

Love and Light!

SSSSO (UK) - monthly update



9th September 2009

Euro Stars!

European Sai Zones Conference, Athens, Greece, September 5/6th 2009

Dear Readers, Sai Ram!

You will have probably noticed that this month's 'Love and Light' did not go out today at 9am but at 9pm. This unprecedented act has been to allow me the opportunity to transpose my handwritten account of the European Sai Zones Conference into the newsletter, as I arrived home last night at 11.30pm from Athens. I wrote it on Monday 7th at my hotel, where I stayed for two nights after attending the joint conference for Zones 6, 7 and 8 – with the SSSSO UK as a guest from Zone 9.

The conference was held in a wonderful complex, set in the heart of a bio-dynamic, organic, farm abundant with olive groves, vegetable beds, fruit trees, flowers and vines. Known as 'Sai Prema' and built and owned by a lovely Greek devotee, Manos Karakostas, this spiritual oasis is situated about 50 kms south east of Athens. The smiling faces of Spyros and his son Leftheris met me on Thursday night at the airport. How instant the connection is with Sai brothers and sisters of all nations! We immediately connect at the heart level and are open and completely without defences or affectation with each other.

With the conference starting on Saturday morning it left Friday free of any commitments and gave me a chance to acclimatise to 30+ deg. C and to reacquaint myself with fellow delegates as they arrived. The SSSSO UK was invited to this conference last year, for the first time. Then, all five delegates from the UKCC were overwhelmed by the sentiments repeatedly expressed by their fellow delegates that, "Now Europe is complete!" This was often said with tears of joy that made us feel like a long-lost branch of a family that had been found and reunited with the family tree. This year that same sentiment was just as profuse and moving. Although the conference was held in Greece, the German Sai organisation took on the majority of the delicious catering for the 65+ delegates from 22 countries. Our Greek brothers and sisters made all the

accommodation arrangements and organised transportation for everyone from and to the airport.

The Zonal Coordinators: Alida Parkes, Zone 6, Marianne Meyer, acting Coordinator for Zone 7; and Steen Piculell, for Zone 8; all liaised and arranged the substance and format of the conference. Just a couple of days before the conference I learned that Dr. Michael Goldstein, Chair of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation and Chair of the Prashanti Council would be there! Also with him were to be the Chair of the International Sathya Sai Education Committee, Mr Kalyan Ray, and our very own Shitu Chudasama, International Coordinator of the Sathya Sai Youth. This was indeed a wonderful surprise and a great opportunity for me to be present and hear from Dr. Goldstein the overview of arrangements for the 9th World Conference in Prashanti Nilayam next year, and to understand more about the invitation to all the Zones to come, zone by zone, to Puttaparthi in pilgrimage to Swami in his Abode of Highest Peace. As our Council will address these matters formally for the first time on Saturday 12th September at our 3rd Quarterly meeting, this was to be a real gift, to be able to share in discussions held on this important topic by the three European Zones. The conference began, quite rightly, with a period of silence in memory of the late Dr. Thorbjørn Meyer who died on this year. Last year, Thorbjørn was actively leading this conference with his deep wisdom and loving presence.

Throughout the weekend there were many, many, moments that showed how greatly the loss of his physical presence was missed and how much he is still loved, though no longer with us in the form we knew him to be.

Litsa Anagnostou, the National Coordinator for Greece welcomed us all warmly and lovingly and with lovely words from Swami. She spoke of the great honour it was to have the head of the SSSWF with us and invited him to give the Opening address.

Dr. Goldstein began by very sincerely thanking all the office bearers for their time, dedication and perseverance. He said that he had observed the same people over many years, working hard. He commented that he could see change, transformation and even

light within the faces of these people and knew that they had faced many tribulations in the course of their service. I must say, that I, too, had the same feeling about Dr. Goldstein (not having seen him since January 2007). Speaking honestly, I have been a little terrified of him! However, he was immensely soft and the wisdom that he has had for a great number of years, I'm sure, came across in the most inspirational and loving, caring, manner.

He then really flowed in a very inspirational way, succinctly summarising the challenge that men and women face on their unique paths towards (hopefully) reaching self-realisation. He made a correlation between the 'Space-Time Continuum' of Dr. Albert Einstein, and the 'Divinity-Man Continuum' that we are immersed in. He spoke of how we mostly deny who we really, really, are and elect to become what we are not, in the support of the pervasive illusion of Maya. He described the 'Paradox' that we choose to dwell within and not the 'Paradise' that really is. This, we do through our small-minded approach and by clinging to things that do not, in reality, matter at all. He spoke of the enormity of the commitments that face us in swami's 85th birthday year! However, he pointed out that although we have 'our hands full' it should be our hearts that are 'full' in this process.

He said that rules are essential in our organisation – as in every such group of people – but they must not become heavy bureaucracy. It is important to be 'efficient', he said, as that is a very useful skill – but it is more important to be 'effective'. This is an interesting distinction.

He said that the religious rites of ALL are sacred not just, for example, Aarathi. He advised that the very highest church or temple (...or mosque or synagogue) is to be found within our own heart.

He emphasised how very individual the spiritual path is for each of us, how different our external needs are and that there is no 'one way' for an individual to reach self-realisation. He said that Sai Baba Centres must have a universal interface with society. He said that the chanting of Vedas does not have to be an automatic part of a Centre programme. In fact, if they are chanted it may be better on a separate occasion. In order to sing the Vedas one needs to have a complete understanding of them, and preferable be taught by a master. It is no use if they result in being a cacophony of sound as they should be for the upliftment of others.

Dr. Goldstein went on to speak about the various planned events for next year and gave everyone the opportunity to ask questions for their own clarification. He assured everyone that the Pre-world conferences (there may be more than one in each Zone) would not be a "business as usual affair"! He spoke of how the organisers would really do everything possible to accommodate all the different pilgrimage groups from each Zone. He suggested that each country seek to find the quiet devotees who may be the 'hidden jewels' and might be identified to come forward to be given some confidence building and possibly become new leaders.

He spoke about true spiritual principles and accountability. Throughout all his talks, Dr. Goldstein alluded often to 'authenticity' of being. The subject came up regarding a cultural performance that is requested from each Zone. He advised strongly, and with some humour, "Please do not bring the Hindu Gods from Europe!"

He emphasised the need for nurturing the culture of the country of any Sai organisation and spoke of the unnatural and impossible practice of trying to plant a tree from one part of the world in another part of the world unsuited to it. Everyone gained much from the question and answer session, which he gave us in his generous, almost 2-hour, session.

Everyone then broke into separate Zone-based discussion groups. There was a long session before lunch, held under the lovely octagonal meeting area outside, that is completely shaded by leafy wisteria. And there was another fruitful session after lunch. Luckily, I managed to go to both a Zone 6 and to a Zone 7 session. (Zone 8 joined in with Zone 7.)

Dr. Goldstein made himself available in these sessions and stepped in, often, to clarify or advise where it was needed.

Throughout the weekend many varied meetings took place: there were meetings of Zonal Coordinators and their Central Coordinators; meetings regarding the European Institute of Sathya Sai Education and SSEHV – it really was a heavy working weekend for people from all over Europe to be in one place and meet face-to-face, in their various capacities.

When the afternoon Zone sessions were over, those who had meetings went off to them, but many of us had the great opportunity to chat and exchange experiences – such an enriching thing to do.

In the evening, after dinner, the film of our 'SSSSO UK Activities 2008', created by

Mathan Arulvel, our NYC, and first shown at our National Conference in January 2009, was shown in the large airy room that is also the place where Devotional Singing and Suprabhatam took place each morning at 6.30, so ably led by our dear friend and brother, Georgios Bebedelis. Everyone who saw the film enjoyed it and its musical score, immensely, and many people came and spoke to me about how it moved them.

Sunday morning gave us all the treat of hearing Mr Kalyan Ray speaking very sweetly about Sathya Sai Education and taking us to the very heart of it. His talk contained, near the end, a wonderful surprise! There is to be a new Sathya Sai institute formed in Europe! It will be the 'South Europe Institute of Sathya Sai Education' and will be administered by the long-established European Institute of Sathya Sai Education. Dr. Thorbjørn Meyer set this great initiative in motion before he died. He was also responsible for organising the training of a team of skilled advocates of SSEHV in Europe who will assist the establishing of this new Institute. Mrs Marianne Meyer will be the Director of it.

Shitu Chudasama then spoke, with a PowerPoint presentation, and highlighted the activities of the Young Adult Wing (18 - 35 yr. olds) in various Sai Organisations around the world. He has attended a large number of conferences on many continents. He emphasises that young adults should collaborate and cooperate with their elders and realise that they, too, will be elders one day! The images of smiling young adults in his presentation were testament to their spiritual practice and their enthusiasm for life and for service to those around them.

After a break, each of the Zones made a presentation. Although I had been asked to make a presentation on behalf of the UK, I was surprised when they ran backwards from Zone 9 to Zone 6! Sadly, I did not complete my presentation in my time – owing to not managing my time properly, and to dwelling longer than I had planned, upon the details of our newly acquired building in Leicester. Everyone was very excited at the news! My ego decided to punish me by making me feel very annoyed with myself over my time-management as I did not give myself the opportunity to present the full picture but only half a story...

I derived much inspiration from all the presentations that followed; in fact some moved me to tears.

Dr. Goldstein kindly closed the conference with gratitude and more words of

encouragement. After another superb meal of fresh and beautiful dishes, some people began to depart while some went to more meetings. The remainder had fun chatting. I quickly packed as a coach trip had been arranged to leave at four in the afternoon, taking all remaining delegates into Athens to visit the newly opened 'New Acropolis Museum'. Replicating the proportions and ascending layers of the Acropolis (fully visible alongside, through vast windows) this is a unique and innovative building. Our Greek brothers and sisters had also organised a wonderful, professional Guide for us, in the form of a very enthusiastic woman who spoke superb English and brought key exhibits to life by describing their unique place in the unfolding of both the historical life of Athens and in its development and contribution to what we consider 'Classical Art' today.

The approach to the Museum is on thick glass flooring that allows you to see the 2,000-year-old archaeological findings beneath. We literally walked over the city foundations as they were at the time of the cusp of Christianity's emergence.

Replicating the ancient practice of burying small versions of everyday utensils in the threshold of a new home, the museum's designers had incorporated this feature (again, set under a glass floor) into the entrance to the Museum. We looked down, just a few inches below the glass to see a shallow depression in fine sand filled with delightful little cups, bowls and jugs from one of antiquity's doorways, offered, yet again, for a blessing of plenty from the Gods to abundantly sustain those who enter the Museum.

As we wound our way round and up through the layers, our journey was mirrored alongside us on the Acropolis itself.

Of course, when we came to the section where the superb Parthenon frieze (that is the series of 92 exquisitely carved panels from which Lord Elgin removed the 15 panels that are now known as 'The Elgin Marbles') is displayed, I was much teased and encouraged to personally bring back the Elgin Marbles! Indeed, it is very embarrassing to see a great tranche of empty display niches in the great run of carved stone slabs, where the letters: 'BM' show that these are held in the British Museum... Since the argument from Britain, always put forward, is that the 'BM' is preserving these quintessentially Greek treasures from the ravages of erosion and pollution ...there is now no substance to that argument as the niches exist for these carvings to be restored in their correct

sequence in an environmentally perfect atmosphere. Very embarrassing... How wonderful it would be if our Prime Minister could legislate for them to be returned to where they belong - and what a humanitarian and loving act that would be!

As I wheeled my case away from the coach, towards the Akropolis Metro station, I looked back and saw sweet people boarding the coach to return to Sai Prema. My heart was bursting with both happiness from my time spent with them and sadness at leaving them. As Juliet said to Romeo, 'Parting is such sweet sorrow...' *Efcharisto* to Zones 6, 7 and 8!

Mini-Retreats

You will read in the section on Region 3 of a lovely 'mini-retreat' that I attended over the Bank Holiday weekend in Suffolk. It was delightful. A similar mini-retreat was held in Cornwall where Arthur and Poppy Hillcoat were able to speak. If the economic downturn continues to exert pressure on us all in terms of needing to cut down on expenditure and sacrifice certain treats, then perhaps more modestly priced retreats like this can take place around the country, bringing people from the same area together, deepening our spiritual practice together and creating a wonderful sense of Satsang?

Love and Light,
Rosemary Perry, National Chair

National SSE Teachers' Day 2009

"My Life is My Message" Sunday 20th September

Windsor and Maidenhead Town Hall,
St Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1RF

Stop Press!

Phyllis Krystal, other speakers and activity facilitators are looking forward to meeting and sharing their experiences and skills with as many of you as possible.

There are places still available, so please register today and encourage other members of your centre to also come and benefit.

The day will re-energise, enthuse and inspire you for the academic year ahead.

Registration is from 8:45am and the day will conclude at 4:30pm.

Lunch will be provided.

Do come and join us and 'Make your life your message!'

For further information please email:
lakshimi@thehaven.plus.com

Lakshimi Puvanendran,
National SSE Coordinator

YOUTH

Youth Sadhana Day: 'The Power of Discrimination: Its practice in daily life' 12th September 2009

Winstanley Community College, Leicester,
Kingsway North, Braunstone,
Leicestershire, LE3 3BD (UK)

This most uplifting day forms a part of the post-Summer Course series, giving you the opportunity to understand deeply the topics that emerged from the memorable Summer Course in 2008, and the World Youth Conference in 2007 that so many of you attended.

Many of you will also remember the first sequel of the 'post-Summer Course' series, which was themed, 'Faith in Self, Faith in God'. It took place on 25th April 2009 in Leicestershire where youth from throughout the UK enjoyed a variety of inspirational guest speakers, thought-provoking workshops, panel discussions and musical interludes. The theme for this satsang will be 'Discrimination'.

If you have any questions about discrimination or any dilemmas that you're facing in your life right now, we would love for you to send them to us via the registration form. All questions will remain completely confidential and will be answered on the day. And why not also check out the latest National Youth Satsang factsheet on 'What Is Discrimination?'

All of this and more info are available at:
http://www.saiyouth.org.uk/region_4.php
Or email: **saiyouthr4@gmail.com**

National Youth Day: 'The Rising Generation'

10th October 2009, Leyton, London, E10

This will be our official launch for a special series of programmes and events that will take place over a year in the lead-up to Swami's 85th Birthday in 2010, and the World Conference to be held in that year!

Also, a very important announcement will be made about the up-and-coming joint National Youth Conference for the United Kingdom and Ireland in 2010 ...and how you can be involved.

What is your role in this drama of life? What questions do you have? What topics do you want to explore? What is your role in the mission of our Sai Avatar? These are the things we want to explore and find answers to together. We want to hear from you! Email us

your thoughts, and come along on the day. More detailed information will be coming out very soon. To contact us use the link: <http://www.saiyouth.org.uk/contact.php>
Or email: mathan@arulvel.co.uk
Mathan Arulvel,
National Youth Coordinator

Sathya Sai Leadership Training Programme 2009/ 2010

GREAT NEWS!

**The deadline for the Sathya Sai
Leadership Training Programme 2009/10
has been EXTENDED to 11th October
2009.**

The Sathya Sai Leadership Training Programme (SSLTP), successfully launched in October 1997, by the National Youth Coordinating Committee, was implemented as a direct result of the First World Youth Conference resolutions.

Since then, six cohorts with a total of 60 candidates have successfully graduated and completed the programme.

**NB All those aged 21 and over are
eligible to apply.**

Following the success of the programme over the past 12 years (it is now being adopted in some European countries), it has been decided that another, earlier, intake will be accepted in 2009. Hence, this is a golden opportunity for those interested in self-development and acquiring leadership skills to enrol on the programme. The programme takes the form of a 14-month modular course. It comprises one-day workshops, projects, assignments, and 'outward bound' type activity weekends to consolidate learning. A member or members of the Organisation whose professional background is related to that particular module facilitate each of the modules.

The course will commence on the weekend of 24th/25th October 2009. For an application form or further details please speak to your centre/regional chairs or contact Deviesh Tankaria at deviesh_tankaria@hotmail.com. Details can also be found on: www.saiyouth.org.uk/SSLTP

The deadline for submitting the application form is has been extended until the
11th October 2009.

Please note: all applications will be dealt with on a 'first come first served' basis - so please get your application form in to us ...as soon as possible!

Deviesh Tankaria, SSLTP Coordinator

Region 3

Sai Retreat in Suffolk

We, in Suffolk, were disappointed that the annual National Sathya Sai Retreat was cancelled but we were delighted when Leonora van Gils, our Ipswich Group Convenor, suggested that we should hold our own 'mini-retreat' at her home, in the Suffolk village of Darsham (yes!). Not allowing any grass to grow under her feet, she invited Rosemary Perry, National Chairperson, and Rosemary's husband, Stephen, to attend. Along with Suki Ahluwalia and his wife Mona, and around Sai members from Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex, these made up the thirteen attendees of the retreat from Friday afternoon 28th August to Sunday afternoon, 30th August 2009.

The weekend started later than planned as those travelling long distances got held up in the Bank Holiday traffic. But all was well, satsang was enjoyed by the early arrivals, and dinner soon melded the group into one harmonious whole. After dinner the inaugural bhajan session was held in the multi-faith meditation room that is part of Leonora's delightful home.

Saturday morning we were woken at 7 a.m. by the sound of the Gayatri Mantra playing through the house, and silently assembled in the Meditation Room for 21 omkars and Suprabhatam. Rousing Bhajans, Arathi, and a short meditation then followed.

After breakfast (where Sai message cards had been put at each place-setting and were found to be significant in their content for each recipient) we met for a Workshop kindly led by Rosemary. Each person selected a card from the 'Native American Medicine' pack, and was then given a synopsis of its message, and the counterpoint to that message. For those of us who knew each other it was easy to see how relevant were the cards selected. Then we split into pairs to explore the significance of the Medicine Card to each of us. (We each tried to choose a person we didn't know very well – or at all! This was very productive. Then Rosemary guided us in a meditation for personal healing, creating a balance between the energy of the earth and the cosmos.

From 2pm to 4pm in the afternoon, the time was dedicated to silence, the main aim of which, was to reflect upon the Medicine Card we had each received, and to write a letter of those personality traits or characteristics which had been brought to our attention, and which were no longer helpful to our spiritual

progress. These letters were to be burned in the sacrificial fire planned for later.

We assembled at a previously prepared fire-pit in the back garden and Suki led us through a fire puja, explaining each step clearly, along with its meaning, for the benefit of the novices in the group. This proved to be a very powerful ceremony, and some among us were unexpectedly shown visions of the Lords Ganesha, Shiva and Krishna, and even Swami Himself, being present (even before the formal invitation was extended). Needless to say, the fire puja went ahead wonderfully and culminated in each person throwing his or her letter into the fire. We were advised to leave the site of the fire without a backward glance.

After a short break, another blessing was in store. Rosemary had prepared an astrology workshop. A participant volunteered to stand in the centre of a circle of horoscope cards all painted by Rosemary (all the planets, signs and aspects), set out with planetary and other alignments added, according to their birth date. Rosemary then interpreted this, with input from the volunteer and from the observers on what the images 'feel like' together, asking which part of the chart feels 'comfortable' and which part feels 'difficult' then analysing why this might be. This also was a useful exercise.

After evening bhajans our 'Secret Santa' privileged each of us with the gift of a candle, which each of us then lit from a candle that had itself been lit from a special candle at Puttaparthi. It carries the flame of 'Health, Harmony, Love and Peace'. This originates from a Greek member of the Christmas choir at Prasanthi Nilayam a few years ago, who had been allowed to light a candle from the Olympic flame receiving the blessing of 'Love, Health and Harmony'. Swami gave permission for the choir to all share the light, adding that the blessing should include 'Peace' as well.

A handkerchief bearing the imprint of a picture of Swami holding the 'healing Lingam', and a CD of Sathya Sai Baba's Words put to music was also included. Rosemary said she would 'complete the circle' by taking her candle to the European Sai Zones Conference in Greece the following weekend, along with enough candles for everyone there to share the blessing by lighting their candles from her candle's flame!

On Sunday, the early morning Omkar was followed by Suprabhatam sung in English as well as Sanskrit, along with other chants and prayers. Devotional songs and Aarathi followed.

The Sunday morning workshop led by Leonora was about chakra balancing with a pendulum. First Leonora demonstrated on each of us how she checked the chakras and how important it was that they moved at the same speed, for balance. Next we answered questions relating to each of the chakras (to be completed later at home) and finally did a chakra healing meditation from a CD.

After the closing bhajans, followed by lunch, we all dispersed to our homes carrying with us a surfeit of blessings of fun, friendship, healing and renewed spiritual vigour.

**Report by Ann and Geoffrey Steinberg
(Members of the Ipswich Group)**

Thurrock Group Summer Camp 09 Report

This July, Thurrock Sai Group (TSG) embarked on a spiritual weekend of uplifting activities. Inspired by Swami's 'Summer showers' in Brindavan, TSG members spent three days together in order to advance spiritually and to nurture values and skills to benefit the wider community. This event was the second TSG summer camp after the first in 2006 had proved very successful.

On Friday 24th July, over fifty-five TSG members met in Rayleigh. We started by stating the objectives of the camp; the goals we wanted to achieve such as individual spiritual development, unity as a group as well as having fun. Such goals were pursued in earnest as we spent the first evening singing bhajans and enjoying some team-building exercises.

The camp continued through Saturday and Sunday in Orsett Village Hall, the usual venue for our monthly bhajans. An early start for morning prayer and yoga left everybody was refreshed for the rest of the day. The activities had been planned for 3 age groups. Study circles on Sathya Sai Parenting, Swami's teachings in our daily lives, etc for adults. The youth learnt to keep Swami's teachings at the forefront of their busy, daily lives through better communication skills and various other activities. The very smallest were treated to many arts and crafts activities tied in with manners, communication and having fun. There were also some inspiring guest speakers including Sai Shankar and his wife Bharti and a fantastic unison bhajan workshop conducted by Subodh and Hema Patel. The group also ventured out of the hall to visit a devotee's allotment, learning about nature and Sunday afternoon ended with T-shirt painting and team-based sports. Ultimately the aims of the camp were achieved.

The group felt spiritually uplifted and the bonds of unity between them strengthened. Everyone in all age groups enjoyed themselves and everybody took something valuable back home with them to reflect and improve on.

As a consequence of the TSG Summer Camp 2009, adults have come forward to take on leadership roles within the Sai Group, many have come forward to lead bhajans, conduct service activities and to conduct study circles and so on.

Written up by Nayan Dave, submitted by S. Yoganathan, Region 3 Vice-Chair

Region 4

Krishna Janmashthami celebrations at our new headquarters...

Over 400 devotees from the two centres in Leicester and surrounding areas were proud and privileged to hold Krishna Janmashthami celebrations at our new headquarters of the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation UK. It was indeed a beautiful way to inaugurate the building and invite Sai Krishna to come and reside in it for the years to come.

Krishna Janmashthami is a wonderful celebration of the birth of Krishna, the Poorna Avatar who was born to Divali and Vasudeva in Mathura and whose incarnation was to proclaim the doctrine of divine love.

Since the purchase of the building, devotees from all over the UK have carried out a lot of work, and it was a tight deadline to repair and decorate the areas for the 14th of August. But great teamwork, sacrifice, dedication and the investment of many hours of labour and lots of tender loving care ensured everything was in place and the atmosphere was set for an evening to celebrate this auspicious occasion. The main hall upstairs was decorated, as was the smaller hall on the ground floor to accommodate those who could not climb the stairs.

After a brief introduction, the programme began with prayers and the powerful chanting of Vedic Mantras. Krishna was glorified with the devotional outpouring of the Govind Damodar Stotram and then His every aspect was praised - his splendour, ornaments, lotus feet, the people around him, the places he visited, his actions, speech, smile and so on. Group devotional singing followed this.

Our Central Co-ordinator, Ishver Patel, then gave an inspiring talk on Lord Krishna's life (taken from Swami's discourses), which traced key landmarks during the course of his life and how these events and achievements were extraordinary and at times beyond human understanding. He further shared the

story of Arjuna and the leper, where the leper teaches Arjuna the lesson of unconditional love for the Lord. He requested all those present to contemplate on their personal relationship with the Lord and whether it is based on unconditional love, where we do not ask for anything, or whether we are rooted in 'I want'.

Swami tells us that, "The great teaching of the Gita is this: Put your trust in God, carry on your duties, be helpful to everyone, and sanctify your lives. Dedicate all actions to God. That is the way to experience oneness with God. God is in you. You are in God. This oneness is the basic truth. Chant the name of the Lord and render social service in a spirit of selflessness and devotion to God."

Birmingham Sai Centre

With summer on its way out, many birds will soon fly south and children will go back to school whilst families take that last weekend get-away before the cold sets in. August will soon come to a quick close.

Although August meant Birmingham Centre was in recess with fewer activities than usual, it still continued with group devotional singing (GDS) at various places instead of its usual venue which too was closed for summer holidays. For two consecutive Fridays, GDS was held at various devotees' homes culminating in Krishna Janmashthami, which was celebrated with gusto and great cheer. Having GDS at devotees' lovely homes is something everyone looks forward to as it gives such enjoyment and a sense of kinship in our journey to our dear Swami.

As for the last two Fridays, GDS was held at two different 'Homes' for the Elderly and unwell members of society. This is something the Centre has been holding now for many years and each time funnily seems as if it was just the first day the Centre started this activity!

At both the Homes, the residents eagerly awaited Swami's visit through His devotees. As always, the welcome and appreciation was overwhelming. Bhajans were sung for an hour followed by Araathi. What a heart warming experience it is to feel Swami's presence within all present and more so to see the faces of the residents all radiant and happy, away from any pain or suffering they might be enduring. All thanks to our beloved Swami for his grace and blessing.

Then came the service activities for the Leicester Building Project. Some of the Centre's members gave their time and energy to this project, whilst those unable to help donated foodstuff during some weekends. Help was given in conveying heavy boxes and

an array of classroom furniture to their designated rooms, which continued for the best of the day. Thereafter, on another weekend, a small number of devotees removed the boards covering many of the windows. This involved handling many huge boards at a considerable height, starting from the front right to the back of the building.

Then the grounds were cleared of rambling bushes, tons of rubbish, rubble and dirt. Later, welcomed help came in the form of the youth from the South Birmingham Sai Group and two devotees from the Scotland and Manchester region. With all these extra hands, the work finally got completed, having begun early Saturday and finishing Sunday afternoon. We all offered our thanks to Swami for helping us achieve our target and for giving us the strength and fortitude to patiently tackle this 'bushy' errand!

With aching bodies and tired limbs we bid farewell and went home to rest until next time to serve Swami in his never-ending work.

Written and compiled by Raju P Gadher for and on behalf of Birmingham Sai Centre.

Family Fun Day ~ Coventry SSE Sunday 28th June 2009

Coventry SSE wing held a Family Fun day for all the children, parents, teachers and friends. Primary School Teacher Lucy Doherty, our parent helper, took on the challenge of organising a fantastic T-shirt designing activity for the first part of the session and Meena Matharu, our classroom assistant, put together outdoor sport activities for all the second half.

The morning began a little late with so many familiar faces sporting beaming smiles, ready to take on the challenge of T-shirt designing based on Human Values. The most amazing thing about this event was that we had three generations in one room. A lot of children brought their grandmothers with them, along with their parents. It was such a sight to see. Lucy first explained what the activity entailed and then she showed all the children and parents how to go about achieving grand colourful designs. She had brought with her various design templates, special fabric pens, that the children could use to create their design or they could design their own from scratch.

It was very evident that the children were truly enjoying being accompanied by their parents and making the most of their helping hands to create their own masterpiece!

Apparently, once a design is complete, you have to iron it to make the design permanent and ensure the colours don't run – and Lucy's husband Niall, was ready at hand with the iron in a separate room.

As the first part of the morning finished, outside games were being organised and a very colourful, mouth-watering picnic was being prepared.

The younger children played a variety of games set out by the teachers, and the older boys played football whilst the girls and some parents played rounders.

By now, the skies had cleared and the sun was shining. It was truly a glorious morning. What a way to end the SSE year? All the parents, children and teachers part took of a scrumptious picnic to end the morning, at the same time, basking in the warm sunshine whilst sipping some chilled Indian banana smoothies – made by Narinder Kanwar, our very enthusiastic and cheerful parent.

A great day had by all who were present.

Vina Mistry

Coventry SSE Co-ordinator

Celebration of Achievement Day, Coventry SSE Wing Sunday 5th July 2009

Coventry organised their very first Celebration of Achievement Day for all the SSE children. It was a grand award ceremony for the children to recognise their achievements and their contribution to SSE as a vital ingredient in keeping SSE classes alive. Without these children, there would be no learning for all of us. In a way, I suppose, we are saying Thank You to each child for its contribution in making and shaping what SSE is in Coventry today.

The purpose of the day was to celebrate all the Coventry SSE children – from Nursery to Group 3. They were awarded in different areas according to where the children's strength lay.

The morning began with Group 3 girls introducing the programme by welcoming everyone and then reciting some universal prayers with the teachers. Then Paresch Prajapati took the children through some basic yoga exercises to explain the importance of Yoga and health to all.

Mukund Patel from Leicester – our guest speaker for the morning, spoke on the role of parents and how important our conduct is in order for our children to follow the correct path.

Soon after, his wife, Pravina Patel, Region 4 Regional SSE Co-ordinator was invited to give the children their awards whilst Mala Patel

(assistant SSE co-ordinator) read out the children's names and their area of achievement.

The beaming smiles of the children said it all... they truly lifted the atmosphere and put smiles on all the adults' faces too. After every award was given out there was a huge round of applause from everyone and a photo was taken of each child with Pravina. All the parents and teachers were proud to see the children receive their awards, to see their efforts acknowledged.

The second award for attendance followed the achievement awards. There was one from every class.

Two group 3 boys then talked about their experience of SSE. One talk was by Anant Patel, and the other by Rishi Matharu. These talks were about their SSE experiences, the values and good things they have learnt, and how they have been able to put these values into practise in their daily lives. Both these talks gave parents a good insight into what their young children could grow up to be. There was very positive feedback from these talks, especially from the children.

The audience was then treated to a photographic presentation on the activities and events of SSE since 22nd February to the end of June 2009. Four months felt like a whole year!

Then Priya and Saisha, both Group 3 girls, gave the vote of thanks to all those who helped to make the Celebration of Achievement Day a success. All the teachers were thanked for their continuous efforts as SSE teachers, devoting so much of their time voluntarily to teaching all the children. Without doubt, the biggest thanks go to our beloved Lord Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for giving us the opportunity to serve Him!

The event ended with delicious food prepared so lovingly by Kailas Patel, Jaymati Lad and our Mani Carpenter and all the SSE teachers. Thank you to all for organising this wonderful and memorable day for all the children and parents!

Saisha Mistry (Group 3 student)

(With help from Vina Mistry – SSE Co-ordinator)

All articles submitted by Ramesh Mistry, Chair Region 4

Region 6

Arthur and Poppy Hillcoat 2009

Mr. Arthur Hillcoat, who referred to himself humbly and humorously, as just a 'beggar', told an audience of around thirty people, at Brighton and Hove Centre, of how he came to know of Sri Sathya Sai Baba through being

introduced to a book by a friend who felt compelled to give it to him to read. The book was, 'The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist' by Dr. Samuel Sandweiss. As soon as he had read it through, Arthur, now fully convinced of Sai Baba's divinity, went to see Swami for himself, for the first time, in 1979. Arthur also mentioned that he had been a 'seeker of truth' since the young age of twelve years old, when he had wanted to talk about God but had had little opportunity to follow up his interest in those days, and so left school with few qualifications. Over time, he worked his way up to being a managerial consultant with an engineering background. Since coming to know about Swami he has held key positions in the Sri Sathya Sai organisation and is the former Chairperson of the Sai Organisation in Australia. He and his wife Poppy now travel the globe spreading Swami's message. Arthur is a special member of the Prashanti Council and designated 'Ambassador of Love'.

The first point he made was that Swami wants less focus on miracles and more emphasis on His teachings. Arthur told us that we should 'Be' and 'Act' as we really are, that is, as the **Love** that we are. It shouldn't be seen as an 'effort' for us to love because in reality **we actually are that Love**. At one point, Mr. Hillcoat seemed to be about to shock us by saying that Sai Baba was not God but he explained that the *body* of Sai Baba is not God, just as Swami tells us that we too are not the body! He reminded us that Baba says that, "I am God, you too are God ...but you don't know it yet!" Whereas He does!

He also mentioned that in this Age everything is being stirred up, that we should accept and welcome this as an opportunity for spiritual growth, whatever comes our way, with a positive attitude. He told us that Baba had said that the Golden age is at hand and will be here within the next *few years*. He said, too, that Sri Sathya Sai Baba had used an example of a plane sitting on the tarmac, the engines ready to be started. He told us we have the opportunity now to be aboard that plane and that we must not miss the opportunity given to us to put His teachings into practice.

During a brief question and answer session in which he used several teaching stories as examples, he was aided by his wife, Poppy, at his side, as his hearing is impaired. He also briefly referred to illness and troubled times experienced by himself and Poppy, mentioning how the power of taking Vibhuthi had miraculously cured him, on more than one occasion. He reminded us that our sweet Lord Sai is always with us, carrying us

through our trials and tribulations and sees and hears everything. He gave a personal recollection of Swami's omnipresence when he and his wife had been concerned about travelling costs. On their next visit to Puttaparthi, in interview with Swami, the first thing Sai Baba told them was not to worry about expenses!

He ended his talk by extolling us to remember that all are Divine, that no one person is 'lower' or 'higher' than another, and by telling us that we too are God and not separate from Him! However, he advised us, "...not to go running down the road shouting this out, 'cos if we do, it is likely that men in white coats may come running after us with straight jackets!"

**Niki Johnson,
Brighton & Hove Centre**

Travels with the Hillcoats

August is the month of warm sunny days in England. Did I hear somebody laugh? Oh - perhaps not.

We were, however, extremely fortunate that Swami turned on the good weather for us on Tuesday 18th of August, the day when I had arranged for Arthur and Poppy Hillcoat to take a boat ride on the Thames. We set forth from Henley-on-Thames, near Reading. Henley, of course, has an international reputation for an excellent boatclub that annually puts on a Regatta and supports and celebrates The Boat Race, the annual healthy rivalry which decides whether it will be Oxford or Cambridge University that will be the keeper of the Cup.

Arthur and Poppy very much enjoyed the charm and beauty of this little bit of England. It was indeed a pleasure to be out with them and to experience their humour and their undivided, non-discriminating love over the four days of accompanying them in Region 6. During their talks at four venues in the Region, they were relaxed, happy, extremely approachable, very uncomplicated and very much to the point. It was a special pleasure to have them with us, pouring their love out continuously, and giving inspiration to not only the youngest of our children but also right through to the older ones amongst us!

We, from Region 6, send our love to them, give them our warmest thanks, and pray that they have now had a safe journey back home to Queensland, Australia.

**Bahnoon Karim Agnew,
Chair Region 6**

Region 7 Sai Picnic

For the last four years devotees from Region 7 have gathered, in August, in Glastonbury, at Michael Steven's Priory Farm for what is affectionately called a 'Sai Picnic'. It's really an open-air satsang! Priory Farm is also the Centre for the Glastonbury Sai Group.

The Farm consists of a house, another building where the Sai Group meets every Thursday, a lovely garden (not ordinary garden like yours or mine - this has a few acres of land), and farmland adjacent to the house. There is also a brook which separates the garden from the farm. The garden is immaculately kept which has lovely flower plants, mature fruit trees, and vegetable patch.

On Sunday 23 August about 50 devotees (including children) started arriving at Priory Farm from about 10am. Arthur and Poppy Hillcoat, who were in the Region, also joined the picnic. The weather, which started a bit hazy, turned out to be a very warm sunny day! After a welcoming drink, the satsang started at 11.00 with the chanting of the Gayatri mantra and walking slowly through the garden. This energised the whole place and everyone was looking forward to the rest of the day!

After the chant, everyone settled down for a few bhajans, which were led by Katherine Crossweller and Nick Williams. The 23rd of August this year is 'Ganesha Chaturthi'. Michael made a Ganesh statue out of clay and this was placed beside the photo of Sai Baba on a simple but beautiful altar under a marquee.

After the bhajans, Caroline Vasey and Jackie Mansbridge gave a talk about their pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella, in Spain - a 530km walk! What a wonderful experience they had and how Swami's hand was there at every turn. When they felt they couldn't physically and emotionally continue help came from unexpected quarters.

After a picnic lunch in the lovely surroundings of the garden, we gathered again for a couple of bhajans. This was followed by an enlightening talk on the significance of Ganesha Chaturthi by Satyan of the Cardiff Centre. Satyan quoted from Swami's discourses to explain the significance of the 'remover of obstacles'.

After Satyan's talk, some of us took up an offer from Katherine to join in an 'OM Meditation' - a soul healing as well as physical healing exercise. Others started a bhajan session under the shade of a tree. The

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

children enjoyed the day and were engaged in all sorts of games in the garden including picking fruits from the garden, with Michael, to offer as Prasad. The day ended around 5pm with Michael leading everyone into submerging the clay image of Ganesha in the small brook.

We thank Swami for bringing us together to share our love and to meet people who we have not met for a long time. Since Region 7 covers a large area, devotees from the south of the Region do not get an opportunity to join in some of the regional events. This is an occasion to meet and rekindle our friendship and love and enjoy ourselves.

Ram Thiagarajah, Chair Region 7

Region 8

Visit by former Air Chief Marshal Suri

Devotees in Scotland were extremely fortunate to have a person of such high calibre and wealth of knowledge of scriptures amongst them. His immense humility, total devotion, and unflinching faith in Swami were oozing - owing to his nearness and dearness to Swami. He interacted with the devotees so freely that they were enthralled by his experiences and his surrender to the Lord.

The first part of the talk centred on the 'Oneness of Humanity' and the second part was a 'Question and Answer' session.

Overall he kept the audience spellbound for the duration of his talk.

Region 8 would love to have him back in Scotland when next time he comes to the United Kingdom.

Som Bahanda, Chair Region 8

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:**

Special new Release:

'Language of the Heart'

On the evening of the 9th August 2009, just before the UK Sadhana Camp group presented a musical offering of love at the Lotus feet of our beloved Swami, He graciously accepted a musical album entitled "Language of Heart". This album had been prepared by the Sai Youth right from the composition of the lyrics, singing and providing instrumental music-to-music direction.

ukccnews@hotmail.co.uk

Our loving Lord Sri Sathya Sai Baba blessed this project, "Language of Heart", in February 2009 during Shivrathri, along with the Sadhana Camp plan. At that time, He said that He would release the album during the Sadhana Camp.

This statement, that He would release the music album from His Divine Hands was the source of inspiration and motivation to endure all the challenges faced to complete the project in time for the Sadhana Camp. There are 9 songs in 9 languages sung in expression of dedicated love to Swami and they are about His message of Love.

The album contains information about the lyrics and their meaning so that everyone can enjoy listening to the melodious songs in the album and understand the sentiments.

The album "Language of the Heart" is now available from the:

**Sri Sathya Sai Book Centre,
19, Hay Lane, London, NW9 0NH
Tel: 0208 732 2886**

For further details, visit either:

www.languageofheart.com

or:

www.srisathyasaibookcentre.org.uk

The pack is available at a price of £12 (plus postage and packing) and contains the following:

A beautiful handcrafted metal jewel box

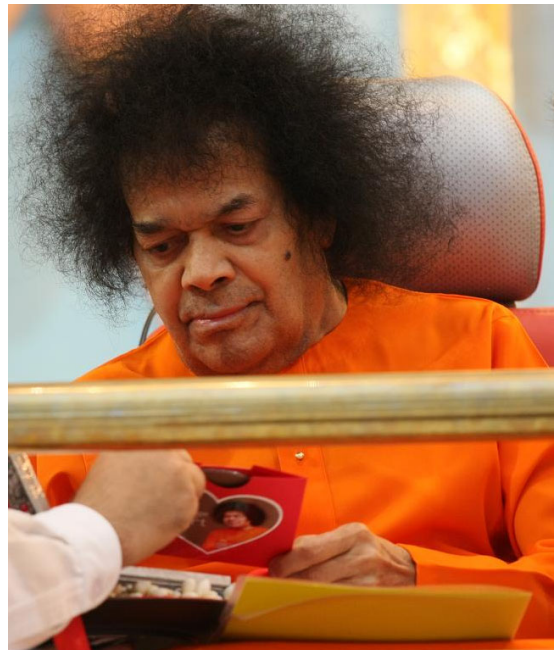
A red heart-shaped fridge magnet

A heart shaped key ring

The CD of music and song.

Any proceeds from the sale of this item are going to the Sathya Sai School, Leicester.

Swami examines and approves the gift box and CD.



'Love and Light'

Submission of Articles

The deadline for submission of articles to Love and Light is no later than the 4th of the month for publication on the 9th of the same month. Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate articles after this date, inclusion cannot be guaranteed.

An article can only be accepted via a member of the UKCC who will then forward it to the editorial team.

'Love and Light'

© SSSSO (UK) 2009

To freely subscribe contact:
ukccnews@hotmail.co.uk

All rights reserved

'Love and Light' is the only nationwide monthly publication of the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation (UK). You are free to pass it on in its entirety to any interested party. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the SSSSO UK National Chair.

Data Protection Act 1998

Please note that 'Love and Light' is also published on the National Website and is freely available to countries outside the EEA.

Love and Light SSSSO UK Diary Dates 2009		
Month	Date	Event
September	12th	UKCC 3rd Quarter Meeting
September	13th	NWC Meeting
September	17th / 18th / 19th	Seminar with Phyllis Krystal
September	20th	SSE National Teachers' Day
September	26th / 27th	Regional Meetings
October	3rd	SSEHV National Day
October	4th	Region 4 ROAD Show
October	10th	National Youth Day
October	24th / 25th	UKCC Vision Weekend
November	7th	R6 'ROAD' show
November	19th	Ladies Day
November	23rd	Sathya Sai Baba's 84th Birthday
November	29th	UKCC 4th Quarter Meeting
December	5th	Region 2 ROAD Show
December	6th	NWC Meeting
December	12th/13th	Regional Meetings



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