Day) Show in R7
April	25th	UKCC Project Meeting



BISSE
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 - Read review papers on SSEHV
 - Read comments on the Programme by educationalists in the UK
- 100,000 + visitors a year 1,200 + E-newsletter subscribers worldwide

Remembrance - Dr Padmanabhan

Our condolences to all his family.

Dr Padmanabhan, the steadfast and staunch devotee who, for so many years, used to walk behind Swami during Darshan, passed away recently. His family was one of the first families of Bangalore to recognise and follow Swami when he proclaimed his divinity at the tender age of 14. Dr Padmanabhan was the father of two dear friends of the SSSSO UK, Geeta Ram (who blessed us with a series of talks around the UK in July 2005) and Dr. Prithvi Raval (who was our guest speaker at the 2008 National Spiritual Day). The final ceremonies were to be performed on 5th January 2009. It was wonderful that all the family were brought together to India from different parts of the world and that Dr. Padmanabhan passed away when all were present. Prithvi had prayed that he would be able to hold his father's hand when he passed away – and this too happened.