



"Nature is the Best Teacher"

Dear Readers,

Sai Ram. I hope you are all enjoying the intermittent sunshine, delicate flowers and rosy buds that indicate Spring is nearly upon us! This is a time when the sap rises to form verdant foliage and vibrant blooms for the Summer. As Dylan Thomas said: 'The force that through the green fuse drives the flower, drives my green age... The force that drives the water through the rocks, drives my red blood...' In this country where the four seasonal differences are quite marked there is an ascending energy at this time of year that it is good to harness to our spiritual practices. It gives them extra impetus and vigour - and inner, spiritual, 'Spring Cleaning' is always helpful!

Since the February 'Love and Light' I have had the pleasure of attending the 'Post ERC-SSEd Conference' on Sunday Feb. 11th in Pinner. There, the fifty or so attending had the opportunity to take part in a marvellous survey where all their thoughts and views were gathered into an important and intriguing analysis that will reveal to us the perceived areas of strength and weakness etc. that exist within our three areas of Sathya Sai Education. On the following Sunday I was invited to a National Youth Satsang for Rs 1, 2 and 3, in Tooting (they are moving around the country), this was a lovely informal gathering where the Youth who could attend (about 100) joined in song, talks and workshops. They also evaluated very much where they are in their perceptions, attitudes and thinking. Mathan Arulvel (NYC) set the scene for the World Youth Conference. Mathan, as I write, is visiting Sai Youth in St Petersburg, Russia, to talk, build bonds and exchange ideas!

On the 25th a majority of somewhat surprised UKCC National Co-ordinators attended the R4 ROBC (Regional Office Bearers' Conference). To rectify this very unwitting imbalance we do intend to try and come together or singly to other Regional Meetings through the year! Held in Birmingham, the morning session was allocated for a National Youth Satsang and a very healthy number - around 60 - R4 young adults turned out for it. After lunch the Regional conference started with talks from various National Wing Co-ordinators and from me. Wing Workshops fruitfully took place and the whole day delightfully was threaded together with song and humour.

Last Sunday, the United Kingdom Central Council (UKCC) held its first quarterly meeting of the year in North London. Sixteen of us worked our way through a packed agenda and versed ourselves in all the ongoing affairs and running of the Organisation.

Love and Light,

Rosemary Perry, National Chair

Sai International Youth Choir

To sing ...in perfect harmony!

The Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference, under the auspices of the Sathya Sai World Foundation, has been blessed by Bhagawan to take place on 26th to 28th July 2007. By Bhagawan's infinite grace a Sai International Youth Choir will be formed to mark this historic event. We would like to invite Sai Organisation Youth who have an interest and talent for singing or playing instruments to join. We require between 15 to 20 singers and musicians from each Zone, aged between 16 to 35 years to take part in this Sai International Youth Choir. The Choir will represent the international aspect of Sai Youth from around the world focusing upon the unity of all cultures and religions. It will be an expression of unconditional love for Swami. We are very fortunate to have leading the Choir Alma Badings, who is a professional Musician, Conductor and Violinist.

The songs that will be performed will be in four-part harmony. Ladies and gentlemen will be both divided into high and low voices. Sai Youth from all Zones will be further encouraged to contribute their own compositions made up of lively songs containing this spirit and essence universal Love. Any Sai Youth wishing to submit their own compositions for review should kindly contact the Choir Conductor: Alma Badings. Once these songs have been finalised the music and songs will be put onto the Internet, so that the singers may practice before the auditions in Prashanti. Once the auditions are over the rehearsals will commence on 16th July 2007.

Shitu Chudasama, National Vice-Chair, on behalf of the WYC 2007 Planning Committee

SITA

Sathya Sai Information Technology and the Arts

...Have You Got Web Design Skills?

We are looking for highly committed individuals to help with web development projects within the Sai Organisation UK. You will be working with friendly, like-minded people using their creative talents to convey Swami's messages on Sai websites. We would be very pleased to hear from you if you have skills in the following areas:

Web programming, Flash / Multimedia Design, Web Design and Graphic Design

Media Training Course: 8th April 2007 in London.

We have lined up skilled people who have been working with the very latest equipment and are experienced in their own fields of expertise to give you an introduction into Photography, PA Systems and Videoing. We hope this starter course will launch you into supporting or creating imaginative projects for your Regions and Centres when

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conveying Swami's messages and work. There will be workshops, presentations and practical sessions on finding out how to develop your skills in these media areas and make best use of your equipment. Attendance to the course is through registration only, by contacting the email address below. We hope to run similar courses again, for volunteers in all Regions so if you wish to contribute your skills as a trainer in any region then please contact: admin@sitaproject.org.uk.

SITA Team

Post 'Regional European Consultation on Sathya Sai Education' (REC-SSEd) Conference

On the 11th February, following the REC -SSEd which took place in January, the three strands of education within the United Kingdom came together to discuss and decide a way forward. Our new UK Chair Rosemary Perry greeted those that attended the meeting. Rosemary graciously opened the day's proceedings by lighting the lamp, speaking about the REC for the benefit of those that were not present with the use of Swami's words and the key messages provided by the International Education Committee Chairman, Mr Kalyan Ray.

The day was filled with opportunities to discuss and share ideas and views. Those that were present were empowered to participate in a 'SWOT' analysis. Open and honest comments were received and shared amongst all. Those that attended participated fully and assertively.

A special thank you to Region 2 for hosting this event to bring the 3 areas of Sathya Sai Education together. Papers have been compiled and will be shared with you by the 18th March 2007 via your Regional Chairs - something to look out for!

Sharmila Parikh, National SSE Co-ordinator

Region 1 17th Anniversary Celebration of the Bromley Sai Centre

Seventeen years ago, the Founder President, late Dr. Jeganmohan, established the Bromley Sai Centre with a group of Sai devotees in the shrine room at his house. During the first fifteen years, the devotees gathered every Sunday evening at his home and joined in the devotional singing and other spiritual practices in the Centre. At the beginning of 2006, in keeping with the UKCC guidelines for Sai-oriented Centres, the Centre moved to new premises in a Church in Bromley. Since then Devotional singing sessions have been held once a month, on the second Saturday evening of each month.

The Centre celebrated its 17th Anniversary on 10th February 2007. The evening began by the lighting of the lamp by the family of the late Dr. Jeganmohan, followed by multi-faith prayers and Devotional singing. Two Guest Speakers were invited - National Spiritual Coordinator and the Regional Chairperson. Raj Selvakumar (Nat. Spiritual Co-ordinator) informed us on the planned spiritual activities for the year 2007. He inspired the congregation by saying that we should start looking for Swami the moment we start the day

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and pray to Swami that we may be a channel for his love, peace and joy through the day. Raj Rajasingam (Chair R1) narrated with warmth his experiences with Swami. A young speaker, Master Janahan Elansie, spoke eloquently about Swami's teachings. He reminded everyone that we must have purity in the use of the five senses of perception. We all have the five inherent human values – Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence (Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi, Prema and Ahimsa). At every thought, at every word and at every action pause and imbibe these five human values. This will instantly lead to unity and purity of thought, word and deed. It will develop good qualities and character.

This was followed by a medley of bhajans devoted to Lord Shiva, ending with Aarati. This celebration was organised with the help and support of the devotees of the Bromley Sai Centre. Devotees also attended this function from many other Sai Centres/Groups in Region 1 and everybody thoroughly enjoyed the celebration. Thanks to our beloved Lord for his Divine presence on this evening.

Region 1 ROBC

The Region 1 ROBC was held on Sunday 25th February, at the Merton Centre Sai Mandir. The Conference began with a short welcome to the delegates by Raj Rajasingam, Region 1 Chair, where he thanked the Office Bearers for their dedication and commitment during a particularly hectic month. He went on to outline the importance of the four wings and explain that as Active Members, all of us are following the path of 'Karma Yoga' (action done in an intelligent manner), and that we should therefore take every action we perform and dedicate it to the Lord as 'Karma Arpanam' (actions/deeds surrendered). Following this, Mrs Karunes Ratnasingham, former National SSE Coordinator, spoke on 'The Sadhana of Active Members'. She encouraged all Active Members to put aside any disputes and disagreements, and focus instead on pushing forward with organisational activities in addition to their individual Sadhana while Swami is with us in his physical form.

The Wing Coordinators then presented their Work Plans for 2007 and an overview of the European Education Conference and its outcomes to the delegates, before Navin Patel, former National Spiritual Coordinator and Sai Student, addressed the audience. Navin impressed upon us the great responsibility placed upon Office Bearers. He made it clear that a role as an Office Bearer is a 24-hour job, and that regardless of time or place an office bearer should be able to respond to any individual who is in need.

The delegates then split up for interactive sessions with the Wing Coordinators, where they discussed how to implement the Work Plan and make it applicable to individual centres, and discussed any other worries or questions that arose. Everyone then reassembled in the Mandir for a feedback session, which was followed by a talk from the former Region 1 Chair, Keith Sithsabesan, who outlined the rules and responsibilities of Office Bearers. Devotional singing, Aarathi and Dinner

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followed this final talk. Over one hundred active members attended the R1 ROBC this year.

Raj Rajasingam, Chair Region 1

**Region 2 Maha Shivaratri
Celebrations and Background
6pm Friday 16th February to 6am Saturday
17th February**

The scene was set with Lord Shiva sitting amongst the beautifully created 'mountain backdrop', which formed part of the most magical altar in a transformed school hall in Watford where devotees gathered to celebrate the festival of Maha Shivaratri.

The Maha Shivaratri Festival or the 'The Night of Shiva' is celebrated with devotion and religious fervour in honour of Lord Shiva, one of the deities of the Hindu Trinity.

Shivaratri falls on the moonless 14th night of the new moon in the Hindu month of Phalgun, which corresponds to the month of February or March in the English Calendar.

Celebrating the festival of Shivaratri, Hindu devotees observe a day and night fast and perform ritual worship of the Shiva Lingam (an ellipsoid symbol of the universal consciousness of God) to appease Lord Shiva.

According to a popular legend, Shivaratri marks the wedding day of Lord Shiva and his consort, Parvati. Some believe that it was on the auspicious night of Shivaratri that Lord Shiva performed the 'Tandava', the dance of the primal creation, preservation and destruction.

Another popular Shivaratri legend stated in the Linga Purana that it was on this night that Lord Shiva manifested himself in the form of a Linga. Hence the day is considered to be extremely auspicious by Shiva devotees.

The Region 2 celebration began at 6pm on Friday evening with a powerful recitation of Vedam (holy chanting from the scripts) followed by the rendition of most powerful and soul-stirring devotional songs (Bhajans) and hymns in praise of Lord Shiva

At various auspicious times throughout the night a Hindu priest (on behalf of all the devotees) performed a ritual Puja (ritual offerings) to the Shiva lingam by bathing it with milk, yoghurt, honey, ghee, sugar, and water amidst the chanting of the Shiva Ashtotranaama (108 names of Lord Shiva) and the Lingashtakam (Sanskrit Slokas or verses) with the ringing of temple bells as the lingam was adorned with sandalwood paste and rose water. Following the bath, vermilion paste is applied on the lingam. Traditionally, leaves of a forest tree Aegle marmelos (bilwa, maredu, wood apple) are used for this Shiva ceremony.

According to the Shiva Purana, sincere worship of Lord Shiva yields merits, including spiritual growth for the devotees. The Shiva Purana further says that performing the ritual bath (abhisheka) of Shiva Linga with six different material items (dravyas), as stated below, while the chanting appropriate prayers such as 'Sri Rudram', 'Chamakam' and 'Dasa Shanthi' pleases Lord Shiva the most. According to the mythology, each of these dravyas used in the purification ritual blesses a unique quality:

- **Milk** is for the blessing of purity and piousness.
- **Yogurt** is for prosperity and progeny.
- **Honey** is for sweet speech.
- **Ghee** is for victory.
- **Sugar** is for happiness.
- **Water** is for purity
- **Vermilion** paste represents virtue.
- **Offering of fruits** symbolizes longevity and gratification of desires.
- Burning of **incense sticks** yields wealth.
- The **lighting of the lamp** symbolizes attainment of knowledge.
- The offering of **betel leaves** marks satisfaction with worldly pleasures.

Devotees, aspiring for the blessings of the Lord, gathered throughout the night as melodious devotional songs creating heavenly vibrations interspersed with the Lingam worship continued until 6am on Saturday morning and all present basked in the Glory of the Lord.

Anila Kumar Mod, R2 Youth Co-ordinator

**The Unbeatable Warmth of the
Region 3 ROBC!**

"It was a wonderful Satsang – lovely warm atmosphere with good, crisp, presentations, a very good bookshop and such divine food and, of course, the chance to catch up with all our old friends and meet new ones. Thank you for organising it."

Sunday 25th February saw a great family day in Region 3, as over 150 R3 devotees including many parents and children gathered for the annual Regional Conference, at Christchurch School in Ilford. There was a genuinely warm atmosphere, and everyone felt they were truly within the Sai fold the moment they stepped in through the door. Once registered, attendees were given a form in which to write any questions they may have for the office bearers. Children were whisked off to have an exciting time in the crèche run by Amanta Goodur and her kind, caring, team. The conference began with a very moving Vedic Chant, led by Dr. Vickneswaren and his team, followed by multi-faith prayers offered by R3 SSE students. The 'Welcome' message from the new Region 3 Chair, Sunthar Uthayanan, outlined the structure of the International Sai Organisation, homing in on Region 3, which has 21 centres and groups. He presented an overview of the different wings and their management structure, and then introduced the Regional Wing Co-ordinators. In preparation for the year ahead, he ended his address by playing a recording of the exquisite bhajan 'Remind Me My Lord'. The day was very ably compered by Yogesh Patel whose lively style, quotes, stories, amusing anecdotes and introductions kept us all attentive, laughing and smiling throughout.

Each of the Wing Co-ordinators gave a 15-minute presentation of their respective Wing's activities (Spiritual, SSE, Service, Youth and BISSE), reflecting on the activities of 2006 and mapping out the Wing Plans for 2007. A refreshing mid-morning break gave attendees the opportunity to

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meet up with old friends and discover new ones! The youth from the Region had researched and produced a beautiful and inspirational DVD timeline of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, His story and His work set to heart-stirring music. Having ingested food for the mind and soul it was time for food for the body! Lunch was a delicious range of dishes lovingly prepared and served by a really professional team, who would not look amiss on 'Air India'! Someone even took a photograph!

Lunchtime provided the ideal opportunity to browse, chat and buy at the well-stocked Sathya Sai Bookshop. Navin Raval and his wife, Chandrika, ran this valuable resource as efficiently as ever.

After lunch, a panel comprising the Wing Co-ordinators took to the floor to respond to the questions, which had been handed in at Registration. The panel was joined by Region 3's new Vice-Chair, Gurmail Singh. His introduction was most original (and in the opinion of many present, worthy of being copyright material!). The questions covered a vast area, such as: 'Why is there a need for SSEHV?' 'Could you please give us more details of LOTUS (Life's opportunities to understand spirituality)?' the impact of the highly-inspirational and productive international Regional European Consultation on Sathya Sai Education, held in January, on Sai Spiritual Education; CRB checks for active volunteers; Vedic chanting workshops, etc.

After this 'Q & A Session', Dr Vickneswaren treated us to a highly animated, humorous and informative talk on 'Satchithananda' (Being-Awareness-Bliss). He looked at the effective use of our senses in relation to the 5 koshas (the gross, subtle and causal sheaths) that permeate and surround the body. This was followed by a most edifying, moving and enlightening talk by the ever-inspiring Dr. Upadhyay, on the recent Medical Camps undertaken in war-torn Sierra Leone, and in Alikay in India. The key message from his presentation was 'Love is the only qualification you need!' We have it on good authority that the many snippets in his talk provided enough discussion material for four devotees on their long return journey home from Ilford to Luton!

The very uplifting and inspirational day came to a close with a superb devotional singing session by the Sai Youth (and some not so young!), which included a live rendition of 'Remind Me my Lord', and ended with 'Aarthi' offered by Dr. Upadhyay, to our beloved Sri Sathya Sai Baba whose Divinity and love had guided us every step of the way for the day ...just as it always does, and always will!

R3 Wing Co-ordinators

Region 5 Youth: Inner Divinity Workshop

On Sunday 11th February, we were two of eight Youth (18 to 35 year olds) who embarked on a 6-month journey to help connect with our inner divinity - the 'Swami within'. We were aware of Swami's presence, not only with His beautiful photograph, but also by the fact that, including the facilitator, Rachel Ennis Cole, there were 9 of us in total!

With gentle guidance from Rachel, we directed and designed the workshop as we were participating in it, which for those of us used to being on the receiving end of PowerPoint presentations was a real shock. The ease with which everything flowed was magical. The workshop concluded with each of us not only having a divine target, but also having visualised and experienced life when the target has been reached. A wonderful mix of experiential techniques were used - symbols, guided imagery, analysis, reflection, and group activities - all helping ensure the target is firmly planted not only in our minds, but in our consciousness.

Swami instructs us in His discourses to turn within to realise our inner Divinity and true Reality - especially the youth. This course is designed to naturally 'draw out your Divinity' and the teaching techniques help to connect with Swami within our spiritual hearts and to expand our consciousness beyond that of the ego and mind.

We're all really looking forward to the next session!

Neil Bisarya, R5 Youth Coordinator and Sanjay Vaja, Vice Chair Region 5

Region 6

...The All Singing and All Dancing ROBC!

The annual R6 Regional Office Bearers' Conference was held in Guildford on Feb 25th. The youth, after helping to set up, started with English language devotional songs followed by the R6 Activities PowerPoint presentation, which had been shown at the NOBC. Bahnoon Agnew, R6 Spiritual Co-ordinator, led us in the 'Saitree Mantra' and then explained the Spiritual Wing's aims for the coming year. Questions were asked and suggestions came to have more informal discussions on topics like: 'The Nine Point Code of Conduct and how it affects our everyday life'. Lark Beecham, BISSE Area 6 Rep, described the European Regional Education Consultation and the manner in which other countries carry forward Sathya Sai Education within their own Centres/Groups and Institutes. The delegates from Europe were interested in how we in the UK run courses for those who are not in the SSSSO UK. This discussion then led onto the blossoming of the Rochester Centre SSEHV programme. Rima Patel, the R6 Youth Co-ordinator urged us all to spread the message of the World Youth Conference in Prashanti in July, and encouraged the Region's young adults to attend this special event.

The Service Wing objectives were presented and many signed up for CRB clearance and were encouraged to keep collecting stamps and coupons. More beautiful knitted articles for 'Something Beautiful for God' and interesting books for prisons were donated and collected up on the day. After a shared lunch the youth led us in devotional singing of traditional Bhajans. Then Shri Kandiah encouraged us to examine the quality of our Service and suggested more interactive discussion.

Chris Brown kindly led us in some enlivening sacred circle dances and the final meditation after which we flowed peacefully into English devotional songs.

Philippa Malcomson, Chair Region 6