

# Love and Light!

SSSSO (UK) - monthly update



9<sup>th</sup> June 2009

## Facets of the One Truth!

Dear Readers, Sai Ram!

Arriving back from Australia on the 12<sup>th</sup> May, it was straight back into Sai activity. The weekend of the **16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> May** was spent in Leicester helping run the 'Open Day' (see article further on) for devotees to look round the building that will shortly become a Sri Sathya Sai Headquarters for the United Kingdom, thanks to the efforts of the Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust (UK) and other energetic protagonists.

**On Saturday the 23<sup>rd</sup> May** I had the honour and pleasure of addressing around 50 trainee Catholic priests at the Merton Centre in the Sai Mandir. For the first time, I fully understood how the Sai Mandir divides itself into both a Hindu Temple and a Temple to Swami. The organisers of the event, which was part of an organised tour for these Seminarians to visit various different places of worship, went to great pains to ensure that the segments on the Hindu Faith were very distinct from the segment about Sathya Sai Baba.

Rita Chudasama and Saima Rajasingam also spoke at this event, each of them bringing insight in beautiful and different ways. Considering all three of us did not consult each other beforehand, it was quite remarkable how the talks all dovetailed together without any repetition!

Another weekend was spent in Leicester attending a Leicester Building Management Committee meeting on **Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May** and chairing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarterly meeting of the UK Central Council, on the **Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May**. And on **Saturday June 6<sup>th</sup>**, in Totteridge, I spent an afternoon at a Joint Regions' (1, 2, 3 and 6) Multi-faith Day on the theme:

### 'All Scriptures Lead to the One'.

Lasting over 4 hours from 2pm it was a really moving occasion graced by some really lovely speakers: Mr. Colin Price, spoke about Christianity, and with a background in Theosophy he really made some wonderful observations. Mr. Krishna Subrahnamiam, a former student at Swami's college, spoke on various key points of the Hindu faith. Mrs. Bahnoon Agnew, Chair of Region 6, spoke about her faith, Islam, and emphasised the

purity of the saintly life of the Prophet Mohammed, and she also gave us some crystallised thoughts on Islam, written by great thinkers - such as Mahatma Gandhi and George Bernard Shaw.

Mr. Chaman Lal Chaman spoke with eloquence about his faith, Sikhism, telling us how the Guru Granth (the scriptures of the Sikh faith) contains jewels from many faiths within it.

Rounding up the talks by giving the Sai perspective on universality was our old friend, Professor Suresh Govind, from Malaysia, who spoke with wit and knowledge about the teachings of Sai Baba. How he made us laugh whilst making highly esoteric points, Bam! Bam! Bam! He must be one of the fastest-talking people in the world! He is much loved here in the UK!

The programme began with a very popular 'ice breaker' that had everyone thinking: Various quotations from the different religions were shown on the screen and our MCs (Saima Rajasingam and Neil Bisarya) goaded us all to guess which faith they came from and shout out what we thought the answer was! In itself this sowed us the commonality of the writings in the world's Scriptures.

Three members of the Youth Wing gave us a modern day take on a Victorian poem based upon the Sufi tale about the four blind men coming across an elephant for the first time and interpreting it in very different ways ...depending upon which bit of the elephant they each encounter!

The modern twist was that the Youths were unable to see because of the heavy-duty 'Ray Ban' sunglasses that they were sporting! ...Good to see our National Youth Coordinator letting his hair down public!

A Panel Discussion also took place with four of the speakers (Mr Chaman unfortunately had to leave early) addressing written questions from the audience that was 170 strong. I had fun posing the questions to the panel and their answers were various but created a whole. In fact the whole event was like a large Study Circle where all the points of view are, as Swami tells us, like the different facets of one brilliant diamond!

The singing of the enchanting children from the Sathya Sai Wembley Saturday School, gave us some beautiful Human Values songs

in English from the British Institute of Sathya Sai Education's SSEHV programme. They absolutely melted everyone's hearts! ...As did the two lovely young girls from Mill Hill Centre who, along with marvellous musicians, closed the day leading us all with a song in English, 'We are one in the Spirit, We are one in the Lord!' After a Vote of thanks from the National Spiritual Wing Coordinator, Jey Sivaloganathan, the event ended at about 6.45pm.

The next day **7<sup>th</sup> June** I had to be at Kingston University, where we had our Wings' Meetings. These occur every quarter and this time were preceded by a Council presentation to all the regional Wing Coordinators, that were able to attend, on the Key Action points that are being addressed by Council Members currently. Any resulting changes on some matters may occur over a long period of time whilst some (more on the status of the Organisation) will hopefully be implemented as soon as they are ready. Some of the items brought about healthy debate! ...Although this was not the occasion for discussion but rather the first stage in letting the RWCs know what the Council is addressing in order that they will not only work with UKCC but also work in cross-wing collaboration, where possible.

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

## **Open Days for Our Building in Leicester!**

Over the weekend of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> May, the Leicester Building Management Committee (LBMC) organised with the relevant estate agents and the vendors of the building (the former 'Bede Island Campus', a part of Leicester College, on Narborough Road, Leicester) that will become our Sri Sathya Sai Headquarters in the United Kingdom, to be opened up.

This was to give opportunities for as many devotees as could come, to visit OUR building! Early each day, a large, stalwart, team of local Sai volunteers arrived to provide the infrastructure for the visits. They offered a range of support from providing hot meals and refreshments to complex technical assistance; from Tour Guides to an Exhibition/Display team.

On the Saturday morning, preference was given to the faculty, parents and children of the Sathya Sai School. The current caretaker, who knows every nook and cranny of this interesting building, extensively showed them all round the enormous space. There were gasps of delight from the children who

couldn't wait to move into their new school environment!

It was my pleasure to greet all those arriving and talk about the potential OUR building holds for us all. Prabodh Mistry was also there to explain the importance of this new home for the school. Having been on a very full tour of the building even into the real basement/cellars, I was pleased to be able to talk with genuine enthusiasm about the original purpose of the Church Board who built this school back in 1902. They were intent on providing good education with a religious and moral underpinning. They also provided free places to the needy.

Over the years, the building has always maintained a good ethos and been directly connected with education. The Church, which supervised the building of the school, (it was in a rather rural surrounding then), is still to be seen on the opposite side of Narborough Road.

It is quite a surprising thought to realise that in the early 1900s it was so dangerous crossing Narborough Road that a tunnel was built deep under the road to link the Church safely to the school! Who would have thought that a horse and carriage could be possibly more dangerous than today's cars!

The actual walls of the building were built with about a 60 cm cavity to allow a Victorian heating system to circulate warm air between and through the walls all around the building! This is, indeed, a very ecological and environmentally sound system of insulation - even by today's rising standards!

It is most fortunate and propitious that there is a natural East-facing side of the building that lends itself to a Main Entrance. Ancient Vastu favours this for auspiciousness.

Ishver Patel, our Central Coordinator for the UK and Ireland, gave a presentation to the groups after their tours. He spoke about the great opportunity we have with this building and showed images to inspire and demonstrate how the building can be transformed into a real place of beauty, in just a few years. It is not in dire need of decoration immediately and is in good repair though some of the windows will need replacing. The potential offered by the space is immense.

There is more than ample space to house the school on either of the two main floors - even with pupil intake about to increase immensely, perhaps.

The building has a semi-basement with large windows that needs very little to become a drop-in Centre for the local community, perhaps run by our youth? The impressive 1<sup>st</sup>

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floor hall takes advantage of soaring roof trusses to create a wonderfully impressive conference hall as well as an inspiring Assembly hall too. It has mullioned, rather ecclesiastical, windows in a Gothic style, that add further to the sense of upliftment and inspiration. There are literally dozens of large rooms of which, some are already equipped with good desks, chairs and technical equipment. There is a bright canteen with modern built-in seating. There is a photographic studio, laboratory, Dance studio and more!

Atop the building is a charming bell tower that I know many want to hear ring out again!

Everyone wanted to express their thrill at the building – mostly with big wide smiles! Many commented on the very tangible atmosphere that is warm, friendly and very embracing when you enter and move around.

Well – how many people actually turned up over the weekend? ...A staggering 550 enthusiastic devotees from all around the Regions!

**Rosemary Perry for the LBMC**

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## National Sathya Sai Retreat 2009

### 'The Only Constant is Change'

**Information and Booking Forms were circulated on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May to all the Regional Chairs for distribution to all the Sai Centres and Groups in the country. If you have not, for some reason, seen these, and want to, please do immediately contact your Centre/Group Chair who should be able to organise emailing them to you or printing them out for you.**

The most perfect new venue for the 2009 Retreat, which will be held from Friday 28<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August, has been booked at the Exeter University Campus, just off the M5 in Devon. It is a truly first class facility, with beautiful grounds that are filled with ancient trees, wide open spaces, interesting floral specimens and really comfortable, modern accommodation buildings, all in easy walking distance (for those who wish to) of the ancient City of Exeter.

This year everyone will be housed in one building, all rooms have en-suites, there is a superb dining room with panoramic views across the City and it is here we shall display the extensive 'Sai Baba Exhibition' and at the other end of this very large and comfortable meeting area, the Sathya Sai Bookshop stall.

Arthur and Poppy Hillcoat from Australia (Swami's 'Ambassadors of Love') have been invited and have agreed to be our main Speakers this year – sure to be full of wise and wonderful words.

There will, as always, be an interesting selection of workshops, but if just 'Being' is what you are looking for, there will be plenty of time and space for that as well.

This year, we have agreed that to help with the cost of the weekend, payment can be made in three instalments in May, June and July. For those of you who have been to the National Sathya Sai Retreat many times before, you will be delighted to know that, at this venue, all bedding and towels are provided by the University. Quite a major reduction in packing!

**Caroline Vasey (for the National Sathya Sai Retreat Planning Group)**

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## 'ROAD' Shows

'ROAD Shows' (where 'ROAD' = 'Regional Organisation Awareness Day') - anyone and everyone from the Region's Centres and Groups may attend who is interested.

It was as the result of feedback at the first Regional Office Bearer Training Day, held in Region 1, on November 29<sup>th</sup> 2008, that we changed the name of that event to broaden the availability to beyond just 'office bearers'. With four 'ROAD Shows' already undertaken, Region 6 will be holding theirs on July 25<sup>th</sup>, Region 4 on the 4<sup>th</sup> October, and for Region 2 - December 5<sup>th</sup> is firmly inked into the Calendar!

At all these days, all – or the vast majority – of your Council members will be there with you, making presentations, answering your questions and helping to facilitate discussions **relevant** to you and your Region.

We hope that it cuts down travel and cost for you if we all come to you rather than you all coming to one general national day! We really look forward to meeting you all there! They have been fun-filled!

**UKCC**

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## National SSE Teachers' Day 2009

### **NB Change of Diary Date:**

The date for the National SSE Teachers' Day **has been changed from Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September to:**

### **Sunday 20th September**

The venue is the Windsor and Maidenhead Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1RF.

Our keynote speaker will be Phyllis Krystal. The day will be a wonderful celebration of Sai Spiritual Education in the United Kingdom, open to all. Please note the date in your diary. Further details will be available via your Regional SSE coordinators.

**Lakshimi Puvanendran**  
**National SSE Coordinator**

## **The 'Sathya Sai Leadership & Training Programme'**

### **A Personal Insight and Retrospection:**

Having recently graduated from the SSLTP I would like to share my thoughts regarding how I felt it benefited both 'me' and my personal inner spiritual journey.

In November 2006, after witnessing the previous cohort's graduation, I decided that I wanted to be in the next batch. Little did I know or even contemplate on what I was committing to. At the time, I did not realise that it would not be the course material that would challenge me, but rather the opportunities that would stem from my learning.

The course began in April 2007, just as I was in the process of embracing my life after university. Everything seemed simple, effortless and fun; this made it easy to welcome a new chapter into my life.

For me, SSLTP would be another exciting new activity to put on my calendar and attend every other month. In retrospect it is safe to say that my perception of what the course entailed was premature but did develop over time.

As the first two sessions passed I had begun to acquaint myself with the cohort. Initially I had the misconception that SSLTP would be like SSE but for the ambitious youth. I was very wrong. There, in front of me, was a diverse mix of personalities - candidates that represented a whole spectrum of ages and experiences.

At the time, it seemed rather strange to imagine that we were all in the same room aspiring to reach the same goal. Much like a collection of different stones, big, small, purple, blue, broken, ...each hoping to transform into a diamond ...the same diamond ...impossible?!

Looking back now, I can say that through the course of the journey, each individual, one by one, had delicately unfolded and revealed his or her own brand of wisdom. Little did I know that for each module I had encountered, it was this wisdom that would form the crux of my learning!

The first part of the course focused our attention on Swami's 'Vision and Mission'; explaining why God has come to earth and taken a human form, time and time again. From this point, my understanding of Swami's purpose blossomed, and now, after years of pondering, I can confidently articulate Swami's mission and how it ties in with mine. Through deep introspection and spontaneous conversation it dawned on me the extent to which my vision in life, 'to help & inspire others', resonated with this divine vision. Thus, SSLTP had not only taught me what Swami's vision is, but it has also shown me how we can relate to it, apply it and ultimately make it our own.

As the course progressed I stumbled across the term "thought leadership" and now found myself learning how "to be". At first this seemed rather ambiguous and unfamiliar; how can one just 'be'? ...'Be' what? As I absorbed the ideas from others and allowed myself to let go of old paradigms, I realised that 'to be' to me means learning how to harness my thoughts and steer them in a way that is congruent with my ultimate vision in life. This would ultimately lead to aligning my thoughts and deeds and eliminate any discrepancies that lay in-between.

Towards the middle of the course I found myself assimilating information that I had extracted from the many modules that I had now been exposed to. This included dealing with conflict, learning how to communicate effectively, equipping myself with project management skills and learning how to lead myself before attempting to lead others. Each module gave me the opportunity to re-evaluate my life in its very many aspects. Suffice to say that at this point I realised attending the SSLTP modules was not going to transform me into a good leader. No, it was going to provide me with *the tools that I needed to become a great leader*. What is more fascinating is that opportunities where these tools could be used, seemed to arise somewhat spontaneously in my life and yet in synchrony with my learning.

Towards the end of the course I had the opportunity to project manage a team; this added another dimension to the assortment of skills that I had already acquired. My team consisted of a small heterogeneous group of individuals. This made the experience somewhat challenging and yet unfamiliarly beautiful. As a team we were learning how to resonate at the same frequency in terms of ideas, objectives, and outcomes for the project. SSLTP gave us the opportunity to give something back to the organisation at a

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Centre, Regional and National level – we were given the platform to re-evaluate protocols and carry out research that would enable us to create new ones. Leading a team is never easy - especially when you are an amateur - and I certainly was. However, had I not been given the interactions and materials from SSLTP to cushion me, I believe I may not have reaped the benefits and experiences that this project gave me.

My learning was not confined to one small hall on a bi-monthly basis; SSLTP coincided with opportunities within and beyond the UK. During the beginning of the course I was preparing to go to Prashanti for the World Youth Conference (July 2007) and towards the end of the year I was preparing to go

enabled me to not only strengthen my teamwork and leadership skills but also look at myself from the inside out. The course represented a colourful mix of spiritual and practical elements. Whether it was learning about Swami's mission or how to successfully project manage a team, merging 'both worlds' appeared unfamiliar yet exciting. I learnt the importance of self-awareness and self-reflection, which I believe are both vital for living, serving, growing and 'being'. Every speaker, each discussion, and every interaction, rekindled my innate, inherent ability to face my fears and blossom into the person it is that I have always yearned to be. Even though each experience was not always easy, it was, though, another opportunity to



### The Outward Bound Weekend; Avon Tyrell; April 2008

back to Prashanti for the UK Youth Sadhana Camp (July 2008). Furthermore I also had the opportunity to go to Hampshire, which formed part of the 'Group Dynamic' module. The trip was called the 'Outward Bound Weekend' this weekend gave me the chance to implement the theory into a practical setting. Whether it was hanging from a tree, being led blindfolded in a forest full of obstacles or engaging in a heated discussion, it was difficult not to take something tangible away. My team and I were also given the opportunity to present our project proposals at the UKCC 'Vision Weekend' in Devon in October 2008. Interacting, eating and praying with the UKCC was interesting. It elucidated the idea that great leaders are normal individuals, individuals that aspire to achieve goals with beneficial implications for others in society.

Each of these trips involved teamwork, leadership and group solidarity. At this point in the course SSLTP had taught me how to communicate effectively and ensure self-awareness at all times. I felt that these skills helped me to contribute to each group dynamic in a positive and helpful way. SSLTP was a truly magical journey that

assimilate all the information that I had absorbed. I was now able to confront my weaknesses, perfect my strengths, challenge my paradigms and renew my ideas.

It is interesting to look back at how I initially perceived the other candidates in the cohort, as what once appeared an incongruent collection of individuals was actually a creative, wise, and uniform team. I truly believe that Swami puts people together for a reason. Why do I say this? Well, this course has blessed me with a special collection of friends; each one has challenged my insecurities and has taught me something new.

As I now look forward to preparing for the next chapter in my life, I urge you to ask yourself, "How could SSLTP benefit me?"

I cannot think of a better way to end this article than to say that I would recommend this course to anyone - absolutely anyone - (*Ed: Anyone over 21!*) who wants to open their eyes and touch their own divinity.

**Written by Reema Sharma**

**Submitted by Mathan Arulvel on behalf of the SSLTP Management Committee**

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## Region 2 Events

### Love Always in Action!

After two to three months of rigorous planning, Region 2 held its first **all day** Free Walk-in Health Awareness Clinic, in partnership with the Hillingdon PCT and Hillingdon Community Health, on Sunday 17th May 2009 in Hayes, Middlesex. This event was designed to bring about awareness of certain health issues, which many either don't understand or ignore, and it was aimed at the 'marginalised' communities.

With Swami's Blessings, the event brought together the love and dedication of 23 general volunteers, 15 medical professionals, i.e. doctors, dentists, optometrists, nurses and a yoga/exercise teacher. There was on hand the following:

- Diabetic team,
- Dental educator,
- Smoking cessation nurse
- BMI check (Body Mass Index)
- Blood Pressure checks
- Blood Sugar
- Advice on healthy eating and diet.

Many ethnic communities are unaware of the rise in blood cancer and how it can be easily tackled. The Anthony Nolan Trust participated in this Clinic to educate people on this particular subject and to encourage bone marrow donors to step forward from Asian communities. Did you know that only an Asian donor can help an Asian patient, an African help another African and there are only around 17,000 registered Asian donors out of a population of 3 million in the UK? Every year, approximately 20,000 people are diagnosed with blood cancer from babies to the aged.

Between 10am and 3.30pm, 142 people were seen and over 500 consultations given. A 'comments board' was provided on which patients wrote, e.g. "Very friendly, helpful staff", "Good to have all services under one roof", "Everyone was respectful and caring", "Should have more of these clinics".

All volunteers worked tirelessly and were very courteous and supportive. A light, healthy lunch was served to all. Indeed, "Service to Man is Service to God".

**Sunita Verma,**

**Region 2 Service Co-ordinator**

**Now that we have a roof let's put some ceilings in place!**

**R2: 'Ceiling on Desires' Project – Pilot Month: June 2009**

All the Region 2 Centres / Groups and Wings are participating in a trial 'Ceiling on Desires'

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Month' during June this year. Initiated by the Service Wing, this project has been taken on board, wholeheartedly, by all who have considered it thus far. Depending on feedback from the pilot project, R2 Service Wing propose to run a CoD project for one month each quarter for the remainder of this year. It is a primarily spiritual exercise - the idea being to evaluate one's own routines and daily activities and thereby see what can be done to curb excesses or improve our circumstances and environment and also those of others.

These don't have to be grand gestures that one can't live up to - it could easily be e.g. simply a sweet you decide not to have, skipping a meal you don't really need, walking a mile you don't need to drive (and doing your body some good!), a film you don't need to see, a video/DVD you don't need to hire - all the possibilities are endless. In fact, the sort of lives most people lead today make it difficult to set a ceiling on Ceiling on Desires (get your head around that one!). Of course, these could be replaced by more time with loved ones, more exercise, fresh air, better diet, time for meditation and Namasmarana.

Calendars for this month have been distributed via our Centres to act as a reminder / incentive / recording tool on which daily activity (or inactivity!), savings, gains can be recorded. To make the experience better for all, Centres are invited to identify and share different means of self-improvement being practiced and proposed by each member - be it a child or a venerable elder - we can all teach each other.

At the end of the month, members who have been able to put aside any material savings are encouraged to contribute towards the month's nominated project - which this month happens to be (of course!) our Building Project in Leicester!

**Kavita Trivedi, Chair Region 2**

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## Region 4

### 'The Glory of Womanhood'

**A 'lyrical' Ladies Retreat held at Beaumanor Hall, Leicestershire held from**

**23rd to 24th May 2009**

***"As today is a sacred day dedicated to women, they should change themselves and help to change the men and the children. They should develop the qualities of sympathy, compassion; love and sacrifice. Study the lives of our great women, who were models of patience,***

**fortitude, compassion and sacrifice. I desire that you should take up the reins of leadership and bring peace and prosperity to the nation by leading ideal lives.” ~ Sathya Sai Speaks - Vol. 28, Chapter 32, 'When Women Are Honoured'**

With the sun beaming over the beautiful grounds of Beaumanor Hall in Leicestershire, the 'Region 4 Ladies Retreat' was set for a wonderful weekend.

With the arrival of 95 ladies from all over the Region, the morning began with uplifting Vedam chanting and melodious Devotional Songs sung by the youth and adult women, setting the mood for our time ahead by displaying unity amongst all ages.

Stressing the role of women in the building of the home, society and the nation, Baba says, *"Women have a very crucial role in individual and social uplift. They are the makers of the home, the nation and the world. They are the mothers who shape the generation to come. So, they must enshrine in their hearts the spiritual urge towards Light and love, wisdom and bliss."*

This entire weekend captured the role of the woman in the home, society and in the Sai Organisation.

All ladies were able to express themselves openly and actively through teambuilding exercises, creative workshops, team games, discussions and much more. Latent talents were aroused through role-plays performed on Saturday evening, as part of the entertainment.

Inherent creative skills, were brought out when groups were created to compose poetry/songs in dedication to Swami's dictum: **"Be Happy! No Castor Oil Faces!"** whilst other groups made an offering in terms of an altar decoration. Beautiful altar decorations were offered to Swami, as well as poems and songs including the nursery rhyme "If you're happy and you know it..."

There followed an inspiring talk by sister Pravina Patel (R4 SSE Co-ordinator), sharing her experiences of marrying into a Sai family, and of her journey with Sai since then – all recounted in her usual light-hearted and humorous style.

Then came sister Sutopa Sen, an alumna of the Sri Sathya Sai Anantapur campus, now serving Swami as an active member at the East London Sai Centre, who spoke on **"Female Energy"**. She spoke about women being **"In-dependant"**, that is **being dependent on the God within**.

As women, we are known to be more spiritual and hence centred in ourselves, in touch with

God. Sutopa also shared how Swami reminds us ladies that we must have oneness and peace, a state of equanimity, whilst also being independent of our surroundings.

Swami reminds us how to achieve this state of 'in-dependence' - by praying, meditation, having patience and the importance of a mantra, allowing us to remain focused and dependent on the God within.

With forbearance, being able to bear the difficulties and ups and downs that arise in our lives, we, as women, can achieve great success.

The ladies enjoyed having lunch outdoors in the glorious sunshine and had an opportunity to chat with their fellow sisters from other Centres.

After lunch, the ladies had yet another delight of listening to and seeing some personal and rare photos of Swami from sister Bharti Sanghani, another alumna of the Sri Sathya Sai Anantapur campus.

She spoke on 'Shaping the mind, body and spirit' telling us that Swami has told us that women have seven virtues: Sathya (truth), Dharma (right conduct), Shanti (peace), Prema (love) and Ahimsa (non-violence) that we know as the five Human Values; and Swami has further added to them: Sahana (tolerance) and Ananda (bliss). Bharti shared some photos of the Anantapur campus and explained how Swami willed it into existence. She told us how it was built in just 10 months, and completed in July 1968. The land where the campus was built was dry and desolate, and the only thing that could be seen on the horizon was a mountain, which was known by the students as Lion Mountain, as there appeared to be a lion on the face of the mountain. Bharti reminded us how Swami had said to them, "lion-hearted women will restore the country". She shared the three S's namely 'Spiritual elevation', 'Self upliftment' and 'Social discovery'. Bharti had lovely memories of Swami visiting unannounced, sharing time with them and lighting a lamp in a room in every corner of the campus. She reminded us that we should be ever ready for Swami in our lives.

Next, the ladies took part in various workshops including 'Colour and Crystal Therapy' (a technique used to balance the chakras), 'Know Thyself - through drawing and symbols' (a medium used to explore aspects of our individual lives through analysis of symbols), 'Glass Painting' and various methods of 'Card Making'.

This was followed by fun and energising team games, using parachutes, skipping ropes, and various ball games in the grounds of

Beaumanor Hall. The utter joy and laughter that ensued made one forget for a moment that these were not children!

Swami reminds us that it is good to learn about influential and model women of the past, and this was achieved by short plays that were the basis of the evening entertainment. All the ladies took an active role in each play. We learnt more about Meera, the beloved of Lord Krishna, Easwamma, the mother of our Swami, Mother Theresa, and Sabari. It was sheer delight to see so many talented actresses and hear beautiful songs depicting the characters. What a wonderful end to a most gorgeous day spent in satsang.

Sunday morning started with the awakening of Swami by singing 'Suprabhatam' along with uplifting Vedam chanting and Devotional Singing. Then followed yoga, taught by sister Indi Jethwa. The ladies joined in 'yogic jogging' followed by various Pranayama (breath exercises), whilst also learning about the benefits of each. Yoga was recognised by all the ladies as being a very useful aid in the spiritual journey and many learnt key Asanas (Yoga postures) to help balance weight and help with calming the mind and remaining focused.

Taking advantage of the glorious weather, breakfast was served outdoors. This was followed by a very interesting talk on 'Sathvic Foods' by Dr. Dipaben Modi and her mother Manjuben Modi. Dr Dipaben Modi stated that the closer the food is to its natural state the more sathvic it is. She also showed us practical examples of sathvic foods, explaining and demonstrating the difference in energy for example between butter and margarine, with butter being the healthier option, and crisps and baked potatoes - again with the latter being a better alternative. Manjuben Modi shared a couple of her sathvic recipes and all ladies had an opportunity to taste the delicious items!

Next came the study circle, where the ladies had to discuss various everyday scenarios all on the topic of multi-tasking and finding a balance amongst spirituality, family, work and living in society. The elder ladies spoke from experience and the young shared their thoughts on how to deal with various situations by applying Swami's teachings.

By now the ladies had worked up an appetite, and a wonderful barbeque of healthy soya burgers, corn-on-the-cob, mogo, salads, pasta, and more (including ice cream and fruit!) awaited them.

The weekend was brought to a close, by listening to a couple of our sisters sharing the

story of their journeys with Sai Baba in their lives. Firstly, we heard of the personal experiences and her interactions with Swami, by Pratibha Nirvane. From a very young age, she only had eyes for Swami and would crave to have that closeness with Him. She also shared personal photos from the early years. Next we heard from Jayshree Pabari, who, again, shared with us how Swami guided her and her family through some very tough and sad times. Having that direction and love from Swami, gave her the courage and confidence to become an active member of the Sai Organisation, and thus progress on her spiritual journey

Completing the weekend with a vote of thanks, we finished the Retreat with an all time 'high' and with group photos to remind us of the special time we all spent together in unity and love.

"Glorifying Womanhood?" of course we did!

...And the team is looking forward to a bigger and brighter Ladies Retreat again next year. Let us pray that we can make an even greater impact and bring ladies from around the Region and the UK closer in honour of women, and in sharing the love we all have for Swami and that He has for us.

**Written up by Prema, Jyoth, Geetika Sodha and Deepa Joshi**

## **...Leicester Centre Celebrates 17 Years ...and the Journey Continues...**

The weekend of 16th/17th May 2009 was very memorable for devotees in Leicester, a city now fondly known as the 'Centre of the universe', as, at one end of Leicester, there was excitement of the first viewing for devotees of the Sathya Sai Organisational Building, and at other end, 'Leicester Central' Centre celebrated an event entitled 'The Journey Continues...' to commemorate the last time they would be at their current meeting location that they have occupied for the past 17 years.

The devotees who attended had mixed feelings as ...on the one hand it was wonderful to see the achievements of the Centre from when it began in 1974 to the present day, but it was also a sadness, for it would be the last time they met at the Soar Valley College premises, that are being demolished to make way for a new building.

The session started with Vedam chanting and a procession accompanying Swami as He was transported from the upstairs hall where His glory has been sung for the last 17 years to the hall downstairs, where Group Devotional



singing put everyone in the right mood for the programme that followed.

For the next two hours, the 400 devotees were taken on a journey starting with how the Centre started, via all the events that have taken place to today:

And ...To name a just a few:

- 1974 - Leicester Central Centre established
- 1975 - Swami's 50th Birthday celebrations (Regional) with devotees from Wolverhampton, Coventry and Luton
- 1977 - Community Service Programme started
- 1979 - First Medical Camp
- 1980 - Meals on Wheels
- 1993 - SSE pilgrimage to Swami and performing a play
- 1994 - First residential Ladies Retreat
- 1995 - Live bhajans at the local radio station
- 1996 - An 11-week teacher training course for the SSE teachers
- 1998 - Building a life size model of the first floor of the Prashanti Mandir
- 2000 - 'Bhaja Govindam' retreat for SSE
- 2001 - 76 hours of continuous Akhanda Bhajans for the 76th Birthday
- 2001 - Symposium entitled 'Who is Sai Baba?'
- 2002 - A 9-week leadership training for the Active Workers of the Centre
- 2003 - The Centre is invited to lead songs at the local church's Easter Celebrations
- 2004 - Vedam classes started
- 2005 - Youth pilgrimage 'Sai Anugraha' to Swami
- 2005 - First residential Gents' Retreat
- 2006 - A Yagna for World Peace

At the celebration, people who had been involved with the activities were asked to come up and share within 'just one minute', what impact the activity had on them.

Of course, one minute was insufficient, but most managed to keep to their time limit and share their experience. Halfway through the nostalgic review, the singers entertained the devotees with some beautiful songs.

The programme concluded after the offering of Aarathi, and everyone then reminisced with each other, while they partook of the Maha Prasadam (Blessed Food).

The devotees left the premises for the last time with happy smiles, and also with great hope for what's next to come.

As the saying goes, "When one door closes, another one opens"...

...Just as Leicester Central Centre was conducting its last session at this venue, our Organisation was hosting an 'Open Day' at the Leicester Bede Island Campus Building,

which is the first building to be acquired by the Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust (UK) for the use of not only the Sathya Sai School Leicester and the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation (UK) but also all the Sathya Sai-related organisations present in the United Kingdom.

**Written up by Leicester Central Chair**

## **...Easter Celebrations at the Coventry Centre...**

On the bright and sunny Sunday morning of the 5th April 2009, the SSE children of Coventry presented an Easter assembly to all their teachers, parents and guests. The assembly began at 10.30am with an offering of universal prayers. First was the Ganesha prayer, then the Buddhist prayer, then the Sikh prayer, Christian prayer, Muslim prayer and finally Swami's prayer. It set the scene for what was to come.

The story began with Palm Sunday.

By reading a short paragraph, saying a few sentences or just by holding up a picture, each child was involved in the telling.

The children also talked about how Christians celebrate Easter. There were many cute nursery children, who were keen and enthusiastic, almost bringing a tear to my eye as I watched them hold up pictures at the right time, depicting the story.

The story led everyone present to the point where Christ's life was sacrificed, which is what Easter is about; and the message was given to all about the egg symbolising new life, a celebration.

The assembly ended with Group 2 teacher Bhagwatiben Parekh discussing what sacrifice is and how we can learn to sacrifice for the benefit of others. Her first example was for children to learn to sacrifice some of their time to helping others, e.g. "If you wanted to play in the park and you saw someone needing help, you can give up that time as sacrifice." And, "The very same thing would apply if your mother is struggling with house chores, you can give her help instead." Another example was, "If you have saved up money for a new gadget, you can ask yourself, if you really need it, whether it is going to help you in any way and will it improve any of your abilities? If not, you can use that money for a more worthwhile need or cause."

Then Savitryben Mistry, the Group 3 teacher came forward and talked about the significance of the cross and what Baba says about it. He says, "Cut clean across the 'I' and let your ego die on the cross." For the benefit of the younger members, she related

what ego can mean and why we need to remove it in the first place.

The children ended the morning session with some group devotional singing for 45 minutes and offered their humble prayers to Baba, along with some traditional Bhajans and some English devotional songs. The GDS session ended with prayers. The children were then given a large home made Easter cookie on a stick in place of chocolate! A reminder that Easter doesn't mean that you have to buy a chocolate egg but that something made with much love is just as good.

**Written up by Vina Mistry, Coventry SSE Co-ordinator**

### **...Easwaramma Day Celebrations at the Coventry Centre...**

The Easwaramma Day Celebrations in Coventry took place on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May in the St. Paul's Church Hall. The altar was set with a serene garlanded picture of Mother Easwaramma and a picture of Sathya Sai Baba each side. The event began with an offering of the 'Ganapathi Prathna' and the 'Ganapathi Atharva Sheersham'. This set the scene for what was to follow.

The Coventry SSE children had prepared an awe-inspiring item on Mother Easwaramma titled, '**Mother Easwaramma – This is Your Life**'.

The play was a tribute to beloved Mother Easwaramma's life, which not only honoured her but also celebrated the purity she attained through her self-less love for God and his manifestations.

It began with a Group 3 student introducing the item and beginning with a role-play about Swami's grandfather, Kondama Raju, asking his son Venkappa Raju to change his wife's name from Namagiramma to Easwaramma (the mother of God). The story continued with how Swami was conceived with a blue light gliding into Easwaramma whilst she was fetching water from the well.

Then the children covered the welfare and service side of Mother Easwaramma that helped everyone around her. The children showed her simplistic nature and how she was always so concerned about Sathya as a child, how she always felt that others were taking advantage of her son for their own needs. The children enacted the roles so beautifully and took control of the stage naturally of their own accord.

The play also highlighted Mother Easwaramma's three self-less desires and how Swami brought these to fruition. Her first desire was a hospital for the local people so

that they wouldn't have to travel so far. The next was a school for the children of Puttaparthi. Easwaramma wanted boys and girls to be educated equally. Her third desire was to provide water for thousands of unfortunate villagers who had to travel such great distances to fetch clean water. These three desires, Swami very lovingly fulfilled for His earthly mother.

The play, which was skillfully combined with a slide show took twenty minutes, and captured the audience's attention on every detail and by the wonderful performance carried out by the children. It was a great presentation in spite of the fact that the children only had two rehearsals.

The play concluded with two songs, 'Easwaramma, Mother Divine', in English, that glorified Mother Easwaramma and described who she was. During this song, all the SSE children offered a flower at the feet of Mother Easwaramma. The second song was in Hindi called, 'Itne shakti hamein dena Maata' meaning 'give us strength dear Mother...' These two beautiful songs were offered with so much love and reverence to Swami's dear mother in memory of all she stood for. (I still keep humming the tune days after the programme!)

The programme continued with devotional Bhajans sung by some of the fifty-four attendees. It was very inspirational and beautifully put together.

Our Pranams to Dear Easwaramma, the Mother of our beloved Lord!

**Written up by Hasu Patel, Coventry SSE Nursery Teacher**

### **...Easwaramma Day Celebrations at the Rugby Centre...**

In celebration of Easwaramma Day this year, Rugby Centre decided to do something different from all previous years. The SSE teachers decided upon a 'Three Mandirs Yatra' (a pilgrimage to three temples). Taking advantage of the Bank Holiday, the Yatra was arranged for Sunday 3rd May. Arrangements were made to attend Arathi at all three chosen Mandirs in order to take full benefit and Darshan of the presiding deities.

Our first stop was at the Swami Narayan Temple in Neasden where we were met by one of the temple guides who arranged a short slide show about the temple and then led the group to various areas of the temple for viewing and answering any questions we may have. We were given time to look around, take Darshan, and browse in the temple shop for Souvenirs. Everyone felt that

the temple atmosphere was one of serenity and everyone appreciated the architecture of the building.

We then left there with ample time to arrive at our second destination: the Ganesha Temple in Wimbledon where we felt the vibrant spiritual atmosphere instantly. We were very fortunate to be present when the Mataji Puja commenced and we took the Arathi after 30 minutes of puja. Then we all did Pradakshina around the main Murthi of Lord Ganesha in the centre of the hall...

We then had the pleasure of a talk from Mrs. Karunes Ratnasingam on SSE classes that are held at the Temple. She had also arranged a scrumptious lunch in the grounds where we were surrounded by nature.

Taking reluctant leave from there, we arrived at our final destination, the Hare Rama Hare Krishna Temple in Watford. There, we all felt as though Lord Krishna and Radha Mai themselves were waiting to receive us. The vibrant sound of the chanting was difficult to tear away from, but once again there was a guided tour which we took advantage of.

Between the throng of devotees craning their necks to get a glimpse of Krishna, we managed to take our places on the crowded floor. The drumbeat and clinking of the cymbals, combined with the melodious voices of the singers, transferred me to Brindavan for some moments. Suddenly everyone was getting up and Arathi commenced. The hall trembled with the vibrations of the 'ONE' voice, the one heartbeat and indeed the absolute oneness of all gathered there.

After this beautiful experience we took leave of this lovely place to make our journey home.

On the return journey, we discussed how beneficial and enriching the experiences of the day had been for us all, and it was noticed how the children were having their own discussion about the day!

It was a most wonderful day and the SSE children and their parents have requested that we arrange a similar outing again, very soon!

**Written up by Savita of Rugby Centre  
...and Easwamma Day  
Celebrations at the  
Birmingham Sai Centre...**

So, here comes another snippet for the merry month of May from the heart of England - Birmingham. Whilst the nation was raring to jump into T-shirts and shorts, Birmingham Centre was gearing up to celebrate one of the most important of days in our 'Sai Calendar': Easwamma day. Since this great day, and

another very important one: 'Buddha Purnima' (or Lord Buddha's day) were very close this year, the Centre decided to have a 'double dose' and observe both these wonderful celebrations on the same day of 8th May.

The evening unfolded with a brief history and life of Baba's beloved Mother via an overhead projector relaying beautiful photos of Easwamma, alongside a soft and heart-warming commentary from our SSE Gurus. It was mentioned how Swami fulfilled all his Mother's wishes and maintained his perpetual love for his Mother. Thereafter we had the SSE children reading out what their mothers did for them and why. As each child spoke, his or her innocence and wisdom touched everyone present.

A short bhajan session followed, but it was one with a great deal of 'Oomph' feeling about it - extolling Swami's loving and humble Mother, whose name and love has spread to all the corners of Mother Earth.

After the dizzying bhajans, the Centre was privileged to have a Buddhist monk, the Venerable Dr. Kassapa of the Buddhist Maha Vihara Association, as its guest. After a warm introduction to him by our Vice Chair, Dr Kassapa spoke at length on the significance of Buddha Purnima.

Swiftly it was time to bring the evening to a jovial end with everyone having soaked in Swami's love and grace. Of course no gracious occasion, especially one remembering Swami's Mother, is complete without appetising Prasadam (Blessed food), which was served soon after, having been kindly prepared by the Centre's affectionate and generous ladies.

**Birmingham Ladies Day on  
the 17th of May**

With renewed energy from the 'double dose' of the above, our Ladies Wing conducted and organised another of their special Ladies Days - and true to their word, only ladies were allowed and no other species! A good number turned out and, as always, it was well received and well supported by the Centre's ladies. The focus for this day was on 'Positive Thinking'.

The afternoon started with a role-play session on how to make a negative situation into a positive one, which then spread to involve everyone present, from the very young to the not so young. A very interesting article was read out that was based on the power of positive thinking and how it brings out the goodness in one's self. This was followed by a power point presentation about a man (Ed: Of

course!) who had a choice to be either in a good mood or a bad mood and each time he chose the good mood, his choice positively influenced all the people that came into contact with him. With such a useful start the afternoon was well set to a good start.

So once again, no Ladies event is complete without the sharing of their culinary skills. Our ladies shared and cooked their recipes, with dishes right through from the sweet to the savoury. This was quickly followed with the highlight of the afternoon which was ...well ...eating the delicious recipes all by themselves! As consolation to the gents, Swami must have tasted the delicious recipes and enjoyed on everyone's behalf!

**Written and compiled by Raju P Gadher, for and on behalf of Birmingham Sai Centre.**

### **...and then another Birmingham Easwaramma Day Event: 'Matru Devo Bhava'!**

On 10th May all groups in Birmingham were asked to join in Unity to celebrate Easwaramma Day together by honouring our own physical mothers, and all women, as divine. The theme was: 'Matru Devo Bhava' (revere your Mother as God). On Easwaramma Day the thought for the day from 'Heart to Heart' said, "The Vedas (ancient scriptures) say, 'Matru Devo Bhava' (Revere your Mother as God). You must revere your mother, who has brought you up with love, care and sacrifice. However famous one may be, if he/she does not revere their mother, they do not deserve respect."

Many will be familiar with Swami's teachings on these lines, but how many actually carry this out, in practice? The aim for the day was to go beyond the boundaries of everyday relationship and experience divinity in and as motherhood.

The day started with the chanting of Vedam in the form of 'Ganesh Atharvashirsham', 'Sri Suktam' and 'Devi Suktam'. This was followed by the main event: a worship of mothers individually, as well as all women present as mothers. All sons and daughters exalted their mothers by reciting statements from Swami's teachings: "Matru Devo Bhava, Mother you are God, Mother you are my first teacher, Mother my welfare depends on your welfare, Mother you are the embodiment of sacrifice, From this day, I promise to love, obey and respect you." All bowed down to their own mothers, and then to all the mothers present and showered them with

flowers. All the mothers reciprocated by giving a blessing. This was followed by worship, participated in by all, of the divine mother in all her various forms through offerings, during a chanting of Sri Lalitha Sahasranama (the 1008 names of Mother) in a manner akin to that performed in Prashanti. Whilst the acts themselves seemed relatively simple, the day itself has left us with a permanent psychological reminder and resonance derived from the chanting. The seed for the day was planted some months before, on a group visit to the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre and Monastery. Here, Swami Dayatmananda narrated the effect of new 'action' in altering old unconscious habits. Physically worshipping our mothers, as divinity itself is not something we do everyday. The impact of doing it this once, however, is an action that has changed how we view our mothers and therefore also changed the habits of a lifetime.

**All articles submitted by  
Ramesh Mistry, Chair Region 4**

### **Region 5**

#### **The Sathya Sai Study Circle at Newcastle Sai Centre**

...Meets on the third Friday of every month focusing on the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba. For the last few months we have had presentations by Mrs. Madhavi Majmudar drawing on topics from the 'EDUCARE' course that she undertook in Mumbai. These included 'The Sai Path', 'Global Connectivity', 'Unity, Purity and Divinity', the 'Jyoti Meditation' and 'Messages from Water'. The study group members have found these topics very interesting.

#### **Easwaramma Day**

...Was celebrated right across the Region. In Newcastle, Mrs. Lakshmi Sherbet opened the celebrations with a talk on the significance of this festival and Easwaramma's influence on Swami. This was followed by a silent sitting exercise by Ms Doreen Musgrove, which facilitated members to get in contact with their inner source of divinity.

A skit on Easwaramma followed, with scenes from the different phases of Swami's life. It demonstrated how Easwaramma was made an important character in the Divine stage set by Swami in this Avatar.

The programme finished with Bhajans and Aarathi.

#### **Vedam and Bhajan Practices**

The Sai Centres across Greater Manchester are successfully organising fortnightly Vedam and Bhajan practices – so far we have learnt

'Ganapathi Pratharna', 'Shivopasana' and 'Narayana Suktham'. We have also set up a Greater Manchester Sai Youth Group (GMSYG) that allows the youth of the area to meet monthly for Satsang, Study circle and Pranayama (breathing exercises). We hope to launch a youth-led Service project soon. If anyone in the area wishes to join in these activities then please contact the R5 chair.

**Harish Thampy, Chair Region 5**

## Region 7

### Satsang With Dr Swami

Region 7 was truly blessed to have the presence of Dr Swami in Cardiff on Tuesday 2nd June. On a beautiful sunny evening, Dr Swami spoke at an event organised by the Cardiff Centre and delighted the audience with his lively and inspiring talk. The event started with prayers, a Ganesha bhajan and then Dr Swami sang a beautiful bhajan in his melodious voice and transported one and all to Prashanti!

He then started his talk with a wonderful Telugu poem. He told the audience that he was 80 years old (he did not look a day over 60!) and how he goes on the treadmill everyday and also does Yoga!

He said he had been serving Swami for 50 years and then went on to tell the audience about the unique way that he came in to Swami's fold whilst living in Orissa and working as a teacher in a college.

He explained how a persistent father who wanted his son to have admission in his college left him with two books on Sathya Sai Baba and how, when a very skeptical Dr Swami started reading these books, he could not put them down and finished reading them in one sitting!

And, miracle of miracles, when he stared at the piercing eyes of Swami in the photograph in the book, one of the eyes winked at him ...and then when he looked again the second eye winked at him! Dr Swami felt completely overwhelmed with this experience but knew, there and then, that the person in the photograph was a Divine being.

He then explained how, as a novice, he started doing Sai bhajans at his home and how, because he had no knowledge of conducting them properly, Swami in his infinite mercy came in the form of a 'young man with a bag full of puja items', and showed him the exact methodology to conduct Sai bhajans! And, he told us how, over the ensuing years, their Sai Centre attracted hundreds of people and that Vibhuti and Amrit started manifesting on all the pictures in the Sai Centre and flower garlands

would swing like pendulums when bhajans were being sung!

He told the audience how he introduced EHV into schools in his hometown and how he started a Human Values school. He said, "When one does Swami's work with sincerity, Swami recognises it instantly!" He spoke about his wonderful experiences of working as a Principal at Brindavan Campus and being in the close proximity of Bhagawan.

He said his key message to everyone was to follow Swami's teachings and involve oneself in service activities and work in unity.

Dr Swami finished his talk with a beautiful bhajan bringing to an end a delightful and unforgettable evening for Region 7 devotees.

**Nirmala Pisavadia,  
Regional Vice-Chair, Region 7**

Love and Light SSSSO UK Diary Dates 2009		
Month	Date	Event
June	13th / 14th	Regional Meetings
July	7th	Guru Purnima
July	11th	UKCC Projects Meeting
July	25th	Region 6 ROAD Show
August	28th - 30th	National Sai Retreat
September	12th	UKCC 3rd Quarter Meeting
September	13th	NWC Meeting
September	17th / 18th / 19th	Seminar with Phyllis Krystal
September	20th	SSE National Teachers' Day
September	26th / 27th	Regional Meetings
October	4th	Region 4 ROAD Show

### Sathya Sai Bookshop

The bookshop has a regularly updated website. Please visit it at:

**[www.srisathyasaibookcentre.org.uk](http://www.srisathyasaibookcentre.org.uk)**

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

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## **'Love and Light'**

### **Submission of Articles**

The deadline for submission of articles to Love and Light is no later than the 4<sup>th</sup> of the month for publication on the 9<sup>th</sup> of the same month. Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate articles after this date, inclusion cannot be guaranteed.

An article can only be accepted via a member of the UKCC who will then forward it to the editorial team.

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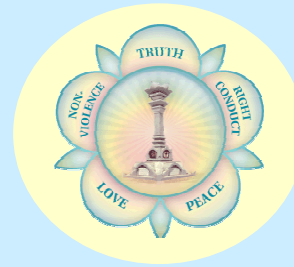
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