

Love and Light!

SSSSO (UK) - monthly update



9th January 2010

Standing at the Gateway

Dear Readers, Sai Ram and Happy 2010!!

The month of January is named after the Roman God, Janus, whose head had two faces – one looking to the past and the other to the future. The Latin word Janua is of the same root and means a gate, a door or an opening.

No matter how hard we try to 'be in the present', we constantly refer backwards and forwards from the past to the future - and back again - in order to operate in this world of seemingly linear time.

An Organisation like ours needs to build upon its past, learn from its mistakes and try to improve its future as a provider for around 5,000 people in the United Kingdom.

To visualise oneself standing on the threshold of a new decade at the dawn of a new millennium and living within the lifetime of a Purna Avatar is stirring and profound in history's timeline.

...And yet we are trying to understand and believe that we are not, in reality, ephemeral but eternal, part of an Eternal Truth that makes the world's history become merely like the short-lived mayfly of the universe.

To reduce our level of engagement in worldly life to the concept of only doing our 'duty' is to live an arid life. Our lives are to be lived fully and our God-given talents and gifts are for sharing. The modern catchphrase is 'use it or lose it' and this is strangely redolent of the quotation from Matthew, Chapter 6, in the Bible, where it says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, lest moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

So, if possible, we should not perform our duties without love pouring from us into them, we need to bring our innate gifts into the world and not live a life purely fantasising about a 'heaven' that we may retire to when this earthly existence is done...

I think that by allowing our God-given gifts to flower in the world with love (and we all have these gifts) we create, if only to a degree, heaven on earth.

Over the past three years I have been very keen that we look at our Organisation from an outsider's viewpoint or a newcomer's perspective. How do we appear to the world? How inviting or welcoming are we? How universal are we? Do just one or two faiths seem to predominate, thereby negating our wholly universal intent?

In the past five years, three National Spiritual Wing Coordinators have worked very hard with their Regional Wing Coordinators to bring about a greater universality within our Centres/Groups.

Certainly, under their guidance, you have all managed to cope with change – some of you have leapt at it and others have slowly (even reluctantly) adapted. But adapted you have! The result is that we are in great shape now. Wherever I go around the country I feel so happy to be warmly welcomed into Centres that are orientated in a universal/multi-faith direction just as Swami's teachings advise.

Our remaining areas of gradual change as a Council are broadly under the categories of:

'EMPOWERMENT' encouraging personal development, sustainability, positiveness, spiritual growth, through e.g.

- Workshops - to offer coaching skills for individuals (to imbue them with self-confidence as speakers), conflict resolution, non-violent communication, spiritual teaching/growth, OB empowerment [Handbook for Office Bearers / 'ROAD Shows' - Regional Organisation Awareness Days] and 'shadowing process for OB successors'.
- Leaders for tomorrow – SSLTP should consider having a new cohort every year. [Now underway from October 2009.]
- Bring about a change from too much 'bhajans' to more English language devotional songs (songs in English from very many faiths / cultures / ethnicities etc.).

'INCLUSIVITY' – Using our Universal perspective/Human Values to encompass aspects of race, faiths and language-use through e.g.

- Develop society integration projects (using a message of unity based on

the universal SSHVs onto a culturally diverse UK). Emphasising that these Values are at the heart of all religions.

- OB training to include: dress code, greeting strangers, understanding cultural requirements, introduce more values-based language; Centres are not merely 'social' places to meet.
- Sports project: children-oriented projects involving those from SSE, SSS Leics. and BISSE – linking with the Olympics?
- Sports and HV songs – 'SSSSO's got talent!' – competition for composition of English devotional songs, values-based young force, champions, short speeches, poems etc.

'INTERACTION WITH WIDER SOCIETY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM' - through e.g.

- Development of our literature – making more of what we do and what we are; describing better what we do.
- Literature for internal cohesion.
- Review of needs in British society that will make the best use of our talents (to come up with useful projects in the social, medical and educational areas).
- Analyse and streamline current projects to make them more effective.
- Enhance our interfaith and Public Sector Voluntary Organisations (PSVO) based projects, using more of the SSHV-based approach.
- Address communication issues e.g. 'cult' perceptions, conditions from PSVO, insurance, negative publicity around SSB, our link with some similarly negatively banded organisations.

These three broad umbrella headings will also each operate on all of the three 'tiered' levels of 'the personal' (or individual) level, 'the collective' e.g. our Centre / our Organisation, and the all-embracing level of 'our society' or our environment / our world.

Regionalising as much as we can to reduce travel and resources, etc. has been another big part of our strategy for empowerment. However, we still face the problem of the large size of most of our Regions.

But back to January ...doors have two sides and in order to end something or in order to start a new beginning one must pass through, being on one side or the other, not remaining in the middle.

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

Office Bearer Change Over Day

**on
January 14th**

All thanks go, from us all, to the Office Bearers (OBs) who are leaving their posts at the end of their term this month. Their hard work, forbearance and perseverance keep the Organisation running.

Thanks also go to the incoming OBs who may feel rather overwhelmed – but please keep in touch with your inner voice and recognise the Divine and opportunities for true growth in all obstacles that come your way.

And the families of all OBs are to be thanked too, as they see family members less and give the background support necessary to enable service.

UKCC

'Love and Light' News Flash

Stephen and Rosemary Perry will be relinquishing production of 'Love and Light' and its mailout after this issue. They have virtually produced every single one of the 59 issues since the newsletter's inception in March 2005.

We wish all the faithful readers who have enjoyed keeping in touch through this newsletter, every best wish and blessing, and assure them that a new newsletter under new editorship will continue next month.

**Love and Light
Rosemary and Steve**

National Conference 2010:

**'Living the Sai Ideal ...I am
God and You Are Also God'**

**UK Sai Building, Narborough Rd.,
Leicester LE3 0BT
Saturday 30th January 2010**

It is with great pleasure that the UKCC announces that this conference is now OVERSUBSCRIBED!

...Therefore registration is now closed.

Thank you very much indeed for your support.

UKCC

National UK 85th Birthday Pilgrimage

Prashanti Nilayam

1st August to 9th August 2010

The Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation UK has been blessed, along with all the other Sai Organisations of the world, to be invited to attend Prashanti Nilayam in the year 2010 as a National pilgrimage. This year will be a very special one with the 85th Birthday and the 9th World Conference being held at Prashanti in November. All the international pilgrimages will take place right through the year. We have been allocated an official 'slot' for the UK in the Prashanti calendar from August 1st to August 9th 2010 inclusive.

Some Key Points for your better understanding:

- There is no ceiling on numbers from the UK for this pilgrimage.
- Recommended arrival date at Prashanti Nilayam for our Group: July 30th or by noon on July 31st ready to commence the Pilgrimage on the 1st August.
- If anyone arrives later than July 31st they will not be included in the Pilgrimage Group.
- If you wish to travel out in a group, we shall recommend travel agents with whom we shall negotiate rates and also recommend certain flights. You will be notified of this later. However, it will be up to you to manage your booking with them, on the flights recommended. By doing that you may return to the UK on a date that suits you better.
- Those travelling together in a group on the recommended flights will have transport (via coach) made available for them from Bangalore to Prashanti Nilayam however, transport will not be provided from Prashanti Nilayam to Bangalore, you will need to make your own arrangements for this.
- Accommodation at the Ashram will be allocated upon arrival. Each devotee will be assigned to a specific group and will need to consult with the UKCC nominated group leader on all matters pertaining to the pilgrimage. Directions provided by the group leader will need to be adhered to.
- Please register your intention to attend the UK National pilgrimage via your Centre chairs to your Regional chair on the separate Form that accompanies this letter.
- A recommended national Sadhana/Spiritual Practice format will be available from 1st

January via your Regional Chair and we would encourage you to adhere to this as individuals and as families (whether intending to go on the Pilgrimage or not). Let all members of the Organisation join as one in making this offering!

- You will be required to be with the UK group for the duration of the pilgrimage and thereafter you are at liberty to make your own arrangements.
- In the interests of selflessness we advise that all those who join the Pilgrimage arrive on the specified date and leave as soon as the Pilgrimage ends. This is in order to vacate rooms for others coming in groups from other countries.
- One of the performances that we shall present at Swami's Precious Feet will be by the UK's SSE children. In order to participate, the children must have been already enrolled in an SSE class since September 2009.
- A 'Frequently Asked Questions' list will be compiled and circulated later to help you with any concerns in this process.

A form where you can register your interest in joining this pilgrimage has been sent out for the Centres and Groups on December 2nd 2009 to be returned by January 9th 2010.

Thank you to all of you who have returned these forms expressing your interest in joining the Pilgrimage.

If you still wish to express interest and to learn more (without yet fully committing) there is an extension now available to send the forms in to your Regional Chair before January 27th 2010. ...But do hurry! These forms will help us assess what numbers we are potentially looking at for the Pilgrimage Group.

UKCC

National SSE, Spiritual and Youth Wings Joint Announcement

**National Pilgrimage 2010
SSE, Youth and Musical
programmes reflecting
British Culture**

Competition!

As part of the UK national pilgrimage to Prashanti Nilayam in August 2010, we asked to put your thinking caps on, reflect on the

richness of British culture and come up with suggestions for possible content to provide three separate cultural programmes.

A very big thank you goes to all who have responded with suggestions from Lakshimi Puvanendran, Mathan Arulvel and Jey Sivalogathan (National Coordinators of the SSE, Youth and Spiritual Wings)

Service Wing

The 'Temple of Awareness'

The 'Chaitanya Jyoti' Museum literally means 'Light of Consciousness', translating further to Love and Awareness. It was built and offered as a token of Love for Swami's 75th Birthday in the millennium year by devotees of Asian countries.

We celebrated its 9th anniversary on 18th November 2009. The air-conditioned museum covering three floors utilising visual aids, LCD TVs and hundreds of Divine paintings are a testament to Swami's Mission.

From depicting the life of Sai Baba of Shirdi, the great wisdom of the Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana and the universal Love of all Religions, Swami's omnipresence is felt everywhere.

Devotees and sceptics from all walks of life, the young wide-eyed village children, the elders and foreigners from all corners of the world are humbled after this life-changing experience.

Nineteen devotees from the UK had the privilege of serving at the Museum during the whole month of November in 2009, some for two weeks and some for more; greeting and escorting visitors, providing information and sharing their experiences of Swami's Divinity. The day started at 9am until midday, breaking for lunch and then continued again from 3pm - 6pm. The permanent museum staff warmly welcomed us all like family.

The UK is fortunate to serve in November each year and share in the celebrations of our Mother Sai. Some devotees return every year to do this seva, asked why, and they reply that the experience is so 'uplifting, fulfilling and humbling, as well as educational'.

We come away with firmer Faith and Love for our Beloved Swami and His Mission.

Sunita Verma, Region 4 Service Wing Coordinator

Young Adult Wing

May 2010: 3-Day Seminar with Phyllis Krystal

Continuing from September 2009: 'How do we live our changeless reality in an ever-changing world?'

Thursday 13th, Friday 14th and Saturday 15th May 2010

10am to 4.30pm daily
The Picturedrome Theatre
162-166 Barton Street
Gloucester GL1 4EU

All are welcome

To find out more information:
www.saiyouth.org.uk

To register attendance:
phylliskrystalseminar@saiyouth.org.uk

'The scriptures (The Upanishads and The Bhagavad Gita) declare, "All Nature is God" and "The Lord is in all beings". When learning about the sublime secrets of the trees, appreciate the Creator and strive to understand the principles behind creation. Life is a tree. The mutual relationship we cultivate and cherish are symbolized by the branches, twigs and leaves; the thoughts arising in the mind are the flowers; Ananda (Joy) is in the fruit, Dharma is the sweet juice it contains. The tree is held firm by the very roots, which fed it...roots that symbolize faith and Self-confidence. Nurture the roots well.'

Sri Sathya Sai Baba February 18, 1980

Neil Bisarya, on behalf of the Sri Sathya Sai National Young Adult Committee (UK)

Region 4

Birmingham Sai Centre

And so the season of Yuletide is once again upon us, the time of good will and kindness, the last month of the year that marks the birth of Christ in a humble setting and destined to be a Divine Master immortalised the world over. For the Centre it marks the end of all SAI activity for '09, all accomplished in His name and by His will.

Please use your initiative to distribute this monthly newsletter as widely as possible to all devotees and interested parties.

As has been the Centre's custom for many years and in the spirit of Christmas, food packages ranging from tea bags to cooking oil received from members and well wishers are collected from October onwards. These are then conveyed on an agreed day (specially earmarked for this time) to the Church of St Paul and St Silas, a beautiful inner city haven, whose lady priest, now a Canon, Canon Jemima opens her church doors for the Centre to arrange, pack into small parcels and then assign to her in order for her to distribute to the needy and deserving members of our society.

This year was no exception. Our out-going Chairman not only collected about a 100 empty paper boxes over a period of 8 months but also encouraged everyone to bestow generously. So on the 12th of December all the food packages were assembled at this Church in neat rows. If a stranger were to drop in by chance he would have been astounded to see so much of contribution having been forgiven to think we were yet another 'corner shop'!

Before the packing could be started, a number of dedicated members braved the biting cold and came in early to help clean and clear rubbish in the neighbouring area around this Church, whilst some paid courtesy call to homes of the elderly, lonely and the less able residents living nearby, who at this time every year await our members visit with much eagerness. In return, these instruments of Swami give and share their love and kindness.

Upon completion of this seva everyone re-assembled at the church and with the blessings of Canon Jemima and Swami, the packing started. Like clockwork and resembling a small factory, the food was packed neatly and accordingly. As a final touch of devotion, beautiful hand drawn cards were placed in each box with a message of love and goodwill. Our promising SSE children and our artistic Ladies Group cleverly made these lovely and sublime cards shimmering with Swami's warmth and Christ's message.

Altogether about a 100 food parcels were prepared. They had most necessities from food to toiletries. These parcels as Canon Jemima informed us were for those asylum seekers who no longer receive any government assistance and for those people who have nowhere to go or have nothing in life. With this thought it became quiet an

endearing moment, when each one reflected how fortunate one was to not only have most in life but of also Swami's guidance and protection.

With the packing done, stacked and stored away in a room of the church, it was time for everyone present to celebrate a little and what better way then to a warm lovely meal consisting of a delicious curry, rotis, rice and a dose of healthy salad, all courtesy as always from our selfless ladies. After a delightful meal, it was time to clear, clean and bid farewells after yet another deed successfully achieved by the grace and in the name of our beloved Swami.

The Centre's last day before going into recess for the festive season until next year was the 18th of December. The evening was marked with a short narration and play of the nativity performed by our SSE children and of course with some Christmas carols. This was followed by a brief talk on the significance of the birth of Christ the Divine Master by our long standing and honoured companion Canon Jemima who in her closing note sincerely thanked our Centre for the generous contributions by the members working in partnership and for having been part of her church and community for all this years.

The beautiful evening was then wrapped up by the SSE children giving every member present a card bearing Swami's message to take home and cherish until this time next year. But Christmas would not be Christmas without mince pies, so there followed some lovely refreshments humbly prepared by some of our ladies. Thus came the ending of the year 2009, its trials, tribulations, success and accomplishments well behind us. And as each one of us bow to Swami to lead, guide and take us into the New Year we the Birmingham Sai Centre wish you our dear friends, snow loads of mirth, merriment and happiness for a harmonious 2010!

Raju P. Gadher for Birmingham Sai Centre.

Region 5

Northwest Sai Centres' New Year's Day Celebrations

On Friday 1st January 2010, New Year's Day was celebrated at Geetha Bhavan Hindu Temple, Manchester, with vibrant and uplifting Sai Bhajans. It was hosted by the Northwest Sai Centres and over 450 people

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attended. Swami reminds us that 'every day, every moment, a new year is born and every moment needs to be sanctified with noble thoughts, words and actions.' We often make New Year's resolutions on this day, and Bhagavan tells us that:

'On this New Year Day, you should resolve to start every day with love, spend the day with love, fill the day with love, and end the day with love.

There should be no difference of caste, creed, colour, religion, or nationality. Love knows no distinction of any kind. You must wish everyone to be happy. Fill the heart with love.

The country will prosper and the world will prosper and everyone will be happy. Cultivate good thoughts, speak good words, and do good deeds with the broad view that everyone in the world should be happy.

Give up your evil thoughts and evil qualities, since they are the cause for all sufferings in the world.'

Written by Harsha Parmar and Vinesh Parmar and submitted by Harish Thampy, Chair, Region 5

Region 7

"Hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray"

The weekend of 19th-20th December was a busy time for the Sai Centre in Cardiff. Saturday was spent in Sai Service at 'The Huggard Centre for the Homeless' in Cardiff, where five hardworking devotees cooked and served a Christmas dinner for approximately 75 people. It was a vegetarian version of a Christmas dinner, of course, but it proved satisfying to all, nonetheless. This was the 8th year that such a feast had been prepared by the Cardiff group. Although a meal is cooked for the homeless, every month, by this dedicated group, it is only in December that it is accompanied by a round of gifts. Useful items, such as soap, gloves and socks, were distributed to all who received the meal.

Nazareth House, a care home for the elderly was the scene of activity for the Cardiff devotees on Sunday. Having practised Christmas carols for some weeks prior, 15 members of the Cardiff Sai centre, plus 4

friends from the Catholic community in Newport, entertained dozens of residents with a concert of carols and readings for Christmas. Readings from the New Testament and excerpts from the Christmas discourses of Baba preceded 10 of the most popular carols, including 'The First Nowell' and 'We Three Kings.' Being run by the Catholic Sisters of Nazareth, the care home has been very welcoming to the devotees of Cardiff. This was the 3rd year in a row that these Catholic and Sai communities in Cardiff have come together to celebrate Christmas. Following a brief introduction about the aims of the Sai Organisation, residents remarked what a wonderful organisation it seemed to be! Even the quotes from Baba, about the true purpose of celebrating the birth of Jesus, were found to be inspirational. When the carols were over, the gifts came out.

All 57 residents of the home received a gift of toiletries and biscuits. It seems that even at the age of over a 100 the taste for biscuits does not go away! The Cardiff Sai Centre received many thanks from the homeless and elderly this weekend, but the devotees were grateful themselves. Occasions like this are opportunities to expand the heart and share one's love with all. It was a busy weekend but also an uplifting one!

**Christian Deane
Region 7 Spiritual Wing Coordinator**

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

Data Protection Act 1998

Please note that 'Love and Light' is also published on the National Website and is freely available to countries outside the EEA.

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**The SSSSO UK
National Website**
is to be found on:
www.srisathyasai.org.uk



BISSE
**British Institute of Sathya Sai
Education**
Find out more about
Sathya Sai Education in Human Values:
www.BISSE.org.uk

Love and Light SSSSO UK Diary Dates 2010		
Month	Date	Event
January	14th	OB Changeover Day
January	30th	National Conference
February	6th/7th	Regional Conferences
February	12th	Mahashivaratri
February	27th	1st Quarter UKCC Mtg
February	28th	National Wing Meetings
March	6th	SSE Carousel Training Day
March	13th/14th	Regional Meetings
March	20th	UKCC Project Mtg
April	10 th/11th	National Youth 2-Day Conference Jointly with Ireland
April	24th	UKCC Project Mtg
May	16th	National Spiritual Carousel Training Day
June	12th	2nd Quarter UKCC Mtg
June	13th	National Wing Meetings
June	26th/27th	Regional Meetings
July	3rd/4th	Regional SSE Family Values Days
July	17th	UK Pre-World Conference - London: 'Sai Ideal Human Life' (whole day)
July	18th	UK Pre-World Conference - London: 'Sai Ideal Human Life' (half- day) TBC
July	24th	Guru Purnima
August	1st – 9th	National UK Pilgrimage to Prashanti