



A Wave of Song

Dear Readers, Sai Ram!

This is the first issue of 'Love and Light' to come out as late in the day as this. With '24-hour Global Devotional Singing' (*Akandha Bhajans*) taking place over this weekend it was felt that it would be easier to send this out on the 9th at 9pm! This does enable me to squeeze in some very topical comments.

On the 10th October the UKCC held a 'Vision weekend' in North Devon. Around 11 Council representatives, 4 spouses and 5 SSLTP candidates converged upon the wonderful Pickwell Manor house in its superb coastal setting. It was a difficult Friday evening drive for a few from London who hit accident-related traffic jams and finally arrived after midnight. We had the use of the whole building (it is divided into beautiful apartments) and managed to do our own catering in the big kitchen/dining room with its wood-burning stove that we kept burning most of the time for that cosy feeling that only a living flame can create. As well as tackling menus for around 20, where it was great to see everyone pitching in - peeling and chopping vegetables, we managed to have long working sessions looking to see where our Organisation should ideally direct itself over the next 5 years. We all shared aspects of what we would like to see implemented - even by reading out imaginary newspaper articles describing achievements and characteristics of the Organisation that might attract interest in the future.

All the key points were accumulated on flip charts. Then we combed through all the suggestions to group them into specific themes. A 'SWOT' analysis was then applied to the themes enabling us to identify the 'Strengths', 'Weaknesses', 'Opportunities' and 'Threats' related to the achieving of the goal. This whole process engendered intense, passionate and creative discussions and a cross-pollination of information, knowledge and experience that allowed us all to learn and gain insight from each other.

Ensuing from this came a distilled set of about 8 key action points for UKCC that we

shall further analyse in order to crystallise and identify the stages required to reach our objectives.

We worked hard and there was much fun and laughter as well. Happy work! We were intrigued to discover that it was an Indian gentleman and his wife who had done all the lovely conversions and had owned the Manor house for around 12 years - selling up early this year. However, when I left on Monday the new owners told me that the couple had held regular meditations and interfaith meetings in the room that had just been converted into the new kitchen/dining room!

The following Saturday, the 18th, drew around 250 devotees to the National Spiritual Day held in the 'Hariben Bachubhai Nagrecha Hall' in Leyton. Built and owned by a devotee, this is a lovely hall that was very generously offered free to us for the National Spiritual day. A very big "Thank you," goes from us all to the owners for their kindness. A similar "Thank you," goes to the Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust UK for kindly making a grant to the Organisation for the day to fund the Guest Speaker's flights to and from India. There is a write-up on the day further on in this newsletter.

On November 5th I had a very productive meeting with the Director of BISSE, the Head of Communications BISSE and the Central Co-ordinator. We discussed how we can work together as two legally separate entities and defined what we can offer each other in terms of reciprocal assistance.

The 23rd November deadline for the issue of 'The Handbook for Office Bearers' looms ever closer and the UKCC thank you all for your useful contributions based upon the last draft circulated to all Centres and Groups for feedback. It is immensely reassuring to receive many appreciative comments that indicate that the Handbook is a welcome addition to the Office Bearer's 'toolkit'.

This morning I was thrilled and privileged to experience, from 5.30am, five hours of the Milton Keynes 'Akandha Bhajans'. A very community-based feel pervades this six-year old - incredibly multi-faith - event that has a

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different group singing each and every hour. It was a pleasure to see the devotees from Bedford, Luton and MK Sai Centres so kindly looking after their guests and running the sessions so smoothly. Whilst there, we enjoyed wonderful 'Sai Bhajans', 'Islamic', 'Hare Krishna', 'Sikh' and 'Buddhist' performances. The last item we saw was the enchanting session of songs performed by the local SSE children – delightful! BBC 3 Counties Radio was broadcasting live (as it has done for the last two years) and interviewing the various different groups. How lovely it is to know that so many of you have taken part in this wonderful annual event, contributing to the purifying vibration of the sound waves that envelop the world for 24-hours.

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

Sincere Condolences...

It is with extreme sadness that we inform members of the SSSSO UK of the recent death of

Mr Mangat Ram Kundra

Mr Kundra was a Founder Trustee of the Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust UK and also served Sai Baba tirelessly in the United Kingdom by providing books and information to devotees in the 1980s, as well as participating in various projects. He set up and organised the running of - for at least a decade - the popular North Indian Canteen in Prashanti Nilayam.

He passed away on 6th November 2008
All our love, kind wishes and support goes to his family at this sad time.

**From the UKCC on behalf of SSSSO
UK**

National Conference 2009 Saturday 31st January 2009

This year's National Conference will be held on the 31st January 2009. As usual, it is hoped that as many Office Bearers as possible will attend but it is also entirely open to everyone in the Organisation.

Venue:

As the attendance numbers reach well over 300 each year (320 attended last year) it was felt that a change of venue would be good for 2009. We have searched for a venue that will offer us a larger, more spacious, hall with a greater seating capacity and one where parking does not present so many problems. Parking is a key issue because, at our last Free subscription to Love and Light: ukccnews@hotmail.co.uk

national conference in February this year, at least 10 cars had to be pulled out of the mud at the end of the day!

Finding a venue that meets all our criteria has not been easy – particularly when we endeavour to keep hall hire costs as low as possible. However we have now booked a venue that we think will serve us well. It is:

Broxbourne Civic Hall High Street, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 8BE

It has the capability of seating up to 550, as the main hall is very large. Therefore to maintain comfort we would very much like at least 400 of you to attend.

Guest Speakers

Following on from the wonderful reception you gave to Dr Thorbjorn and Mrs Marianne Meyer this year we feel delighted to announce that our Guest Speakers for 2009 will be:

Dr Samuel and Mrs Sharon Sandweiss!

'The Holy Man ...and the Psychiatrist' written by Samuel H. Sandweiss M.D. and first published in 1975, must be one of the most definitive and enthralling accounts of someone gradually coming to understand the enormity of the reality of Sathya Sai Baba. When the book, 'Spirit and the Mind' (1985) also by Dr Sandweiss, is added into the equation we can see that we are very privileged to have Dr and Mrs Sandweiss with us in 2009 and that their talks can only be of a very enriching nature. In next month's 'Love and Light' we shall include their biographies.

Conference 2009 will include a film of our 2008 activities and many other presentations relevant to our Organisation - both present and future.

Registration and Cost:

The Regional Chairs will circulate registration forms to your Centre and Group Chairpersons in the next 10 days.

We want to run a simple, cost-efficient conference and believe that if over 350 of you register and attend we can lower the £20 charge of previous years to £15. We know that this is something that you would really appreciate ...but it can't happen without your support.

We need you!

Your commitment and support will enable everyone attending to enjoy what we hope will be a marvellous day of celebration and looking to the future! Also, your immediate response in booking would help considerably...

**Rosemary Perry, on behalf of the
National Conference 2009 PG**

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

'Handbook for Office Bearers' Update

With Swami's Grace, this useful companion to the SSSSO UK's 'Organisation Manual' will be ready for distribution immediately after Swami's Birthday. It may be that it will be easiest to give these to Regional Chairs at our next UKCC meeting on 30th November, for distribution to the OBs in their Regions.

Current Office Bearers will be the first to receive these. Then it will be also made available through the Sathya Sai Bookshop. The charge made for the book will reflect its actual printing cost.

UKCC

National Spiritual Day 2008

The National Spiritual Day was held at Hariben Bachubhai Nagrecha Hall, in Leyton, East London, on the 18th October. The all-day event proved highly successful in delivering the message that was carried by the theme, "In Love We are ONE", to the packed audience.

The Guest Speaker, Dr Prithviraj Raval, lovingly called "Jagdish" by Sri Sathya Sai Baba, delivered a most touching, and spiritually elevating talk. He narrated some rare and wonderful personal experiences of growing up with Swami as a regular visitor to his childhood home in Bangalore. In this way the audience was taken back in time, giving it a special opportunity to imagine experiencing these extraordinary stories of the omnipresence and omnipotence of Swami first-hand for themselves.

The day itself began with Vedam chanting when one could not help visualising Swami entering the hall and giving his Darshan. Multi-faith prayers, representing all the major religions and creating the most divine vibrations in the hall, followed.

The event programme was packed with a variety of items which included: some most heart-rending Devotional songs, sung by the members of the National Female Youth Choir; a play performed by the children of the Leicester SSS School vividly highlighting moral values; some celestial music and song performed by 'Anahata' (Zita, Jyoti and Richard) from Wales; and more devotional songs by members of the National Male Youth Choir.

In between each item, a 'Thought of the Day' or personal account was given by each of the Regional Spiritual Coordinators, expanding on

Swami's teachings. Excellent MCs wove a thread amongst all the items.

The National Spiritual Day Planning Group is to be praised and thanked for organising this unique event that saturated everyone with 'Love, Love, Love,' and ameliorated the feeling of One-ness.

**Bharat Sisodia, R5 Spiritual Wing
Co-ordinator**

Region 1

Sathya Sai Baba's 82nd Birthday Celebration

Sunday 25th November 2008

Archbishop Lefranc School, Mitcham Road,
Croydon, Surrey CR9 3AS

3.00pm sharp

(Please be seated by 2.45pm)

Packed With a Variety Of Sai Offerings:

Prayers, Talks, Drama, Dance, Instrumental
Music, Devotional singing by adults, Youth
and SSE children

Regional Office Bearers' Training and Refresher Day 2008

Saturday 29th November

9.30am – 4.00pm

Venue: Sai Mandir, Effra Road, Wimbledon,
SW19 8PU

Registration: 9.00 am

This piloting Regional level training day is essential for Regional, Centre and Group Office Bearers i.e. both 'current' and 'shadow' and also for 'active' and interested members who may take leadership roles in the future.

All R1 SSE Teachers and Youth who are actively involved in their Centres are also encouraged to attend.

Many UKCC members will be present and available for questions.

R 1 SSE Teacher Training

Region 1 held a Basic SSE training session at Merton Centre's 'Sai Mandir' on Saturday 25th October. Besides being open to existing SSE teachers and coordinators, parents and would-be teachers were also encouraged to attend the all-day event.

The day started with an overview of SSE by Aunty Karunes Ratnasingham. She started by giving an overview of Swami's discourses on SSE, and stressed the point that certain discourses from 1969 would be especially useful to SSE teachers, as they dealt specifically with that topic. The motto "First be, next do ...then tell," was brought to mind as Karunes underlined the fact that SSE teachers are role models for their students, so must have discipline, lest the students detect

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any failings. During this talk, Baba demonstrated his presence, as a flower fell from his picture.

Chair of Region 1, Raj Rajasingam, covered the next session, on 'The Tripartite Relationship' amongst parent, teacher and child. As parents are the first 'gurus' of a child, and spend far more time with their children than any SSE teacher, their involvement and cooperation in the programme is vital. As per Sai Baba's analogy, the teacher may well be the front wheel of the bicycle - upon which the student rides, but the parents are the back wheels, providing support and motivation. Teachers must therefore utilise all opportunities to meet parents, especially through home visits and at parent/teacher meetings; and should develop a good, trusting, relationship with them.

Mona Mehta then proceeded to cover the topic of the structure of the SSE syllabus itself, including the points of emphasis at each of the different Group stages and explained how the teacher's role varies accordingly. The syllabus and its effect on a child's character were then expanded upon.

Each of the five teaching techniques was then covered individually, starting with a session on prayers by Mrs Vidhyu Narayan. She started by narrating a real-life incident: she had been looking for a suitable story for this segment and, just before she started, somebody gave her one - a response to a heartfelt prayer!

The purpose of prayer, according to Sai Baba is to establish God firmly in one's heart. The different types of prayer were covered, as well as some of the numerous reasons why people pray. It was pointed out that, in order to get God's grace, one-pointed concentration is needed. Suggested methods of teaching delivery and possible teaching aids were then provided.

The next technique covered was Silent Sitting, by Dr Chunmugavelu. It was stated that Swami introduced 'silent sitting' into SSE in his 3rd January 1971 discourse, recommending 5 minutes of both prayer and meditation. Thoughts were identified as contributing to losing energy, and children and adolescents undergo various forms of stress and worry, so Silent Sitting can be beneficial. Some guidelines and techniques were given, including hand positions and posture. However, it was also stressed that teachers too need to practice Silent Sitting!

Then Thana Yogendren covered a session on 'Storytelling', reminding us that this is an activity that is common to cultures throughout the world. Various guidelines were covered, but the main points were 'preparation' and 'presentation'. Finally, an interactive exercise was carried out, where participants had to devise a story based on certain pictures and incorporating the five human values - much to the amusement of those present!

Vidhyu then returned to cover the session on group devotional singing, proceeding to demonstrate this with her own melodious voice. Different types of song were covered, being 'Call and Response'; 'Unison'; 'Songs with Actions'; and 'Rounds'. It was commented that Sai Baba says, "The mouth is given to sing God's glory and the ears are given to hear God's glory". Devotional singing was also cited as an antidote to stress and an aid to developing self-confidence.

The final session was on 'Group Activities'. Here, Geetha Maheshwaran explained that such activities develop teamwork, are fun and are active - children also learn through action and touch. Examples were shown through photographs of just such activities that have taken place with children: 'Arts and Crafts', 'Role Plays'; 'Exhibitions' and 'Costume Plays'.

The day was summarised by the Regional SSE Coordinator, Yoges Saminathan. Though it had been billed as "basic" training he admitted that, despite his many years of experience as a SSE teacher, he had still learned many things from the day, no doubt echoing the sentiments of all present. It had been a truly informative day and, hopefully, a small contribution towards achieving Sai Baba's ideals of Sathya Sai Education in this, the year of the World Education Conference.

R1 Service Day

"Engage yourselves in service activity. Consider social service as service to God. This is the best way to earn God's Love. Love all and serve all. Your entire life will be sanctified thereby." - Sri Sathya Sai Baba

On Saturday 11th October, Region 1 held their annual Regional Seva Day, as part of Swami's 83rd Birthday Celebrations. Approximately 50 guests from Age Link, local residential homes, and senior citizen clubs were invited for an afternoon of refreshment and entertainment. All the guests were collected and dropped from their residence by around 12 volunteer drivers. The SSE children had prepared for the day a variety of

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entertainment programmes including a quiz and magic show and the popular 'Bingo' was put on by the youth. The guests thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon with many of them expressing their excitement about next year's activities.

As always we were all grateful to Swami to give us the opportunity to serve him and feel his presence throughout the day.

Raj Rajasingam, Chair Region 1

Sathya Sai School Leicester Sending Supermarket Vouchers Direct to Our School

The Sathya Sai School Leicester continues to receive large numbers of supermarket vouchers from many Centres and Groups – some of these I receive and forward onto the school. However, recently I failed to forward some of them and regret this very much, as the vouchers had become out of date. Therefore, I would like you all to send them directly to:

**Sathya Sai School Leicester
Shree Sanathan Centre
Belper Street
Leicester, LE4 6ED**

Celebration Evening

You are invited to a 'Celebration of Light', to be hosted by the staff, parents and pupils of our **Sathya Sai School in Leicester** on:

Saturday 20th December 2008

4.30 pm - 7.30pm

(followed by refreshments)

**Tilda Hall, Hildyard Road, off Ross Walk,
Leicester, LE4 5GG**

The programme will comprise drama, music, dance and poetry all on the theme of light in different religions and cultures. Guests will include The Lord Mayor of Leicester and Officials of the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation U.K. For further information please contact the school on 07929 660098 or email: sailimuk@yahoo.co.uk

Prabodh Mistry, SSSs Co-ordinator

SSLTP Group Projects:

Project OB1: The Office Bearer Role: A Transformational Tool?

"Office-bearers in this Organisation are leaders who bear the brunt themselves, guides who walk along the path they wish others to take...Sai is the inner inspiration and light for each worker."

(Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 14 no. 13)

This year, the cohort from the UK Sathya Sai Leadership Training Programme has been given the opportunity to pursue projects addressing important questions relating to

this Organisation. Our group has taken on the exciting task of investigating various aspects of the office-bearer position within the organisation. More specifically, this project seeks to find out why, in such a unique organisation, members hesitate to become office-bearers.

The answers to this question, as many people might imagine, are neither simple nor obvious. And so, much consideration and care has been put into the deliberations of this project. This article offers you an open and honest articulation of what the OB1 project team is doing.

Background

Like many other spiritual organisations, the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation of the UK (and around the world) faces the issue of sustainability: Can the unique vision and mission of this organisation be carried forward to future generations and to the wider context of humanity?

The Organisation flourishes because of the commitment of its members, and particularly, the office bearers, who work continuously and selflessly. However, it is often difficult to encourage people to take up the role of an office bearer. It's often an unstated dilemma: On the one hand, in a spiritual organisation such as the SSSSO, an office bearer position can be perceived as being an obstruction along the spiritual path rather than a vehicle for spiritual transformation; on the other hand, we have all encountered inspiring leaders, from all walks of life, who work tirelessly and happily for Swami's Mission. And so we wonder - if Swami has created the office bearer role, how can we make it a transformational tool? The two main questions this project endeavours to answer are:

1. What are the problems, myths and misperceptions related to the Office Bearer role?
2. How can members of the SSSSO UK be inspired to take up Office Bearer positions?

What are we in the process of doing?

The project team has created two questionnaires, which have been disseminated via email through Regional and Centre chairs. One questionnaire is for current Office Bearers (OBs) and the other is for non-OBs (active workers), asking a range of questions, covering all angles, from Office Bearer recruitment to perceptions of the Office Bearer role. We hope that respondents will be uninhibited and honest with their responses, as all of the questionnaires will remain confidential and undisclosed, except

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to the project team. We are extremely fortunate to have a member in the group from Zone 6, who is simultaneously conducting research within that respective area. What this means is that we can identify and share experiences across borders!

After analysing the questionnaires, we intend to identify problems and successes related to the OB role, unravel misperceptions about the role, and specifically identify ways in which the Organisation can encourage members to take on Office Bearer positions: all of the proposals will be as clear, thorough, and (where necessary) as practical as possible.

How you can help!

This project is only as valuable as the responses and feedback it receives from questionnaires. The Project OB1 team wholeheartedly requests that if you have received a questionnaire (either OB or non-OB) please fill it out and return it to:

OB1SSLTP@hotmail.com

If you have not received a questionnaire, or have any questions please contact us as soon as possible at the above email address.

We cannot emphasise enough the importance of your feedback and opinion, and we shall make all efforts to represent your thoughts and input. A very loving 'Thank you' to those who have filled out a form!

**Shilpa Sharma,
SSLTP Project OB1 Team member**

SSLTP Project:

Establishing a Code of Values

This is an organisation filled with inspired members. One of the challenges of this positive aspect is that the UKCC (and we suspect Regional and Centre level Office Bearers) receives many hundreds of project requests. You only need to look through 'Love and Light' in any month to see the diverse range and nature of work the Organization undertakes.

Objective

Like any organisation, the SSSSO UK has limited resources, both in terms of people, time and finance. Finding a means to allocate these resources optimally amongst the numerous project requests the UKCC receives, is the key aim of this project. We plan to establish a methodology that allows the UKCC and office bearers to rank projects based on what extent they enshrine the five human values, regardless of the projects size, activity or nature.

Goals

After conducting a literature review, our goal is to successfully create a set of assessment criteria to evaluate project adherence to the

five human values, and a methodology for implementing it. We plan to use a self-audit by applying the first cut of the criteria developed for this project, before having our assessment methodology reviewed by the UKCC. After any refinements, we hope to run a pilot, ideally sending our criteria to the teams at four Centres. Originally, we thought about Centres planning the November 23rd Birthday celebrations for example. Our findings from this pilot are to be presented to the UKCC.

Key outcomes

We would judge the project to have succeeded if (a) we design assessment criteria that the UKCC think is fit for purpose, (b) was tested in a pilot in which the feedback was positive and at least 50% of those sent assessment forms responded, (c) the analysis of the responses from the pilot demonstrated that projects could be ranked or evaluated and (d) that the UKCC use our findings to implement assessment criteria for all UK SSSSO projects.

Key risks to be aware of

Our planning has looked to identify and mitigate risks. Amongst these are (a) that we lack the skills and understanding of the human values to design appropriate assessment criteria that are sufficiently generic that they can be applied to all projects, (b) that our assessment criteria are perceived to be yet '...more bureaucracy from the Organisation' rather than a value-added tool and (c) that our criteria have some unintended consequences e.g. discouraging projects that are actually aligned with the goals of the UK SSSSO.

Neil Shah, SSLTP Project 'Establishing a Code of Values' Team Co-ordinator

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The SSSSO UK Website

is to be found on:

www.srisathyasai.org.uk

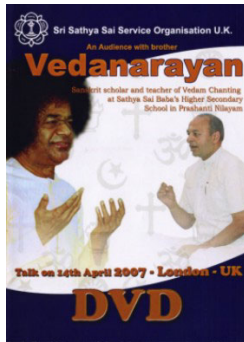
Sathya Sai Bookshop

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

www.srisathyaibookcentre.org.uk

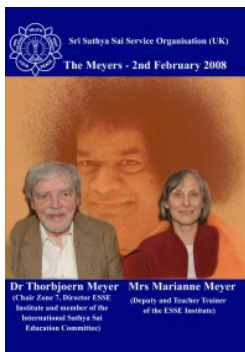
DVDs are often being compiled and released along with new interesting books.

Sri Vedanarayan - 'Vedam', Sanskrit scholar and teacher of Vedam chanting at Sathya Sai Baba's Higher Secondary School in Prashanti Nilayam and leader of the men's 'Nagasankirtan' at Prashanti Nilayam.



The talk was recorded on 14th April 2007 in London. Plus an interview with the UK National Chair recorded at the UKCC 'Vision Weekend' held in Gloucestershire in April 2007.

See *Love and Light: May 2007* for a write-up of his visit



Talks given by Dr Thorbjorn and Mrs Marianne Meyer, the keynote speakers at the SSSSO UK National Conference 2008: "Stepping Out into Action – Walking Forward in Practice", held on 2nd February 2008 in Stanmore, North London.

Plus interview with the UK National Chair on 3rd February 2008.

BISSE

British Institute of Sathya Sai Education

Information on the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Programme and BISSE's activities can be found on:

www.sathyaiaehv.org.uk

Love and Light SSSSO UK Diary Dates 2008		
Month	Date	Event
November	19th	Ladies' Day
November	23rd	Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Birthday
November	29th	Region 1 pilots: 'Regional Office Bearer Training and Refresher Day'
November	30th	UKCC Quarterly Meeting
2009		
Month	Date	Event
December	7th	NWC Meetings
December	12th/ 13th	Regional Meetings
January	4th	UKCC Meeting prep for National Conference
January	14th	Change of Office Bearers
January	31st	SSSSO UK National Conference
February	7th	NWC Meetings
February	14th/15th	Regional Office Bearer Conferences
March	1st	UKCC Quarterly Meeting
March	8th	NWC Meetings