

# Love and Light

SSSSO (UK) – monthly update



9<sup>th</sup> March 2006

## The Journey Has Begun...

Dear Readers,

Sai Ram. February was a month of varied activities with Regional Conferences around the United Kingdom and the Open Evening for the National Youth Pilgrimage, which attracted over 450 devotees to come, see and share what the National Youth Pilgrimage 2006 will be about. It was a very special event, which was held on the date that Lord Krishna left his mortal body. Those of you who look daily at the Prashanti website will have also noted that Swami left Brindavana for Puttparthi that day. I also attended the Regional Conferences in Regions 2 and 3 and was delighted to meet so many of you, and especially to listen to the R3 SSE school choir!

I wonder how many of us have given up something for Lent, which commenced on Ash Wednesday, March 1st? ...40 days of sacrifice is what Christ did before his ministry by withdrawing into the Wilderness. In modern days people do not 'withdraw' literally into the 'Wilderness' but observe this special time in the Christian calendar by abstaining from favourite vices as a test of self-discipline and to contemplate on what Jesus may have experienced in the lead-up to Holy Week.

Love & Light

Shobhna Patel, UK Chair

## Service

### Milestone Achieved

The SSSSO UK is proud to announce the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 'Sri Sathya Sai Leukaemia Awareness Programme' (SSSLAP) in Swami's 80th year of advent. This programme was launched in February 2000 in conjunction with the Anthony Nolan Trust having a specific aim to raise the awareness of an urgent need for bone marrow donation for those suffering from Leukaemia, and to encourage healthy Donors from all communities to register on the Donors' Register maintained by the Anthony Nolan Trust.

We have arranged fifty Donor Clinics to date, addressed 9,900 (approximately) audiences, and distributed over 10,000 information leaflets at various communities and places throughout the UK from Aberdeen to Bath. We have assisted patients' appeals in the UK, USA and Mauritius, given presentations to students at Southampton and Bath Universities, Gurudwaras, Islamic and Gujarati communities to name but few.

All this would not have been possible without the dedicated support provided by some 100 medical and general volunteers who travel across the UK to conduct the Donor Clinics.

**Bharat Handa, National Service Co-ordinator**

## Spiritual

### 'Chanting a Pathway to Peace'

A one-day workshop, Sat 11th Feb 2006

The Sai Organisation contributed to the 'Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace 2006', organised by the Edinburgh International Centre for World Spirituality. 'If we can't find peace within ourselves how will we find peace in the world?' This was my thought when I suggested to the Middle Eastern festival organiser that we, the Sai Organisation, might run a one-day workshop within this festival to explore the power of chanting as a tool to draw us deeper into ourselves to help us re-connect with an inner strength and tranquility. The day was an opportunity for us to share with the public at large the significance of Omkar, the Gayatri Mantra and some of the ancient Vedic chants that are universal in nature and are said to embody the very essence of God, together with Swami's teaching on these. This was the first time we had pulled together a workshop of this kind but I felt sure Swami would guide the day completely; there is no doubt He is always the doer. Sai brothers from Cardiff, Reading and Leicester made the supreme effort of leaving Leicester at 3am to drive to Scotland on Saturday morning for a 10am start to help facilitate the day – to see such dedication and devotion from them in carrying out Swami's work is very humbling and inspiring.

Over 30 newcomers attended the workshop. The programme provided a healthy mix of group chanting to allow participants time to still the mind and go inwards with talks to give significance and meaning to the chants together with some interfaith singing to experience different faith chants as well as have some fun! To find out more about the 'Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace' contact:

**Jeannie Cranfield, (jeanniecranfield@yahoo.com)**

**Region 8 Spiritual Co-ordinator**

### Editor's Note:

The surplus unanswered questions from the NOBC 'Q&A' session will be laid out on a separate, additional, page in next month's 'Love and Light'. As at NOBC, the Wing Co-ordinators will provide the answers to them.

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## SSE

### Sathya Sai Parenting Study Circles

One of the chief aims of having a National Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) programme within the United Kingdom is to enable the blossoming of human excellence within our children. Whilst the SSE teaching framework helps to lay a sound foundation for character development in the child, this in itself is not enough. Baba has said that we need to have in place a holistic approach (tripartite system) where the teacher, student and parent/s work together to develop the child's total personality.

The SSE and the Spiritual Wing are offering a unique opportunity to enable Sathya Sai Parenting study circles to take place via a one-day training to be held on 2nd April. The aim of this workshop is to suggest practical methods by which we can encourage greater participation from parent/s through the Sathya Sai Parenting (SSP) programme. The aim is to get parent/s and grand parents actively involved and thereby create a natural collaboration with the SSE wing.

Parent/s spend a greater length of time with their child and therefore will contribute significantly to how the child develops his/her understanding of the world around them. They will also directly contribute towards how the child sees himself/herself and therefore ultimately have an impact on the child's self-esteem, self-worth and self-confidence.

It is therefore essential that parents understand what the child is being taught within the SSE programme so that they are able to reinforce the lessons within the home environment. Parent/s also need to develop relevant skills so that they can be role models for good/acceptable behaviour, which is beneficial to a child's personal growth/development.

*"Parents are the first examples of social behaviour that the child sees before it learns to imitate".*

*Sathya Sai Baba*

Sharmila Parikh, National SSE Co-ordinator

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## BISSE

### Stepping Stone Steps Towards SSEHV...

It all started by a little girl wanting her aunt to come and teach SSEHV at her school so that her friends could enjoy the songs and stories as much as she did. It took time to set up an appointment with a very busy headmistress, Mrs. Allsop, Head Mistress of Northbridge House School, Nursery and Kindergarten, fondly known as 'Stepping Stone School' (LEA Camden). After months of waiting for a call we became disheartened and anxious... The call finally came and much to our surprise so did the appointment to meet. Mrs. Allsop seemed more than impressed with the programme and asked lots of questions about its origins and how widespread it is. She loved the posters

and the idea that the fruits represented the Human Values. After having decided for herself that she liked what she saw, she asked the question she had been thinking about throughout our session. "...How much does it cost?" When we told her it is free...she couldn't believe it!! She told us she would consult her team and get back to us. Once again...the waiting...

We waited patiently and then called to follow up... again we waited. Mrs. Allsop called one day totally out of the blue. "Yes," she said, "we'd love to have you come and teach SSEHV at our school." She included SSEHV as part of PSHE (Personal, Social, and Health Education). We have started with the Nursery group as a pilot and will move on to Year 1 after the half term. The children responded to the lessons with intelligent, imaginative and adorable replies.

The teachers have begun to work in the selected Human Value to their lesson plan, allowing SSEHV to be in the classroom each day of the week. We have prepared a pack for the teachers to give them when we complete our 5 sessions with the Nursery Groups and hope to be able to offer them training, in their area, in the near future. Teaching at Northbridge House School has been exhilarating and inspiring, taking 'Stepping Stone steps' towards SSEHV.

Subita Mahtani, Vice Chair Region 2

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## Youth

### National Youth Pilgrimage 2006

The first Monthly Meeting is on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March.

For regularly unfolding information, go to:

[www.saiyouth.org.uk](http://www.saiyouth.org.uk)

The first 'All-Night Bhajans' will take place on 8<sup>th</sup> April commencing at 9pm and concluding on 9<sup>th</sup> April at 6am. All devotees are welcome: Special Guest, Hari Subramaniam, will be attending. For further information on this particular event, please again refer to the website address above.

The Youth Spiritual Programme (Sadhana) is now ready to download from the [www.saiyouth.org.uk](http://www.saiyouth.org.uk) website. This programme has taken its inspiration from Swami's discourses and can be undertaken by both Adults and Youth irrespective of whether they are joining the National Youth Pilgrimage or not.

Shitu Chudasama, National Youth Co-ordinator

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### Region 4 Maha Shivaratri Celebrations

The R4 Centres of Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Leicester (Narborough), and the Nottingham Group all held Maha Shivaratri celebrations. General Devotional Singing and ritual Prayers featured in all these celebrations. Leicester Narborough added a role-play, whilst Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Nottingham made offerings of flowers or water with varying chants.

Ramesh Mistry, Vice Chair Region 4

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## SPECIAL FEATURE: Regional Office Bearers' Conferences 2006

### Region 1

#### 'Realise Your Innate Divinity'

Fifty R1 devotees attended the NOBC and 80 devotees from around the Region attended this post-NOBC event on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February. It was attended by 80 devotees and started with Veda chanting, multi-faith prayers and devotional singing by the regional youth. The event began with a flashback of all regional events in 2005. The regional BISSE representative gave an awareness presentation of SSEHV. The guest speaker was a former 'Sai Student' who spoke about his experiences with Swami. This was followed by a talk by the Regional Chair on, 'The role of an Office Bearer'. Respective wing coordinators presented their work plans for 2006. The Satsang ended with a vote of thanks, devotional singing and Aarathi. On the whole it was a successful evening and lots of positive comments were received.

**Keith Sithsabesan, Chair Region 1**

### Region 2

#### 'A Sadhana Evening of Work and Worship'

Region 2 devotees, joined by the UK Chair, Shobhna Patel, and the National Service Co-ordinator, Bharat Handa, hosted their first and very successful Regional Office Bearers' Conference. During the event, the Region celebrated their achievements as divine instruments and decided on the projects to be taken forward this year in the fields of Spirituality, Service, Youth and Education. Victoriously attended by a strong, dedicated and devoted workforce of 121 office bearers, active workers, members, youth and SSE students. The evening consisted of an offering of prayers for guidance and instruction, meeting the 'Region 2 Team', taking a trip down memory lane; watching the past events of 2005, lively & constructive workshops for active workers / members, a special study circle for past and present Centre / Group chairs, a film premiere of the magical Monkey Hanuman for the younger ones and the presentation of action plans. The evening ended with devotional singing, distribution of souvenirs, books, photos and dinner.

Region 2 became instruments led by a 'Divine Will', worshipping as individuals, working as a team and finally coming together as one to sing the glories of Sri Sathya Sai Baba who continues to inspire and live in our hearts.

**Satesh Melwani, Chair Region 2**

### Region 3: 'Back To Basics'

Taking on board the prevailing theme from the 8th World Conference, the theme for our Satsang was decided as 'Back to Basics'. The challenge was to ensure the Satsang encompassed work on the 2006 regional plans, as well as provide the spiritually uplifting atmosphere of Maha Shivaratri celebrations. As the Youth group commenced their Vedic chanting, an awesome Divine breeze ran through the hall. The DVD of the talk given at NOBC by our UK Chair, Shobhna Patel, followed. Vidhyu and Mahesh Narayan inspired everyone present with their Divine experiences. Brother Mahesh's wit and humour followed by Sister Vidhyu's close experiences of Swami during her days as a student set a wonderful atmosphere during the morning. Having completed our four workshops in discussing, agreeing and setting our spiritually-motivated work plans for the coming year, the morning session concluded with the DVD of Central Co-ordinator, Ishver Patel's talk from NOBC and the presentation of work carried out by the UK Sai Organisation in 2005. All enjoyed a hearty lunch worthy of a banquet and prepared by our very own Suribhi and her team. The afternoon session commenced with a short performance by the delightful children of our Regional SSE School. The School Orchestra having practiced for many weeks, enchanted our audience with divine melodies to sooth even the most active of minds and a glorious ensemble of devotional singing, dedicated to Lord Shiva, were sung by our very gifted Youth.

**Kishor Kumar, Chair Region 3**

### Region 7

Our **Regional Satsang** was held in Bristol on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2006 from 10am to 4pm. The day included presentations, talks, video, a play by SSE children and devotional singing. The main address was a talk from our National Spiritual Coordinator Kiran Patel. The programme also included an 'Interactive session on the 9-Point Code of Conduct, feedback from the 8th World Conference, talks by former Sai Students, PowerPoint reviews of regional and national activities, a presentation on Swami's teachings on "Selfless Service", a presentation on the National Youth Pilgrimage and a Service Wing presentation.

Approximately 50 devotees (+19 children) participated.

**Jey Sivalogathan, Chair Region 7**