

Love and Light

SSSSO (UK) – monthly update



9th September 2006

The Divine Call...

Dear Readers,

Sai Ram, August was yet another month of wonderful activities in Swami's fold: The CRB process was launched, the 'Isle of Wight Satsang' was a splendid day to remember - with the arrival of a double-decker bus full of R1 devotees on the ferry crossing, the 'All Night Bhajans' by the youth on the eve of Ganesh Chaturti literally inspired a mouse to stay all night, and just last weekend another spectacular day was held for National Teachers' Day. A lot of devotees from the UK received 'the call' to attend the auspicious 12 day Shiva Yagna which brought them back home energised.

September is already upon us with more Organisational national occasions lined up and many Centres and Groups will soon start preparations for Akandha Bhajans and our Beloved Bhagawan's birthday. I would urge you all to think about how you as an individual and a part of your Centre/Group can make Swami have a wonderful Birthday, what is it that pleases HIM on HIS birthday and during Akandha Bhajans...?

Love & Light

Shobhna Patel, UK Chair

National Ladies' Day

'Giving Wings to Our Hearts',

Nr Dunstable, Bedfordshire, Sat. 14th October 2006

Although application forms, flyers and informative letters have been circulated around all the Regions to Centres and Groups, there are still many places available for this event. Our keynote speakers are all set to inspire us with their talks: Human rights campaigner, community activist, and author, Zerbanoo Gifford, is acknowledged as a pioneer for Asian women in public life. She has stood three times for parliament, and is described as a "political fireball." Founder of the Asha Foundation and the author of many books, including: 'The Golden Thread', 'Asian Experiences in Post-Raj Britain', 'Dadabhai Naoroji: Britain's first non-white Member of Parliament', 'Thomas Clarkson, and the Campaign Against the Slave Trade', 'Asian Presence in Europe'; and 'Celebrating India's 50 Year Anniversary', which accompanied a television series. In 2004, Zerbanoo was awarded a fellowship from NESTA (National Endowment of Science, Technology and Arts). With the belief that women can bring stability and peace to the world, Zerbanoo has dedicated her fellowship to connecting influential and inspiring

women worldwide. She is about to have a book published on the theme of the world's inspirational women. She will be talking to the Ladies Day conference on this theme, defining female inspiration and answering questions from delegates. In interview, Swami told her to work with women. Just recently, Zerbanoo received the ZTV Award for 'Woman of the Year 2006'.

Sandra Levy will be speaking on 'The Divine Feminine' bringing together diverse threads from psychology, ancient wisdom and the spiritual path to develop her theme. She will also facilitate a workshop for us. The day will include a variety of items to nourish, inspire and recharge the delegates in a relaxed atmosphere. Hurry and please apply via your Centre or Group Chair!

Rosemary Perry, National Vice-Chair

Region 1

A Pilgrimage Across the Sea to the Isle of Wight

Seventy-five Spiritual aspirants from Region 1 embarked on a journey across the sea to the annual Isle of Wight Satsang. The journey started with 3 Aums and the chanting of the Gayatri mantra in a luxury double-decker bus. The singing of Bhajans throughout the journey elevated the tempo of the Pilgrimage. A packed programme of musical items and inspiring speeches were well received by the audience. The melodious singing by Region 1 youth uplifted the programme. After the Satsang we all relaxed at the seashore breathing the unpolluted sea breeze.

On our return journey Swami had His own plans. Since the Maha Yagna began in Prashanti, the devotees in the UK were advised by our national Spiritual coordinator to join in with the Yagna by chanting the Gayatri 108 times every day at 9:00pm. Swami delayed our crossing by two hours so that we reached Cheam just before 9:00pm. As soon as we arrived we all joined in chanting the Gayatri and the day of pilgrimage was fully filled with energy and love. All the devotees who went on this pilgrimage enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and are looking forward to next year.

Keith Sithsabesan, Chair, Region 1

Krishna Janmashtami Celebration

Wimbledon Sai Centre celebrated Krishna Janmashtami with an inspirational programme on Sunday the 13th of August. The event commenced with Vedic Chanting, multi-faith prayers and uplifting songs, these were then followed by a presentation on stage by the Youth and Group 4 students on "Mama Dharma - One's Own

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duty". Their creative adaptation of Arjuna's dilemma at the battlefield of Kurukshetra was both moving and thought provoking. The interactive dialogue brought the scene to life and applied it to our modern day challenges. The youth's understanding of Krishna's message to Arjuna, coupled with the powerful Slokas, music and dialogue, emphasised how much commitment had gone into producing this original presentation. The main message of doing one's duty whilst surrendering to the Lord was very clear. All in all they did an excellent job of translating and relating the main messages from the ancient Bhagavad Gita to the current day society and way of living. They were a credit to Swami's mission.

Leela Sivaloganathan-Jones, Chair, Wimbledon Centre

Region 2

Second Successful Spiritual Boat Trip

Bank Holiday Monday, 28th August 2006

What could be better than spending some loving, blissful time with your family on an August Bank Holiday? Well, this is exactly what approximately 108 members of the Sai family in Region 2 embarked upon...together, for a soul-stirring journey down the River Thames.

A lovely drive through London, passing the immaculate (now clean(s)ed!) Houses Of Parliament, the majestic stature of Big Ben chiming away at midday whilst witnessing passengers "boarding" the London Eye, brought us to our departure point, Lambeth Pier. There the Thames Cruise Boat was swaying gently and being prepared for a journey of a different kind.

The atmosphere was set, Swami's presence could be felt as the journey began...3 Aums were powerfully bellowed out as the waves could be heard swishing against the sides of the boat...ssshhh...with a gentle breeze swaying and birds dancing with delight. The bliss intensified as the chanting of the Gayatri mantra began, following Swami's delicate yet firm tone on a melodious CD. As we sailed by the Tower of London and passed Canary Wharf, the vibrations of the chanting were being sent through the water out into the community. Prayers for Love and Light spread throughout London to energise everyone and fill them with peace and bliss. Echoing through the serenity they culminated in an extremely powerful meditation.

A change of tempo was now brought about when the rendering of uplifting bhajans started...harmonious sounds intertwined with the fast beat of the tabla and the splashing of the water in synchrony with the rhythm of the dholak!! Magical moments were felt as we journeyed back to our mooring point whilst feasting on a sumptuous blessed meal provided on the Lower Deck with some brave souls relishing the warmth of the Sun, gentle breeze, and occasional splashes outside! The River Thames provided us with the sacredness of the Ganges

for a few joyous hours enabling us to retain from it all the goodness and joy that we had prayed for, for one and all. A beautiful and blissful Bank holiday...

Anila Kumar Modi, Region 2 Youth Co-ordinator

Region 6

Love and Light on the Isle of Wight

Swami's "Isle of Light" played host to almost two hundred attending another wonderful Satsang on Saturday 12th August. Ryde Town Hall witnessed an uplifting and enlightening day on the subject of "Living with Sai" with inspiring speakers and joyous music and singing. A double-decker bus had brought along more than seventy devotees, including a large number of youth, from Region 1 and this, combined with the wonderful energy and decor of the hall itself, created a vibrant environment for mixing, sharing experiences and making new contacts.

Ian MacLean in his delightful manner introduced the various speakers and led short Bhajan sessions throughout the day. He also gave a rendition of a Bob Dylan song "With God on our side", which invited reflection. Rajes Selvakumar shared some of his own personal experiences of "Living with Sai", which touched the heart, and talked of the transformation in store for each of us, as we had "crossed the water". Yogesh Patel then gave an informative and engaging talk on the principles and practical aspects of Vastu, the sacred Indian geometry. Anna-Maria Sacchini completed the morning session with a heart stirring performance on the sitar, accompanied by readings from Rabindranath Tagore.

The afternoon began with some beautiful singing by Region 1 youth to the accompaniment of a film on Swami. This is always a powerful combination! Swami's loving gaze seemed to jump out of the screen and pierce the heart of the viewer. Another film by Mathan later cleverly set two pieces of music to film (of Swami), interpreting what Swami might be singing to us and us to him. Rita Chudasama then shared her personal experiences of "Living with Sai" and spoke of the way in which she and her husband had surrendered to Swami their fears surrounding the difficult birth of their son and how Swami had seen them through it – a truly inspiring and uplifting story.

During lunch, birthday cakes, egg-less and beautifully made by Rosemary and Philippa, had been dedicated to Swami for His 80th birthday and to Pat Hathaway for her 90th. Pat was unfortunately unable to attend the day, but the fruits of her labours over the last 16 years in founding and organising the Satsang were evident for all to appreciate. With her devotion in Swami, she has created an annual event of great transformational value. May that energy be carried forward to the future as a true example of "Living with Sai"!

Kevin Cooper, Vice Chair, Region 6

Sathya Sai Schools

Sathya Sai School Leicester

An article based on the Open Day at the school, held on 24 June 2006, has appeared in the monthly e-journal 'Heart to Heart'

(Volume 4, Issue 08, August 2006):

http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_04/01AUG06/Leicester_saiSchool.htm

Sathya Sai School St Andrews

The school has been in temporary accommodation for the last 12 months. With the grace of Swami, it has just secured access to Kemback Primary School for the next three years, on a rental basis. Since acquiring the keys on around 18 August 2006 many of the parents and staff have been working hard to clean and paint the new premises, bring out all the education materials from storage and set them up in the new school to start the new academic year on Monday 4th September.

If you would like to know more about the Sathya Sai schools and how you can help, please call the National Sathya Sai Schools Co-ordinator, Dr Prabodh B Mistry, 01235 202660 or by email:

prabodh.mistry@gmail.com

Prabodh Mistry, Sathya Schools Co-ordinator

Region 8

Open Day at Sathya Sai School St Andrews

An Open Day was held at the Sathya Sai School St. Andrews on Saturday 2nd of September to celebrate its move to new premises at Kemback, about 8 miles south-west of St. Andrews. Devotees from all over Scotland attended. They were shown round the school, and met some of the parents and teachers, and also some of the children. After lunch, a meeting was held for Regional Office Bearers, and Centre and Group Chairs. Then, from 3.00 pm to 4.00 pm, bhajans were sung in the main classroom of the school. Singers from all the Centres sang, mainly English devotional songs, and Aarati was performed by the head-teacher, Leslie Ann Patrick, with her three children. The classroom was filled to capacity with over fifty people. All the decorations and sound system were transported from Glasgow to set up for the singing. The different Centres prepared food, snacks and blessed food. After a stirring and amazing speech by Chairperson of the School's Board of Directors, Mr. Som Bahanda, refreshments were served.

Ram Konar, Vice Chair, Region 8

SSSSO UK Bookshop

The bookshop has a **NEW WEBSITE**.

Please visit it at:

www.srisathyasaibookcentre.org.uk

SSE

National Teachers' Day 2006

'Lead Me; Every Moment of My Life'

Another year has gone by and National Teachers' Day came round again on Sunday September 3rd, fulfilling all expectations. The premise behind this year's theme 'Lead Me; Every Moment of My Life', was to pioneer Bhagavan's doctrines of letting Him guide us throughout our lives, extending it in such a way that we teachers incorporate leadership ourselves into SSE and take ownership of the work we do. This could take the form of taking on extra roles within SSE, leading children through various activities in lessons, volunteering to take the lead in extra-SSE activities. The list is endless, as long as we bear in mind that we must lead and be willing to be led by Bhagavan. As our National SSE Co-ordinator, Sharmila Parikh, said, there are around 6 billion people in the world, of whom only around 30 million are privileged enough to say they are Sai devotees. Of these, a small fraction is teachers; so we have an even more sacred and golden task of looking after His children and nurturing them.

The programme was started with the lighting of the lamp followed by a specially written theme song, a visual message on DVD from Bhagavan on SSE teaching. The participants were then led through a Jyoti (Light) meditation session by Vidyulata Narayan entitled 'Bow to the light within'. This acknowledged the light that is forever guiding us from within and put the participants in the right frame of mind for the rest of the day.

As further motivation for the teachers and a reminder of the good work they do as part of the SSE wing, the ex-SSE students themselves, from each of the Regions, throughout the day, presented 'glimpses' of their lives. These mini-presentations emphasised the fact that SSE nurtures children, thus allowing them to develop into upright youths and adults who carry Bhagavan's message in their lives and within the Organisation. As one student poignantly put it, "We need you teachers because without our Gurus, we wouldn't be where we are now".

If teachers are to lead in SSE, there needs to be a sadhana or spiritual practice which has to be introduced in a disciplined way, and this is where our keynote speaker dear Mr Ajit Popat came in. If anyone can give instruction on how to implement spiritual sadhana in his or her lives, it is he. As a shining example of how this is done, Mr Popat made it very clear that there is no room for doubt in Bhagavan's mission. As someone who speaks uncompromisingly and directly, he asked us, "When will we be ready to let Swami lead us?" It wasn't a question of whether we could do it, but whether we would do it. We are in the presence of a living God, not merely praying to past Avatars, hence the road for us pilgrims is much more difficult. As Swami says, "To

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whom much is given, much is expected..." Sadhana is about sacrificing and coming out of our comfort zone if Bhagavan is to use us as His instruments. Do we stand up and accept His challenge, or do we give the chance to someone else more willing and more able? He also inspired the teachers to be 'reachers' in order to reach each individual child with Swami being the actual teacher behind each of us.

After this stirring motivation focused on the individual, the teachers were then motivated as a group by Mr Rajasingam who talked about 'Moving Forward Together'. He said that for the SSE Wing to succeed, the students, teachers and parents all need to work closely with each other. It is often said that there is not enough time to conduct SSE lessons in the Centre, however instead of adding more hours to a lesson in the Centre, the essence of SSE should be continued in the home, thus automatically lengthening the child's learning. One way of involving parents is through Sathya Sai Parenting Study Circles (SSPSCs) within Centres and Groups. The benefits are that the parents know what is being taught in SSE and they can share their experiences with each other. If this forum is implemented, then the child can get maximum benefit from SSE both in the Centre and in the home.

The highly motivational and energetic Mr Sri Kandiah, renowned for his excellent motivational work within the SSLTP, kept with the learning theme of the day with an interactive session entitled "Lead Me..." As the theme of the day was to encourage teachers to take a leading role within the organisation, Sri spoke of the impact of leaders in today's society and how teachers could work independently as leaders. The important characteristics of a leader were emphasised and illustrated how SSE teachers could practically incorporate these leadership values and traits within their role as teachers. In explaining the difference between management and leadership, he said that "Management is doing things right, and Leadership is doing the right thing."

The interaction was done via a series of seemingly basic questions, for which the audience gave a range of insightful answers. As one teacher said, we must "practise before we teach"! Sri's talk concluded with Bhagavan's well known quote for teachers, "Be, then Do, then Tell" which was echoed by the author John Adair who said, "To be, is the beginning and the end of leadership."

Light entertainment was provided by Region 2 who showed unity in practise by performing a play written by the children of Region 7 pilot SSE school, called 'Lift of Faith'. This funny play showed simply how the occurrence of taking a lift brought together members of different religions through an unusual circumstance.

The teachers were then in for yet another treat in the form of Dr. Mahesh Narayan, a figure very well known in the Organisation for his entertaining, down-to-earth, yet poignant presentations. His mission today was to

speaking to the teachers on how to 'Study to be Steady', referring particularly to study circles and how the integral part of making them successful was to read Sai literature and more importantly put the content into practice. Simply sticking to the SSE curriculum resources is not enough if teachers are to be well equipped in conveying Bhagavan's teachings to His students. Dr. Mahesh started off by posing the enigma as to why devotees read so many different books when there is already a vast collection of Sai literature ready to be digested. He compared it to 'having butter in the hand, yet still looking for ghee'. How lucky we are to have all the words of the current Avatar readily available, compared to relying on the New Testament or Vedas most of which have been lost and forgotten through time. He explained how simply reading the immense volume of Sai literature was not enough and to be true beacons of Bhagavan's mission we must put some effort into actually studying the words. As Dr. Mahesh succinctly put it, "Whenever we have a problem or a question that needs answering, the answer can always be found in a book..." This is Bhagavan's most accessible method of communicating with us.

By mid-afternoon, it was time to rejuvenate the attendees with a very enjoyable and competitive quiz hosted by Sister Pravina Patel of Region 4. Cleverly titled "Master the Mind" it was a fun quiz that tested the teachers on their spiritual - as well as geographical - knowledge! This led to the conclusion of the day with evaluations and a vote of thanks to all those involved with the day. The biggest thank you went to Bhagavan who was there with His entourage in the form of all the speakers who came to inspire, encourage and motivate teachers to implement leadership in all the facets of the SSE wing.

Durga Srikanthan, Sai Spiritual Education Wing

Diary Dates

National Sathya Sai Parenting Facilitators Conference:

Sunday October 8th 2006

National Ladies Day: Saturday October 14th 2006

National Youth Satsang with Sai Students (Open to all Youth): Sunday October 15th

National Spiritual Day: Sunday 29th October 2006

Forthcoming SSEHV courses are:

Coventry - Intensive Foundation Training: 1st-3rd, 8th-10th & 29th October,

Contact: Michele White 0116 233 9455

North London - Mondays from September,

Contact Subita Mahtani 07767 822 424

"All good things have to be done the hard way. Ease and elevation cannot go together. Hardships keep one always alert and in trim. They reveal hidden resources of skill and intelligence; they toughen fortitude and deepen the roots of faith." Sathya Sai Baba



SPECIAL FEATURE

My reflections on the Athi Rudra Maha Yagna ...

The 'Athi Rudra Maha Yagna' was performed in the divine presence of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba from the 9th to the 20th August 2006 in Prashanti Nilayam for the prosperity and welfare of humanity everywhere. This is the first time that a Yagnam (sacrificial fire) of this kind has ever been performed in Prashanti Nilayam. A small group of us were fortunate to spend a few days in the divine presence during this unique event.

As He has said, without His Will, no one could even visit Him for His Darshan. Our departure from London Heathrow was on the 10th August; the day airports in the UK came to a standstill because of a terrorist threat. We were quite anxious and earnestly praying for His Grace. In answer to our prayers, miraculously, our flight was one of the very few flights that were allowed to fly out.

On arrival, not surprisingly, Prashanti Nilayam was in a festive mood. For the occasion, the Sai Kulwant hall was tastefully and traditionally decorated. Indeed, it was a treat for everyone's eyes; my thoughts went back to the stories narrated in the scriptures and how the Yagnas of this magnitude were the envy of gods and goddesses. Eleven Homa Kundas (the place where the sacred oblations are offered) were built in the central passage of the Hall. The borderline was almost entirely made of "coconut tree items". Pillars that had a huge pot at the base and a first tier of coconuts supported it. The second tier consisted of areca nut bundles, followed by holy ferns and then coconut frond decorations. The fronds had also been intricately interwoven to form a fabric sheltering the whole area. Yellow coconuts with little yellow areca nuts hanging below adorned the whole area. You could see birds flying to the areca nuts and biting them with a flurry of dust falling to the ground. Holy water from 100 Indian rivers had been placed in one corner for use during the worship.

A one metre high Lingam surrounded by three smaller Lingams had been placed in front of the first Homa Kunda. Bhagawan on the first day of the Yagna had created a third eye in gold that was stuck to the Lingam. A Lingam is basically a representation of Creation. When the Lingam is worshipped, one is symbolically thanking God for all the bounties Creation is filled with, like air, water, land etc. and the Sun that gives us energy, and so on.

The chanting of the Rudram commenced at 5am early morning. There is a long-standing traditional belief that chanting the *Rudram* confers benefits of various kinds.

For example, chanting it a few times grants freedom from disease, worldly difficulties, etc. As the number of the repetition increases, one is supposed to get progressively more and more benefits but at some stage, the benefits switch from being worldly to spiritual, the culmination being becoming one with God. When eleven priests undertake the chanting eleven times around eleven sacrificial fires for eleven days i.e. a total of 14,641 chants, the Yagnam achieves Athi Rudra Maha Yagnam status.

Bhagawan was welcomed at around 7am by the sonorous chanting of the Rithwiks (priests), the Nadaswaram troupe of musicians, the blowing of the Conch and the sounding of the Gong. He came in the car giving Darshan to the thousands packed in the Hall. He used to then sit in the sofa and witness the proceedings until about 10am.

The afternoon chants commenced at 2pm. Bhagawan used to come at about 3pm after which the evening programme used to commence. This generally began with speeches from eminent scholars followed by Bhagawan's Divine Discourse; the evening finished with a heart rending musical / singing performance provided either by well known Indian artists or students of the music college. On average, we used to be blessed with 6 to 7 hours of Darshan every day!

Bhagawan's Discourses were always thought provoking. One of these related to the Vedas:

"Vedas today have been neglected. Veda is the richest of all. It makes no differences of caste and creed. (At this point Swami called out two students who were from USA and Lithuania and told them to chant the Sri Suktam.) Swami's decision is that everyone in all the countries must chant the Vedas. It is not to be limited to the Brahmins and India alone.

There are people from places like Iran here who chant the Vedas. Veda is the relief and remedy for all and not only for getting power or children. Fortunate are those who learn the Vedas and unfortunate are those, who, having learnt it, do not make efforts to spread and teach it to others. I am sending my students as my emissaries to spread this knowledge. (Swami now made the two students chant the Rudram) do not neglect the Vedas. They contain the mysteries of nature in all totality."

We returned home on the 17th August; it was certainly an experience that I will cherish for years to come.

Kiran Patel, National Spiritual Coordinator