

Love and Light!

SSSSO (UK) - monthly update

4 Years!

9th March 2009



Swami on the Clyde!

Dear Readers, Sai Ram!

In February there have been really important meetings taking place to progress the highly significant project underway to secure a large building in Leicester for our Organisation and I have had the privilege of sitting in on two Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust meetings where this matter has been discussed. One was held on February 15th and the other yesterday. Generally, February and the first week of March have been quite busy this year. Our second 'ROAD Show' took place in Region 3 on February 21st with a really good turnout. It is interesting to see the different dynamics that occur in different Regions when we roll out the same programme and we do learn how to improve each time. The weekend of the 28th February and 1st March saw a mass migration of the Council up to Region 8 (Scotland) for our quarterly Council Meeting on the Saturday, and to run the third ROAD Show in Glasgow on the Sunday. There were 12 Council members who flew up and the Chair of Region 5 who drove there from Manchester!

On the Saturday morning, before breakfast, I was just talking to my husband on the phone when I saw a smallish ship sailing up river. It was the very first nautical craft of any kind that I had seen on the river since arriving on Thursday evening. It sailed under the Erskine Bridge with its green hull and white superstructure looking fresh and crisp in the morning light. I suddenly ended the phone call, thinking that I would surprise Steve with a photo of the little ship that I had just described to him! So I rushed and got the camera out of my case, got it ready, and returned to the window. By now, the ship was much closer and I looked at its prow – read the ship's name – and my jaw literally dropped in astonishment! The name of this little ship was 'SWAMI'! After a 'double take' I quickly snapped a photo, marvelling at the extraordinary divine synchronicities that can occur! And, as usual, I reminded myself that everything that occurs is as truly perfect as this joyful moment ...even if it comes with pain or sadness and seems quite inexplicable... Although Region 8 has not, as yet, written up the ROAD Show for 'Love and

Light' we had such excited and good positive feedback on the day from the sixty people attending (nearly half the total number in Region 8) that all of us on the Council feel that it was an extremely successful day.

Maha Shivarathri celebrations taking place all around the country through that auspicious night on the 23rd February, must have really sent the most wonderful vibrations out into the dark moonless night.

Saturday the 7th March saw the annual SSE Carousel Training day take place in the outskirts of Leicester and it was a pleasure to attend.

Yesterday, our Zone 9 Chairperson, Mr Kishin Khubchandani, kindly attended the Quarterly Wing Meetings that were held in Totteridge at the Mill Hill Centre's venue. Mr Khubchandani had arrived quite late on Saturday evening from India, so it was very good of him to do this for us. We arrived just as Mill Hill Centre finished its programme and there was an opportunity for him to speak to the Centre members. Then he spent just over an hour talking to the National Wing Coordinators and Regional Wing Coordinators, meeting them, encouraging them and telling inspiring stories about Swami and from life generally. Everyone was very uplifted afterwards.

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

SSE Building Project

This year, the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation (SSSSO) in the UK is celebrating a significant milestone in its history. On 31st December 2008, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba approved a proposal prepared by the Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust to purchase a building in Leicester for the purpose of advancing Sathya Sai Education and other SSSSO activities in the UK. Bhagawan's exact words were "My blessings are with you."

Since receiving this approval, different parts of the Sai Organisation have been working together to make the blessings a reality. The building is situated on Narborough Road in Leicester (LE3 0BT). Until recently, it was used as a College of Further Education. It has 22 large classrooms, spread over 3 floors, and two halls (one large and one small) and car parking facilities.

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

The building meets all present academic, legal and building standards for schools and so will be ideal for the purposes of the Sathya Sai School Leicester. We also envision it being used by the local Sai Centres, the SSSSO UK and by the British Institute of Sathya Sai Education. Overall the building will serve in the following ways:

- As a permanent home for our full time Sathya Sai School Leicester
- As the Head Quarters of the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation UK
- For the needs of the local Sai Centres and thereby the local population with such activities as holiday schools and weekend classes
- As an ideal venue for providing training on Sai Spiritual Education and Sathya Sai EHV, including the formal courses offered by the British Institute of Sathya Sai Education (BISSE).

The United Kingdom was the first country outside India to have a Sri Sathya Sai Centre; also the Sathya Sai School Leicester is the only such School in Europe. It has been a dream of the Sai devotees in the UK to have our own School building and to have a home for the Sai Organisation. Let us all come together in love and unity to realise this dream and assist in various ways before and after acquiring the property.

An explanatory paper on the project was circulated to all Centres and Groups last week.

If you would like to know more please contact Prabodh Mistry by email at this address: ancfeedback@sisathyasai.org.uk

"Anything can be achieved with unflinching faith in God. Discharge your duties with a sense of surrender to God."

– Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Ishver Patel, Central Coordinator, Zone 9, Region 91

Regional 'ROAD' Shows Dates Already Taken:

The UKCC had planned to take 'Office Bearer Training Days' to all the Regions but this has been broadened into: 'Regional ROAD Shows' (where 'ROAD' = 'Regional Organisation Awareness Day') and 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 day, held in Region 1 on November 29th 2008, that we changed the name of the event to broaden the availability beyond 'office bearers'.

With three 'ROAD Shows' already undertaken, we now have the following dates for Regional 'ROAD Shows' firmly set in our calendar:

Sunday April 19th: Region 7

Saturday December 5th: Region 2

Your Regional Chair will circulate all the details to your Centre or Group well in advance. ROAD Shows for Regions 4, 5 and 6 will be arranged in due course. At all these days all – or the vast majority – of Council members will be there with you, making presentations, answering your questions and helping to facilitate discussions important and (most importantly) **relevant** to 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!

UKCC

SSE Teacher 'Carousel' Training and Refresher Course 2009

Saturday 7th March saw 140 teachers, teaching assistants, National Chair, Rosemary Perry, and 20 facilitators come together at Winstanley Community College, Braunstone Town, Leicestershire, for an interactive, informative and most importantly, fun packed, training day.

The training started with the National Chair lighting the lamp followed by everyone joining to sing 'Son of Shiva'. The National SSE Coordinator welcomed all present and introduced the day.

The day was enhanced not only by the wonderful hospitality provided by Region 4 but also by the compere, the Region 4 SSE Coordinator, Pravina Patel, who has obviously missed a calling as a brilliant stand up comedienne! Her humour, natural sense of fun and love for all was evident throughout, especially when they seemed to agree that "Leicester is the centre of the universe!"

Kiran Patel, former National Spiritual Coordinator, set the scene by speaking of Sai Spiritual Education being "... material for the heart," especially for our children who are growing in a society, which lacks moral and ethical values. He related personal experiences as a student in Swami's school and university and described how the bonds forged with classmates then continue today. The discipline and dedication that the students adhered to and the hardships experienced, ultimately moulded them. The responsibilities Swami entrusted them with developed their self-confidence. Swami is the

greatest teacher: coming down to the child's level to impart an indelible lesson.

The 'Carousel Training' was a veritable merry-go-round of training opportunities catering for everyone, from the novice teacher to the most experienced teachers in the country. It provided a forum for teachers to convene, network and select specific options relevant to their own training needs.

Participants had a choice of 9 options for the morning and 9 options for the afternoon. The Sessions offered were:

- 'Silence is Golden' - How to practice and teach meditation effectively. (whole day session)
- 'Teaching towards Group 3 Year 2&3 Projects'
- 'Teaching the Unity of Faiths'
- 'Bhaja Govindam in Essence' (whole day session)
- 'Bhagwat Geeta Slokas in Essence' (whole day session)
- 'Effective Lesson Planning and Implementation' (whole day session)
- 'Administration within SSE and Conducting Home Visits and Parent Teacher Consultations'
- 'Prayers for Groups 1 & 2'
- 'Group Activities for Nursery & Group 1 (Primary)'
- 'Effective Use of Drama and Storytelling in SSE'
- 'Writing Songs, Music and Poetry for Sai'
- 'Be creative... (Arts & crafts for Nursery & Group 1 (Primary))'
- 'Be creative... (Arts & crafts for Group 2 & 3 (Secondary))'
- "To be or not to be"...Writing and producing play scripts'

There was something for everyone!

Rosemary and Stephen Perry had an opportunity to sample the sessions and in the 'Writing Songs, Music and Poetry for Sai' session, Rosemary and an unnamed accomplice (*it was the National SSE Coordinator ~ Ed.*) came up with a 'Rap' song on the theme of 'Mother'.

The facilitators were all truly inspirational, sharing their vast wealth of knowledge, skills and experience with the eager teachers. An exhibition of work completed by teachers from some of the sessions was displayed for all to see in the breaks.

Navin Patel from the Sathya Sai Bookshop brought a wonderful selection of books, relevant to teachers, for sale during the breaks and lunch.

At the close of the day, as Rosemary Perry rose to address the audience, chants of "Rap! Rap! Rap!" loudly echoed in the hall. After much laughter Rosemary made some very insightful and complimentary comments on the day and the facilitators; thanking the SSE teachers of the UK for their unwavering efforts and dedication to impart Sai Spiritual Education to the children entrusted in their care. She mentioned that all the facilitators of the workshops were very professional and articulate and emitted a definite sense of 'being' in all they did; and how, as a voluntary organisation, we produce great results.

Some of the participants then left, (some carrying beautiful and delicate items they had made in their sessions) buzzing, revitalised and inspired to continue their work as Sai Spiritual Education Teachers, whilst others (who were able) remained for an optional workshop, 'Living in God', conducted by one of the facilitators from the day, Dr Chunmugavelu. His session was humorous, witty and uplifting.

All in all, a wonderfully inspiring day, filled with love, knowledge and lots of networking time.

National SSE Wing

Region 1

Maha Shivarathri Celebrations

The Region 1 Shivarathri vigil took place at the Sai Mandir in Effra Rd on the 23rd of February. The proceedings started at 8 pm, with the initial invocation prayers followed by 'Linga Abhishekam'. The Abhishekam was performed on two Shivalingas materialised by Swami and the mantra 'Aum Sri Sai Lingeswarya Namah', was chanted by the devotees 108 times. The Abhishekam was performed in between the Bhajans at midnight, 3am and at 5am. The Devotional Songs were started by a mixture of adults, youth and children and then the SSE children from the various Centres in the Region continued for an hour and a half. Centres from the Region conducted the Bhajans according to their time slots throughout the night. The vibrations and joy were felt throughout the whole ten hours as devotees from the various Centres participated in the singing with happiness and enthusiasm, even in the middle of the night! The celebrations concluded at 6am on the 24th of February with Aarti.

Region 1 Blood Donation

Blood Donation days for Region 1 have been organised for the following dates & times

- Sunday 15th Feb from 9.30am – 1.30pm
- Sunday 15th Mar from 9.30am – 1.30pm
- Sunday 31st May from 9.30am – 1.30pm
- Sunday 14th Jun from 9.30am - 1.30pm
- Sunday 20th Sep from 9.30am - 1.30pm
- Sunday 15th Nov from 9.30am - 1.30pm

Venue for these sessions:

The Sai Mandir, 131-133 Effra Road, Wimbledon, SW18 8PU

For further information please call 0208 542 0106 or 07885 515698

Region 2

Just 3 hours to Serve 170 Souls

Every Saturday afternoon, many devotees from Region 2 (R2) conduct an invaluable service of collecting unsold sandwiches from the reputable Prêt a Manger branches in Baker Street and Bayswater in London and then delivering them to the Mother Teresa Kitchen near Waterloo within one hour. The teams usually consist of 2-3 people driving to the locations, with authorisation letters in hand.

In February, I accompanied the team from Harrow West Centre. We left Harrow at 4pm and arrived at Baker Street around 4.45pm. Close to 5pm, with the permission of the supervisor, we cleared the shelves. On our way to the Bayswater branch, we called to let them know we were on our way. Some teams prefer to drop one person at one shop and another at the second, so that food is collected systematically before they close or before another charity steps in. Some days we may collect 50 sandwiches and other days 150, on this occasion we collected 170. By 6pm we arrived at the Mother Teresa Kitchen, where the Sisters received the much-needed sandwiches with glee and thanked us profusely. By 7pm we were back home in Harrow.

These days there are many more hungry people standing around the Mother Teresa Kitchen, waiting to be fed. Perhaps this is the only meal they would have all day. Just think, it cost only 3hrs of our time to serve 170 souls. Let's continue this sacred service in the name of our Beloved Swami. In the words of Swami, *'Hands that Serve are Holier than Lips that Pray.'*

**Sunita Verma,
Region 2 Service Co-ordinator**

Region 3 Road Show

The Region 3 ROAD Show ('Regional Organisation Awareness Day') took place on the 21st February 2009 at Our Lady Of Lourdes Church, Wanstead. Over 80 attended and welcomed members of the UK SSSSO Central Council and our National Chair, Rosemary Perry.

Following on from the National Conference, the aim of the day was to provide a forum for Office Bearers and all Centre members throughout the Region to engage in discussion on the various facets of Centre life.

The programme began with introductions from our Region 3 Chair, Gurmail Singh, followed a 'Question and Answer' session facilitated by Rosemary Perry and the National Secretary, Kishor Kumar. This session provided Office Bearers and Centre members a platform to put across their queries and experiences and in return receive honest and practical advice.

Bahnoon Agnew (Region 6 Chair) led us through a very useful and interactive session entitled 'Communication, Rapport and Understanding – Successes and Pitfalls'. This session provided a somewhat rare opportunity for the audience to actually observe the way that we communicate - not only through words but also through the tone of voice, facial expression, body language etc.

The day was packed with inspirational talks from many of the UK SSSSO Council members. The emphasis being that as Office Bearers, we must first be examples of Swami's teachings. Rosemary led us through ways that we can be "Centred in a Centre". She talked about the importance of making a conscience effort to really see the divinity in others, and to be authentic when we interact with others. Rosemary's talk really complemented the talk earlier by Raj Rajasingam (Chair Region 1) on the roles of Sai Centres.

The audience also had the chance to take part in two group workshops that explored case studies possibly from real life and faced by Centre members and we explored how to deal with them.

These sessions were an eye opener into putting theory into practice.

We were all very well looked after with delicious lunch and refreshments throughout the day. Overall the day was uplifting and energising. The programme provided a refreshing look at the roles of Centres / Office

Bearers and it offered practical advice. I very much enjoyed the day and look forward to more events like this in the future.

Written by Mali Almeida, Youth Co-ordinator – Ilford Sai Centre

Submitted by Gurmail Singh, Region 3 Chair

Region 4 Annual Conference “The Pilgrim, The Path and The Goal”

One hundred and ten delegates attended the Annual Region 4 conference on Sunday the 15th of February at the Sri Sathya Sai School in Leicester. The conference started with Vedam chanting and Devotional Singing.

Ramesh Mistry our Regional Chair summarised the events of the National Conference and said that the Region would also adopt the theme of “The Pilgrim, the Path and the Goal”. He then presented photos of the proposed building that would become the permanent premises for the Sathya Sai School and spoke briefly about the breakdown of the funding for the project.

Next to speak, was Sarah Edwards of the Shrewsbury Group. She highlighted the many challenges faced by small groups - e.g. one person having to multi-task many roles, having to find creative ways to do the same activity and regular attendance by members. The Shrewsbury Group has requested some help with Devotional Singing and Vedam chanting and the Youth Wing have gladly agreed to help.

Next came a PowerPoint, presented by Manish Thakrar (Chair of Narborough Centre Leicester) showing the Region’s many activities and achievements in 2008. This was followed by the Wing workshops and their feedback.

Indi Jethwa summarised the outcome of the Regional Ladies Wing meeting, which took place prior to the Regional conference, setting out its aim and the objectives that were agreed at that meeting. They spoke about their collective Sadhana of “Being Happy” - no “castor oil faces” (!) as Swami says; and of the Ladies Retreat. The new Region 4 Ladies Wing Coordinator is Yashmin Mistry.

Geetika Sodha shared the forthcoming plans of the Spiritual Wing - to hold workshops on Yoga, Vedam Chanting and Self-awareness. The Region aims to learn the Rudram and chant it at the Shivratri celebrations in 2010! SSE camps and the posting of successful lesson plans and teaching strategies on the website are amongst the many plans presented by Aarti Mistry and Pravina Patel.

There was no Regional Service Coordinator at the beginning of the session but a brave Mr Ruju Thakordas took the post during refreshment time. He will be working with others to plan this year's activities.

Bhavesh Mistry the Regional Youth Coordinator recalled the very successful “Summer Showers” of 2008, which was attended in Region 4 by 215 youth from all over the UK, and which included Sai Students and the Keynote Speaker from India, Sunum Gyamtso. The youth thanked the Centres and Groups of the Region for helping make the Summer Course a success. Sadhana days and the reading of ‘Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram’ are some of the aims for the coming year.

Our guest speaker Raj Selvakumar gave a very inspirational talk on the theme of the conference. He said to reach the goal, the path must be a life of Human Values with surrender to God. He took each value and related it to daily life with his own personal example. These examples were hilarious but very inspiring too!

Ketan Gokani our Regional Vice Chair then gave a concluding address. He gave a PPT presentation on the area covered by our Region with details of Centre and Group OBs. He stressed the need to develop members in our Region to be ready to take on positions in the Organisation when they become vacant (known as ‘shadowing’). All the Office Bearers were encouraged to take on shadows as soon as possible. He thanked everyone for attending and wished them a safe journey home. The conference concluded with Devotional Songs and Bhajans and Aarathi.

Inspirational article from Birmingham Sai Centre

Perhaps it can safely be said that 2008 was hastily closed amidst financial doom and gloom and 2009 was ushered in swiftly with uncertainty. However, one certainty existed and that was the need to have new Office Bearers and Coordinators ready to take on Swami’s work. The Birmingham Sai Centre was fortunate enough to fill all its vacant posts, giving everyone something to look forward to at our weekly gathering to extol Swami’s love.

And what better way to start Swami’s work than by several of the Centre’s devotees attending the National Conference, eager to learn and gain more knowledge.

Our Ladies Wing meeting followed in a trot on the 22nd of February - being the first of many decided for this year - with its successful debut having taken place last year. There

were about 30 sisters from the young to the wise who delved into various activities arranged for the day. Our sister, Preya, set the scene by holding a case study on the '5 Ds' i.e 'Devotion, Dedication, Discipline, Duty and Discrimination'. This was accompanied by a workshop on 'Creative Thinking' where the sisters got an opportunity to use their 'grey matter' and unwittingly acquire a slight headache after the various quizzes and puzzles! The goal of these was to identify what their connection is with God. The day finally came to a close with a relaxing meditation, contemplating on Swami and His abounding grace and love.

Although Shivratri actually came on the 23rd of February, the Centre held its festivity on the 27th. The scene was set by a talk on the significance of Shivratri with the aid of a power point presentation. Thereafter soothing 'Lingastkams' were chanted in tune with melodious instruments quickly leading to an 'Abhishekam' which was performed by way of flower petals and *Bili* leaves, offered by 65 devotees, whilst chanting the Shiva mantra in unison. As soon as the Abhishekam was completed devotional songs were begun by the SSE children, followed by the adults and then concluded with 'high energy' sounds by the Youth. We all know that no Shivratri is complete without a dose of 'bhang' and once again harmlessly prepared by one of our Centre's ardent Shiva devotee.

It is with much delight (bearing in mind that this post had been laid vacant for quite a number of years) that the Centre now has its very own Youth Coordinator, Bhavin Solanki. Bhavin immediately got the devotees in 'top gear' by holding a Devotional Singing Workshop for 2 days – on the 28th of February and 1st of March. The workshop was well planned whereby Bhavin shared his wisdom of how we, as a Centre, could better ourselves in singing Swami's glory and praising Him. It was well attended and everyone contributed in their own way to make these two important days a success, right from providing delicious food to cleaning up. Bhavin worked tirelessly and patiently to educate and enlighten all present on the importance of singing devotional songs as Swami would like us to. Hopefully, we as a Centre, can now make new strides on this front.

Ramesh Mistry, Region 4 Chair

Region 6

Upcoming Events

March 14 and 15:

Taize Singing Weekend

(Christian devotional singing) in Tekels Park, Camberley, Surrey. Any interested persons from other Regions wishing to attend, please email Region 6 Chair at: bahnoon@hotmail.com.

April 10 and 11:

There will be an **SSISAP weekend** (Sathya Sai Inner Self Awareness Programme) in Reading, Berkshire.

SSEHV Training (9 modules) in Reading, Berkshire, dates below.

May Sat 30th and Sun 31st

June Sun 7th

June Sat 27th and Sun 28th

July Sat 4th

July Sat 11th and Sun 12th

for queries and booking please contact

Lark Beecham at albeecham@btconnect.com

Bahnoon Agnew, Region 6 Chair

Region 7

Maha Shivarathri

This year, Maha Shivarathri was celebrated in the Region at the Claverton Community Centre in Bath. The evening started with 3 OMs and Veda chanting followed by 'Lingashtakam'. Devotees from Bath Centre commenced the Devotional Singing and were followed by Cardiff Centre. Swindon Group then took up the singing. It was beautiful to hear Shiva Bhajans sung with such devotion and fervour that the night passed quickly! Around 5.30am Suprabatham was sung with a Thambura playing in the background, which brought back memories of being at Prashanti. ...It was heavenly! Overnight devotional singing and prayers come to an end by offering Aarathi to Swami at 6.30am. Around 40 devotees participated in this overnight vigil and even at the end, for Aarathi, there were about 30 devotees still present!

Ram Thiagarajah, Region 7 Chair

Sathya Sai Bookshop

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

www.srisathyasaibookcentre.org.uk

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

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



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



BISSE

British Institute of Sathya Sai Education

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

Save the Date!

Saturday, October 3rd 2009
On which BISSE will be hosting its
National SSEHV Day
at Abbey Primary Community School
Leicester LE4 5HH
...you're invited!

'Love and Light'

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Love and Light SSSSO UK
Diary Dates 2009

Month	Date	Event
March	14th/15th	Regional Meetings
March	29th	SSEHV Parenting Day Aberdeen R8
April	18th	SSLTP Graduation Ceremony
April	19th	Region 7 'ROAD' Show
April	25th	UKCC Projects Meeting
May	6th	Easwaramma Day
May	9th	Buddha Purnima
May	31st	UKCC 2nd Quarter Meeting
June	6th	Joint Regions' 1,2,3 & 6 Multi-faith Day
June	7th	NWC Meetings
June	13th/14th	Regional Meetings
July	7th	Guru Purnima
July	11th	UKCC Projects Meeting
August	28th - 30th	National Sai Retreat
September	12th	UKCC 3rd Quarter Meeting
September	13th	NWC Meeting
September	19th	SSE National Teachers' Day
September	26th/27th	Regional Meetings