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Education Wing - My Baba and I

I was very fortunate to have been exposed to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sathya Sai Baba since birth. In fact, my very first word was BABA!!!!!!

As a boy, when I was growing up, the pictures of the Lord filled me with a sense of wonder and awe. His bright orange robe, his thick curly hair and his charming smile made quite an impact on my young mind. I began to feel a sense of security whenever I came across His pictures.

A few years down the line, I found myself participating in various activities in the Sai Organisation, like singing Bhajans and doing Narayana seva with my parents and the other members of the Sai family. This gave me a feeling of immense joy and contentment. Baba, by now, had become a part and parcel of my life.

The first time I saw Baba in Parthi, in flesh and blood was when I was 3 years old before I started my schooling. I had few more darshans of swami in the next few years but I remember my visit to Prasanthi for a blessing from our Lord as we were leaving India to join my father in England when I was nearly five. I was allowed to sit with my mother on the Ladies side and before I really understood what was happening around me, there He was, walking towards us, smiling, blessing and looking Divine in every step that He took. I was on my knees, hands folded and craning my neck to have a better view of the Lord. He walked past us, looking at each and every person with so much Love that I was spellbound and felt as if I was in a trance. There was a fragrance in the air and everything felt pure and peaceful. I was totally bowled over by the great lord!

Indeed it is only by Baba's grace that I could travel to Prasanthi Nilayam as part of the pilgrimage in August 2010. I had very close darshan of Swami and I did manage to handover my letters to Him. I now realise the significance of that particular trip as Swami left his mortal coil in April 2011.

After coming to England, I had few challenges, difficult situations at school and other places but I was able to survive and get over them because of the inspiration and guidance of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He was, is and will be with me, in me, around me and when I need Him the most, all I need to do is think of him with love and devotion and He has never failed me. I would like to be his able instrument in future and help in whatever way possible to take His Divine Mission forward and help as many people as possible and feel the love of my beloved BABA!

Prahalad Nadella
Group 4 SSE
Halifax
Region 5

Honouring Recently Retired Trustee - Mr Balram Puri

Honouring Recently Retired Trustee, Mr Balram Puri

Last year, Trust members were saddened to learn that Mr Balram Puri had decided to retire from the SSSC Trust UK. In 1978, Sri Indulal Shah, during his visit to London, discussed his proposal of establishing a 'Sai Trust' with Mr Puri. Perhaps, it was the first Sai Trust outside India. Sri Indulal Shah gave Mr Puri the responsibility to liaise with the solicitors and the charity commission in order to set up the charity.

The Trust, following Swami's advice, was established on 15 June 1979 under the name of "Shri Satya Sai World Foundation". Swami was a Founder Trustee. Mr Puri explained to

various contacts in the UK about the work being done by Swami. Projects such as 'the University', the 'Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital' and the 'Water Project' were explained in detail. However, no funds were ever solicited. With Swami's grace the funds started to flow into the Trust, and all funds were remitted to Prashanti Council. The Trust in fact had sent to Prashanti funds of £1.5 million over the years for these projects. The Trust did not charge any penny of expense.

Mr Puri and his spiritually-devoted and very talented wife, Damyanti, came to Swami in 1970. Then, there were just five families in the London area singing Sai Baba Bhajans. Until Damyanti joined, there was no harmonium, tabla or any other musical instrument involved. Before coming to London, Damyanti used to sing at Radio Delhi that transmitted its programmes nationwide. Damyanti started leading the Bhajans and playing harmonium. Slowly, the number of attending devotees grew.

In 1972, a large number of Asians migrated to the UK from Uganda (the only country, along with Kenya, that Baba visited outside India). They settled in various cities like London, Leicester, Birmingham, Manchester and Bradford etc. The Puris suddenly found that there were now quite a large number of devotees of Sai Baba in England and therefore, they organised a Sai Baba Birthday Celebration, inviting these devotees from all the various parts of England to gather in one hall.

Over a period of more than two years, Mr and Mrs Puri would both visit all the Sai Groups outside London, with the harmonium in their car. They would organise Bhajan sessions, and be back in London on Sunday for their own regular Bhajan session. As the number of devotees grew in London, they moved their sessions from Mr Sita Ram's house into a hall in Pinner.

In January 1975, on their visit to Whitefield, Swami called both of them and advised them to work for the organisation. When Sri Indulal Shah came to England later in January 1975, he laid the foundations of the UK Council, and he appointed Damyanti as National Convenor for 'Bal-Vikas' (now known as 'Sai Spiritual Education' outside the UK) and 'Mahila Vibhag' (a Ladies' section).

In 1975, as the number of devotees had been steadily increasing they established another Centre in London near Russell Square underground station. The 'Russell Square Centre' seeded the formation of many new Centres and is still very popular today.

Damyanti continued her singing and musical work at this Centre, and regularly produced Bhajan cassettes. She always included the singers from the Centre. The first cassette (from England) when presented to Swami in 1978 was listened to by him, and approved for sale at the Prashanti Nilayam Bookshop. Later, all her Cassettes and Videos were placed at the Lotus feet and it was only after Sai Baba's blessing that they were released for distribution. All the Cassettes etc. were produced by a charity 'Helping Hands International', which was founded by Damyanti. The sale proceeds were collected and utilized by the Charity.

As the Trust Chair, Kishin Khubchandani, said in his thanks to Mr Puri, on behalf of all the Trustees:

"It is with mixed feelings that we accept your proposal to retire as a Trustee, from the Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust UK. Both you and your wife have been pillars of strength for the

UK Sai organisation and the UK Trust. Your dear wife was instrumental in starting up the first centres in the UK, may Swami bless her soul and grant her perfect peace. Swami himself blessed you to be one of the first trustees of the UK Trust when it was registered in 1978. Since then you have been a true and trusted devotee considering Swami's work as yours.

You have used your wealth and talents for the good of others for over thirty years. Used every opportunity to help others advance spiritually, being compassionate at all times. Humility and tolerance has characterized your behaviour as a Sai devotee. You have truly demonstrated "your life is his message" and "service to man is service to God"

We the trustees of Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust UK will miss your wise council, but will continue to tap into your wisdom when in need."

Article submitted by the Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust UK

National Youth Conference 2013 – 2 weeks to go!

How To Make OUR Life HIS Message

Om Sri Sai Ram!

Did you enjoy watching the inspirational **National Youth Conference 2013** [launch video](#) themed '**How to Make OUR Life HIS Message**'? With Bhagawan's Grace, youth across the UK are feeling ever more excited to share in this most uplifting event, focusing on the sub-themes of '**Master, Message, and Messenger**'. A second video trailer has been put together by our youth, to inspire youth about why we should attend this conference. Please visit our youth conference [webpage](#) to see this.

What is the purpose of this conference?

Swami has said "The future of the country depends on the skill and sincerity of the youth. Therefore the necessary enthusiasm and encouragement must be generated among the youth." He says "Give me just one youth strong in character and I can change the destiny of the whole wide world. All my hopes are based on the students, the youth. They are very dear to Me."

This conference will be a great opportunity to unite the youth together as a country, to gain a better and deeper understanding of His teachings based on the sub-themes of Master, Message, Messenger and to generate enthusiasm to take His Mission forward by making OUR Life HIS Message.

The conference is open to all youth aged 18-35 and also to our Group 4 SSE students (under 18) who will soon be transitioning into the youth wing. Please note, those under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or an appropriate adult with their parents consent. Please speak to your SSE Coordinator for more details.

After the youth conference, there will be 3 focused areas of service for 2013:

- 1) Youth in centres and regions to work closely with the service wing in expanding on existing service projects.
- 2) A youth led service project in India as part of the UK Pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam this year.
- 3) A National Youth service project in October called "Serve the Planet", which is a Global Youth Initiative whereby youth from all over the world will be uniting in respective countries to undertake a service project in October as part of Avatar Declaration.

Objectives of the sub-themes Master, Message, Messenger

Workshops, inspirational talks, and question and answer panels will focus on the following objectives at the National Youth Conference:

MASTER:

1. To know our Master better - His Life, His Characteristics, The Ideals and Examples He set, Recognise His Avatar- so as to connect better
2. Recognise His Instruction about how to become Masters ourselves

MESSAGE:

1. All is Divine - therefore brotherhood, therefore Love All and manifest this via Serve All. You are God- realise this via unity and purity.
2. Recognise how His Life exemplifies His Message.

MESSENGER:

1. 'Make Your Life My Message' - therefore live His Message in our daily life by practising unity and purity via service, meditation, namasmarana etc
2. Share our life's experiences and learning gained by 'following our Master and living His Message' with fellow humanity, so we can all grow together.

Where and When?

All youth (age 18-35) and Group 4 SSE (under 18) are most welcome to attend this event which will take place as follows:

Date: Friday 22nd Feb from 18:00 to Sunday 24th Feb 2013 until 13:00.

Venue: Oxhey Wood Primary School, Oxhey Drive, South Oxhey, Watford, WD19 7SL

Conference Programme

The conference programme will soon be uploaded to our conference website. Youth can look forward to:

- Inspirational guest speakers, including our former National Chair and current International Youth Coordinator, Shitu Chudasama
- Youth speakers
- Inspirational videos

- Musical performances from a Carnatic group, Hindustani Group and also a solo Spanish song.
- Three interactive workshops where youth will breakout into small group sessions to explore deeper the sub-themes of Master, Message, Messenger.
- Sharing their views and enjoying good Satsang with like-minded individuals

Recommended Pre-Reading Material

There is recommended pre-reading material to bask in Swami's Glory, by reading Swami's Divine Discourses related to 'Master', 'Message' and 'Messenger' available to download on the National Youth Conference website. [Click here](#) to download Swami's Discourses that have been used to provide the Spiritual content for the conference.

Inspirational factsheets have also been compiled and will be uploaded to our website. The [Master](#) factsheet is online including an inspiring video on our Master. The [Message](#) factsheet will be coming out this week. The [Messenger](#) factsheet will be uploaded the week leading up to the conference.

Register Now and let other youth and Group 4 SSE know!

There are already over 170 youth from all over the UK attending this amazing event... please remember to [click here](#) if you haven't already registered! Please share this message with your friends and family to be a part of the experience!

If you require accommodation, please indicate so on the registration form and we will be in touch with you shortly. Please note there is limited accommodation remaining in local devotees homes.

Conference website and for more information

For more detail please visit our conference website: <http://www.srisathyasai.org.uk/national-programmes/NYC2013/>

For any queries please email youthwing@srisathyasai.org.uk

With heartfelt love,

Shyam Jamnadas
National Youth Coordinator
On behalf of National Youth Conference Planning Team

Region 1 - New Years Day Celebrations at the Sai Mandir

New Year's Day Celebrations began at the Sai Mandir on New Years' eve, with our traditional bajan from 11pm. On the stroke of midnight, the Mandir, completely packed with devotees, saw the New Year in with Mangala Arathi to our beloved Bhagavan. After the



servicing of prasadam, many devotees joined the congregation in the adjoining Ghanapathy Temple to witness the first Abhishekham to Lord Ganesha in the early hours of 2013 – a truly spiritual way to see the New Year in!

Celebrations continued at a more reasonable hour later on that day. New Year's Day is

one of the most special dates for the devotees of Merton Sai Centre, because it marks the anniversary of the opening of the Sai Mandir – the first purpose-built Mandir for our beloved Lord in the UK. Marking its' 32nd anniversary, it was so wonderful to see so many devotees, young and old, coming together, from far and wide, to share this very special day with each other.

For many of the Merton Sai Centre Volunteers, they had been up most of the night, helping to cut vegetables, cook and help with marshalling the 1000's of devotees who come to the Temple on New Year's Day. Thus, their time to achieve spiritual peace came when they joined the devotees in the Sai Mandir for the spiritual ceremonies that began at 2pm.

Sridhar Iyer from the Temple came and began the proceedings with vedic chanting and a beautiful Ghanapathy Homam. The ceremony then continued with Laksharchinai – the recitation of the 1008 names of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Every devotee was given a plate of turmeric-coloured raw rice, with a picture of Swami, so that each devotee could do their own archinai (offering) as each of the names of our Lord was recited. It was wonderful to see every single devotee, from the youngest of children to the oldest of grandfathers, reciting and offering the rice with such love and devotion to Swami. As the 1008 names were being said, groups of devotees were brought forward to the front of the Mandir to sit in front of the altar to offer flower petals for each set of 108 names. The sevadal organised this so well that by the end of the laksharchinai, every devotee had been given the opportunity to offer flowers at the Lotus feet of our beloved Lord, drawing tears from many who participated, feeling the closeness of our Lord, heart to heart, in those moments of spirituality.

Interspersed within the recitation, Lingam abhishekham was done to the two Shivalingams that Swami had materialised and the blessed water from these abhishekham was distributed as prasadam to all who attended. The ceremony concluded with a beautiful hour-long bajan and Mangala Arathi, followed by Mahaprasadam for the approximately 1000 devotees who attended the ceremony that day. And after the joy and spirituality of the celebrations, even the Mahaprasadam of rice and curry was so special!



Last year, a pilot project from Jaffna Sai Centre was created – the Easwaramma Livelihood Project – a "not-for-profit" project, created as an exchange of love and support between the devotees of the UK and Sri Lanka. Devotees from the UK helped to ship over 800 kgs of raw rice, parboiled rice and rice flour, which had been grown, processed and packaged by farmers and widows, in the Northern province of Sri Lanka, who had been severely affected by the ethnic war and natural disasters in Sri Lanka. Most of the produce was quickly sold to devotees at the Temple and also by dedicated volunteers in other areas of the country. All the money raised was sent back to Sri Lanka to help buy more seed and proper equipment, in an effort to help those affected by the war to regain their trust, dignity and ability to stand on their own two feet. This love and support enabled them to send 10,000 kgs of raw rice, parboiled rice, special flour and curry powder at the end of 2012!

So it was decided to launch this second phase at the Temple on New Year's day and volunteers were kept busy all day, selling the 1kg packets to devotees, who couldn't wait to go home and try out this produce that had been made in their homeland – and they were delighted to find that they didn't have to wait!

Because it had been decided that the first consignment of rice should be used to make the first Pongal (special sweet rice) in the Temple and the red rice and curry powder should be used to make the mahaprasadam to serve at lunch for the devotees! So even in the food that was served and eaten that day, Swami's divine presence was felt in each morsel that was eaten!

That day, 48 kgs of rice from the Easwaramma Livelihood Project was cooked to serve to the devotees and over 1000 kgs of rice, flour and curry powder were bought by devotees to take home and share with their families. And thus, each and every one of those who came to the Temple and Sai Mandir started the year with the blessings of our Lord and were able to take that peace and well-being home to share with their loved ones – knowing that they were helping those less fortunate than themselves, beginning 2013 with prayer and service, and keeping Swami ever-present in their hearts and minds.

Region 3 - Hatfield Sai Centre Celebrates 34th Anniversary



One of the first Sai Centres in the UK, Hatfield Sai Centre was inaugurated on the 20th January 1979 with the support of London Sai Centre. Over the past 34 years it has served as parent to many other Sai Centres; Luton, Stevenage, Watford, Palmers Green, North Finchley, Chelmsford and Cambridge Sai Group to name a few. It's founder D. Amirthanandan (uncle Amir) served on the UKCC between 1989-91

and today at the ripe age of 91 continues with bhajan practice and group bhajan at his home on a regular basis with his wife (aunty) Pathma.

My parents and I joined Hatfield Sai Centre in early 1985. My first memories were of attending bhajan practice at uncle and aunty's home and subsequent centre bhajans. In those days Information was not freely available and much of Swami's teachings only existed through books and publications, the wealth of books brought from Puttaparthi by devotees and of course the immense experiences of devotees who were fortunate to have direct interaction with Swami.

Uncle Amir was determined to introduce English bhajan singing at the centre and many of the English bhajans that are in circulation today emanated from Hatfield. He recognised that language was an immediate barrier and that the Hindu-centric format of worship and the singing of bhajans in Indian languages may turn away local interest.

Aunty Pathma, along with Pradip Travedi and June Jackson conducted Bal Vikas (SSE) in those days and I have fond memories of performing plays and musical items at Battersea Town Hall under the then leadership of Mrs Rajes Sivayogan and the various prayers and bhajans we learnt in class.

On Saturday 26th January 2013 we celebrated our centre's 34th anniversary with a special programme. The theme of the programme was to promote a renewed focus on multi-faith activities in our local community and to invite devotees to reflect upon the benefits of association with the world faiths. The aforementioned brother Pradip Travedi was our first guest speaker and took us on a reflective journey on the direction that Hatfield Sai Centre had taken over the years, our process of transformation both as a community and as individuals and the exponential growth of activities at Centre, national and global level. He talked about the significance of unconditional Love and the importance of our interactions with the Divine and narrated several personal interactions with Swami. He concluded by outlining the relevance that multi-faith played in broadening our understanding of others and developing Love and of the significant role that elders played in mentoring the youth of today towards furthering Baba's teachings through greater awareness of other Faiths.

His talk was greatly received and was followed by Sister Rani Naidoo, our second guest speaker. She talked to us about how multi-faith interaction was being conducted by Sai centres across the world and opened up discussion with the centre audience of the benefits of learning about other faiths. Some of the responses included 'Tolerance', 'Breaking down barriers', 'One God, many paths', 'Expansion of love', 'Seeing God in all'. She then went on to describe the recent success of the multi-faith concert held at our centre and discussed future upcoming multi-faith events, including a study circle in preparation for discussion of 'food, fasting and drink'. The topic is intended to explore Sai teachings on the subject, covering both spiritual and social aspects, so that as a Sai community we are enabled to communicate the same message when asked. Sister Rani concluded with a Buddhist Prayer played from the multi-faith 'One World – International Songs' CD presented to and blessed by Swami in August 2007 (produced by Sathya Sai Human Values Network UK in 2008. For further information please email: daksha.trivedi@btconnect.com)

Sister Ranje Sivakumar, our Chair, concluded our programme with a vote of thanks for our guest speakers and for attendance by devotees. She welcomed a renewed focus on multi-faith and announced that Akhand Bhajans this year would be shared with participation by other faith groups.

by Ganesh Yoganathan

Region 3 - Introduction to Vedas: Part 1

Part 1: Introduction

My task is to open your eyes to the glory of the Vedas and to convince you that Vedic injunctions, when put into practice will yield the promised results. My Love towards the Vedas is matched only by My Love towards humanity. - Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Source: Sathyam Shivam Sundaram, Part 2 - Chapter 3).

Introduction: Vedas are the words of God. The word "Veda" means knowledge. They were revealed by God to the sages ("Rishis") of past. The sages taught their disciples who in turn taught them to their disciples. Thus through an unbroken chain of succession of teachers and disciples, this body of knowledge is available to mankind today in the very same form that it was received ages ago. Since this body of knowledge was "heard" from God and passed on from generation to generation through an oral tradition, Vedas are also called "Shruti" or that which is heard. Vedas do not have a human author. God is its only source.

Content: The essential content of the Vedas is twofold. One is right action ("karma" section) where the Vedas teach man the duties that one has to perform and values that one has to practice from birth to death depending on one's station in life. Hence, the Vedas are considered to be the root of all dharma. This section also teaches the means to various goals desired by a human being for a happy life here and hereafter. Second is right knowledge ("jnaana" section) where the Vedas reveal the fundamental truth that is the basis of all life and matter. It teaches the highest truth knowing which one attains ever-lasting and complete freedom from fear and grief. The contents of the Vedas are limitless, even though only a finite portion of it is currently available to mankind. This body of knowledge was revealed by God to mankind through the medium of the Sanskrit language.

Importance of sound: The Vedas are euphonic and hence the sounds are very important. The sounds and sometimes the meaning of the Vedas depend upon the correct pronunciation of the syllables along with the right intonation, duration, effort, pace and continuity. The sounds produced by the recitation of the Vedas have beneficial consequences for the person who chants it, the people who listen to it and to the environment in which it is chanted. The sounds of Vedas can purify one's mind and also cleanse the environment of negative influences. It is also believed that adverse consequences can result from an incorrect recitation of the Vedas. Therefore it is mandatory that the sounds of the Vedas are correctly learnt and adhered to while reciting.

Universality: The benefits of Vedas are equally available to all mankind. All can partake of this knowledge and benefit from it. Just as gravitation is a universal law that is applicable irrespective of geography or time or people, so also the Vedas are universal in their scope and reach. Though it is available to the entire mankind, India has had the unique privilege of safeguarding it in its original form and spreading it to other parts of the world. All people can benefit from the teachings of the Vedas, if studied with humility, recited with precision, practiced with faith and understood with clarity. Thus, the contents of the Vedas are universal in nature. (To be continued...)

Bro.Krishna Subrahmanian Chair Person
Sri Sathya Sai Centre of Mill Hill.

Region 3 - Sankraanti: Excerpts from Divine Discourses

(Excerpts from a Divine Discourse by Bhagavan Baba in Sai Kulwant Hall on 15-Jan-1996)

Embodiments of Love! Bhaaratheeya festivals are full of inner significance, imparting bliss, and not ostentatious shows. Every festival has a unique significance of its own.

From today (Makara Sankraanti) the sun starts on his northward journey. What does the north signify? It is considered the direction leading to moksha (liberation). The sun is said to move towards Himaachala. Himaachala is made up of two words: "Hima" and "Achala". "Hima" means that which is white as snow. "Achala" is that which is firm and unshakable. What is the place to which this description applies? It is the region of the heart. In a heart that is pure and steady, the sun of the intellect enters. There is no need to undertake a journey in the external world. The northward journey means turning the intellect inward, towards the heart. The bliss that is experienced within alone is true bliss for man. All other external and sensory pleasures are ephemeral. Only the principle of Aatmaa is pure, permanent and infinite. This has been termed the abode of moksha (liberation). The journey to moksha is called the quest for liberation.

Man cannot secure enduring bliss through physical pleasures. He has to discover that the source of this bliss is within himself. Sankraanti enables man to make this discovery, like a man who carrying his spectacles on his forehead searches for it everywhere and discovers to his joy that it has been with him all along. The Divine is not anywhere else. It is enshrined in one's heart. Hence, the man who seeks the Divine within his heart redeems himself. He then attains liberation. All external spiritual exercises are of temporary value. They should be

internalized to experience lasting bliss. All mental exercises also leave the heart unaffected. In the nine paths of devotion, beginning with listening to sacred things and ending with total surrender of the self, the last is the most important. After total surrender of self there is no need for any other effort. Sankraanti gives the call for this total surrender.

Sankraanti promotes mental transformation. It illumines the minds of people. It induces the unfoldment of inner feelings. It brings about the manifestation of the invisible Aatmaa within everyone. Sankraanti is pregnant with such immense significance. It influences not only the mind but also the powers of nature. Nature is a projection of the mind. The world is rooted in the mind. When the mind is turned towards the heart and the heart is filled with the Divine, the mind will cease to be a source of trouble. The mind is the master of the senses. When the senses are controlled the mind is under control. Only the master of the mind can attain the Divine.

Men today are plagued by a whole battery of troubles from birth to death. How can they hope for happiness amidst this sea of troubles? They have to change their vision, their thoughts, their words and their conduct. This is the meaning of Sankraanti. Unless you purify yourself, what can any number of Sankraanti-s mean to you? You tasted sweet prasaadam this morning. After some time, its taste is gone. It is not sweet food that is important. You must fill your life with holy thoughts. That is the purpose of sacred festivals.

Sankraanti should be hailed as the harbinger of unity and peace!

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

From Prema Jyoti – Beacon of love –Sri Sathya Sai Centre of Mill Hill

Service Wing - Medical Camps 2011: India

The UK team was involved in marathon medical camps in India in December 2011. In particular the eye team had a huge challenge in trying to organise various sub teams for four consecutive camps within 3 weeks! Below is a synopsis of the camps held by the SSSSO UK (along with volunteers from USA/Europe/India), in December 2011.



Dwarka Eye Camp (11 to 15 December 2011):

The SSSSO UK team was invited by Sanatan Sewa Mandal Trust to carry out an eye camp.

The team comprised of 6 medical and 6 general volunteers. During the course of the camp around 1,800 patients were seen and 64 referred for cataract surgery. In total 1,463 pairs of glasses were dispensed.

Dwarka General Camp (23 to 25 December 2011):

Following the eye camp, two medical professionals (ENT surgeon and Psychiatrist) along with a medical student spent two days at the Sanatan Sewa Mandal Trust for screening children. Around 150 children were seen for general medical, ENT and psychological matters. Medications such as de worming tablets were provided to all the children at the campus. New school clothes were distributed for all children at the campus.

Dang Medical Camp (17 to 22 December 2011):

A group of more than 50 medical and general volunteers from UK, Germany (1), USA (1) and India participated in the Gujarat camp. The group was invited by the Manav Kalyan Trust Navsari. The team consisted of volunteers, GPs, Optometrists, Dentists, Gynaecologists, Paediatricians, Nurses, Pharmacists, other health care professionals and an Ophthalmologist, ENT and Orthopaedic specialist. The host community provided translators, kitchen and registration teams.



The Dang district is one of the poorest districts in the country; livelihood security is a severe problem. Mythologically, it is related to the Dandakaranya of the Ramayana. It is said that during the exile, Rama passed through this area and the folk songs are replete with events from the Ramayana. Although the district has the highest rainfall in Gujarat, it still faces severe water scarcity. The common diseases of the district are scabies, skin disease, TB, chronic anaemia. The district has the highest prevalence of leprosy in the state. Major health risks are malnutrition, lack of safe drinking water, poor hygiene and sanitation and above all, poverty.

The campsite was located within the grounds of a school for children with visual impairment and over the course of six days, in addition to the medical camp the team was able to undertake narayan and gram seva. Around 4,450 patients were seen (with around 7,500 consultations), narayan seva was served to over 9,000 people, 27 cataract operations were conducted, 1,500 spectacles and 15 hearing aids dispensed, 4 children referred to a special needs school – a sister charity of the host in Navsari. In addition, 716 patients were screened for sickle cell and of the 50 patients found positive, the sickle cell team reached out to their

family members in the villages – accordingly an additional 220 patients were screened in villages. 165 patients were referred to a well-established hospital about two and a half hours away from the camp site.

The team was presented with numerous physical conditions and those assessed as being serious and in need of urgent treatment (around 220) were referred to hospitals for further investigation and surgeries (gynaecology, orthopaedic, paediatric, ENT and other general surgeries). Clothes and new woollen knitted blankets for children, new saris for women and blankets for families were distributed at the medical camp and in the neighbouring villages during the gram seva. Rucksacks and stationery for the school children were also distributed.

Alike Eye Camp (26 to 28 December 2011):

An eye camp was held at Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Institution. The camp was meticulously organised. The students acted as translators; they showed a lot of enthusiasm, talent and love. The SSSSO UK team with the support of local optometrists and ophthalmologists were able to provide support to more than 2,000 patients.

Mysore Eye Camp (30 to 31 December 2011):

An eye camp was held in conjunction with Saragur Vivekananda Hospital, in Mysore. Around 420 patients were seen.

Between the Alike & Mysore eye camps, around 700 spectacles (ready made and glazed) were dispensed. A significant number of eye drops for the treatment of dry eyes and basic eye infections were also dispensed. Both camps came with the option of surgical interventions - with referrals to local hospitals in the area. A large number of common eye conditions were seen e.g. cataracts, dry eyes, pingueculae, pterygia, eye injuries and also retinal detachment with vitreous haemorrhages. Untreated amblyopia and strabismus and uncorrected large refractive errors were also some of the common findings.

Summary



It was truly a fantastic experience to watch the camps unfold and develop, see people “change” in such a small timeframe and be able to listen, understand, empathise and where possible give direction, advice or medicine to those who were suffering from illness, hardship and poverty. We were constantly reminded of Bhagwan’s immortal messages of “Love all,

Serve all” in order to realise the divinity within us. Although logistics were extremely challenging, all this was only possible with the blessings and immense love of Bhagwaan Baba.

Urvi Widhani

The Christian Festival of Lent

Before the major festivals in the Christian calendar (Christmas and Easter), there is a period of reflection, submission and meditation – a time of spiritual preparation to engage fully and humbly with the messages of each of these profoundly important events. These festivals form the focal points that express the essence of our faith and proclaim what we believe.

Christmas, celebrates who Jesus is – the Son of God incarnate in our world and Easter, the glorious climax of God’s love and his saving purpose Jesus has achieved by raising Him from death. Easter proclaims God’s loving purpose of rescue and Jesus’ victory over sin and death.

In the forty day period preceding Easter Sunday, the period of fasting is known as Lent. The biblical inspiration for this season of the church is drawn from the story relayed to us through the Biblical accounts of Jesus’ life. The Gospels, especially Luke, Matthew and Mark, tell the story of Jesus, after His baptism by John, being driven by the Spirit, into the Wilderness and there, he ate nothing, and in the wilderness, he was tempted by Satan. This satanic encounter clears the priority of Jesus’ work as God’s anointed Messiah – in Latin he is called “The Christ”(the Anointed One). By this wilderness experience happening prior to the commencement of his public ministry, Jesus is determined that he wasn’t going to be governed by his own appetites and he was going to trust in the promise of God, rather than asking for proof of the rightness of what he was going to do in fulfilling his divine mission as a servant who would save His people.

Jesus’ ministry, eventually (about three and a half years from when he had gone into the wilderness for forty days), led to his eventual passion and crucifixion, where he totally submitted his life and destiny into God’s hands. He was led to the Cross by the sinful activities and decisions of ordinary men and women like you and me. In 2013, in the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches, Lent starts on February 13th, this date is known as Ash Wednesday and Lent ends on March 30th. This latter date falls on the Saturday between Good Friday, which is the day on which Jesus was crucified and Easter Sunday. This Saturday is always the last day of Lent.

The day before Lent starts is called Shrove Tuesday in this country and it comes from an old English word meaning “to confess”. Shrove Tuesday has the traditional practice of cooking pancakes, this uses up the last fat to be consumed before Easter Sunday – it is a symbolic fasting time following Jesus. Ash Wednesday, the start of Lenten (the word is another old English word, which means “lengthen” due to the time of year, as the daylight in the northern hemisphere get longer), comes from the custom of expressing abject humility for our sin by marking ourselves with ashes. We then, like the Lord Jesus we follow, seek over Lent, to grow in spiritual maturity and discipline by, like Jesus, taming our appetites by abstaining or giving something we unnecessarily rely upon, up and meditating on what the coming seasons of Christ’s Passion (where we acknowledge His suffering and crucifixion) and Easter mean. This in turn should sharpen up the direction that we are called to pursue in serving Christ as

his disciples.

There is considerable debate about how this Lent practice first became a formal part of the Church's life but, it is very clear that in marking the period as a preparation for that which is to come - the Crucifixion and Resurrection then give us the opportunity to feel and identify with what it cost Jesus to be the Christ and in greater depth and feeling, to worship Him in every aspect of our lives.

Revd. Stephen Henderson
08/02/2013

The New UKCC

On 14th January 1981, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba granted the permanent charter to the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation at a conference in Prasanthi Nilayam and since then, changes of Office bearers in the organisation has traditionally taken place on 14th January worldwide. This date coincides with the Hindu festival of Makar Sankranti which marks the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere, a period which is considered to be highly auspicious.

"Office bearers are guides who walk the path they wish others to take; they shall not command or punish, they can persuade and advise. The name Sathya Sai is attached to each wing of this Organisation. It is Sathya Sai that inspires each activity of each wing. This fact has not been taken to heart by many of you. Sai is the inner inspiration and light for each worker."

"Be always in the attitude of the servants; that is the best training to become Masters. Everyone must feel equally entitled to the Grace that can be won by Seva."
Sathya Sai Speaks vol. 10 pages 222-224 & 259.

We thank you for completing your period in office. We pray that you will continue to work for the Sai Mission. We also welcome new members who have taken up positions in centres and wings.

I am pleased to announce the Central Council members for 2013:

National Chair	Dr Kiran Patel
National Vice Chair	Mr Jamie Raju
National Secretary	Mrs Gayatri Bikoo
National Spiritual Wing	Dr Veeru Mudigonda
National Service Wing	Mr Mukund Patel
National SSE Wing	Mrs Vidyulatha Narayan
National Youth Wing	Mr Shyam Jamnadas
Region 1	Mr Yoges Yogendran
Region 2	Mr Senthil Kumarathevan
Region 3	Mr Sam Sambanthan
Region 4	Mr Ketan Gokani
Region 5	Mr Kailash Venkat
Region 6	Mrs Nadia Eley
Region 7	Dr Kumi Pillay

Region 8

Dr Bhaskar Ram

We thank Ms Bhadra Patel (R2) and Mr S. Yoganathan (R3) for their support in the Council.

We feel honoured to have been given the opportunity to serve in this Divine Organisation and are here to support you in your roles.

Jai Sai Ram!

Gayatri Bikoo, Secretary UKCC

Trust Matters

Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust Update

This year, the Trust resolves to be proactive in communicating directly with you. The way that we shall do this will be twofold:

Firstly, we shall be, on occasion, contributing articles to 'Love and Light' to let you know of any significant matters that it feels are relevant to such a public medium. Secondly, it will intermittently be sending PowerPoints out, via Dr Kiran Patel, for distribution to all Centres and Groups. These will be much more detailed about our activities, aims and objectives.

Current Trustees:

The Trustees at present are: Mr Kishin Khubchandani (Chairperson), Mr Ashok Bhagani (Treasurer), Mr Phil D'Costa (Secretary), Mr Mel Griffin, Mr Khushal Jethwani, Mr Chuni Nathwani, Ms Shobhna Patel, Rev Rosemary Perry and Dr Surendra Upadhyay.

Collaboration with the UKCC:

At its meetings the Trust is joined (as has been a longstanding tradition) by the National Chairperson of the SSSSO UK, Dr Kiran Patel. In a reciprocal arrangement, one of our Trustees, Mr Mel Griffin, has kindly been sitting in on UKCC meetings, since early 2012. In this way, Kiran can keep Trustees abreast of SSSSO UK matters and similarly Mel can keep the UKCC informed on any Trust matters that they need to know or want to ask about.

Trust Meetings 2012/2013:

In 2012, the Trust met six times in its own right.

It also formally met with the UKCC and Dr Goldstein on May 7th in Hertfordshire. One of its meetings, held on June 24th at the Sathya Sai Bookshop, included the presence of Mr H J Dora, a Director of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation/member Prashanti Council. The Trust appreciates his time, wisdom and guidance at its meeting. It met with the Board of Directors of the Sathya Sai School Leicester (SSSL) in July in South Oxhey (again, in conjunction with the UKCC). It met with the SSSL BoD again on 20th August, when it jointly met them with the SSSLPTA and other SSSL parents, in Leicester. On August 28th it met with members of the UKCC in South Oxhey. In addition, it combined its December 2nd

meeting with personally thanking Dr Samuel Sandweiss and his wife, Sharon, in South Oxhey, for giving so freely of their time in the UK, which was spent both talking to and inspiring many UK devotees all around the country.

Recent Meetings with SSSWF members:

In 2013, over the 20th and 21st January, members of the Trust met collectively and individually with the new head of the SSSWF, Mr Gary Belz and fellow SSSWF Director/Chair of Prashanti Council, Dr Narendranath Reddy. On the 21st they were joined by Mrs Marianne Meyer, member of Prashanti Council and of the International Education Committee. The Trust really appreciates these senior international figures giving their valuable time to not only directly communicate with the main spokes of the Sai organisation in the UK but also to have face-to-face meetings with individuals. The Trust thanks Kiran for assisting in making all these arrangements run so well - especially in the face of extreme weather conditions.

Recent Donation:

Many of our decisions are made by email. Often, this is because a disaster may occur that needs urgent financial help. Such a situation occurred at the end of December/start of January this year. As you may have heard on the news, floods and related dangerous earth slips/subsidence occurred in Sri Lanka at that time. Initially, we heard that heavy rains had battered Sri Lanka since the middle of December 2012, causing floods and landslides, which killed 36 people and affected over 300,000 people. Later, on 21 December 2012, reports stated that, "...over 56,000 people sheltered in 171 evacuation centres; almost 1,500 houses were destroyed and more than 4,800 homes were damaged". In liaison with the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation of Sri Lanka, the Trust sent £20,000 to assist the local Sai organisation in building low-cost permanent homes for some of the displaced flood victims.

Article submitted by the Sri Sathya Sai Charitable Trust UK



Visit by Ambassadors of the Sai Mission

UK was fortunate to have the presence of the two senior most leaders of our Organisation namely, Mr Gary Belz (Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation) and Dr Narendranath Reddy (Chairman, Prashanti Council) from 17 – 22

January 2013. Their primary purpose for the visit was to serve as guest speakers to the 2 day National Sathya Sai Orientation Conference and to interact with devotees, Office Bearers and management teams of the Sathya Sai School (Leicester) and ISSE.

Whilst mankind can design and prepare, it has no control on the outcome. The National

Conference planned for the 19th / 20th January was no exception which had to be cancelled due to extreme wintry weather conditions - a touching spiritual reminder not to think about the fruit of one's actions.

On 20th January, members of the UKCC and UK Trust had the privilege of meeting the special guests.

Various subject areas were covered. There was positivity expressed regards the Council with a sense of unity in their working and support provided to regions, centres and devotees in general. It was however important to enhance efforts towards a broader understanding of the purpose of the Organisation to ensure everyone worked to a common goal of serving the one mission - the Sai Mission. It was also thought imperative to serve the wider community to enable people to experience and benefit from Baba's Love

On the invitation of non-Sai speakers at centres, Dr Reddy reminded members that it was important that devotees familiarised themselves with teachings of Bhagawan Baba in the first instance since what He has provided was the quintessence of everything that exists in the scriptures and the holy books. There isn't one area that Baba hasn't touched upon during His tenure. Inviting speakers from non-Sai background could deviate devotees from the powerful messages of Baba's teachings and cause unnecessary confusion.

With regard to problem areas and their resolution, it was essential to categorise them either into higher or lower priority. If the issues impacted Human Values of Love, Peace, Righteousness, Truth and Non- violence, then they would be considered a priority and immediate action was warranted. Relatively, one could consider other issues of lesser importance.

We were also reminded to exercise caution when using e-mails, as they could be copied to various people and could lead to unnecessary misunderstandings and distortion. Baba too used to say that 'email' was 'easy mail!' It was therefore considered good practice to phone the individual concerned and resolve the issues directly rather than using emails if possible.

On the 21st January, our special guests had the opportunity to meet the Board of Directors of the Sathya Sai School (Leicester) and Board members of ISSE (Institute of Sathya Sai Education).

Gayatree Bikoo

Youth Wing - Me Myself and I - My Personal Experience

At 5:50am on Sunday the 24th April 2011, I was awake as I was just about to leave my house to drop my family to the airport when, I received a call from a good friend. Thinking at the time she was calling to wish my parents a safe flight, little did I expect the words she was about to say. Like many, I was in complete shock and disbelief that our dear Lord had left His physical form.

Just after I heard the news I was unable to think straight and many questions were processing

in my mind. The main question being, why did he leave us now when we all face so many obstacles in our lives? How could I be so selfish? Swami is the true definition of selflessness, for many years Swami had undergone physical pains as a consequence of being restricted to His ageing body. However, with His infinite love for His devotees he continued to Grace us with His Divine Darshan. We should all remember, Swami IS the God of all Gods. So why limit the formless to a form? If we read, watch and listen to Swami's words, for many years he has told His devotees that His body would not be on this earth forever and we should realise the true divinity within.

Swami has taught us many lessons during His time on earth, and it is easy to listen to these teachings, but the true challenge is to practice them. At the end of the day, we are all human and it is understandable to say we cannot help but be distracted by this Maya and feel saddened by the loss of the physical form. We should all remember our experiences with Swami to help us realise this divinity.

I was fortunate to be born in to the Sai fold and I received my first Darshan of Swami on my 5th birthday in Brindavan with subsequent trips to follow. However, Swami's true purpose in my life was only apparent to me when I participated in the National Youth Pilgrimage in November 2004 for His 79th birthday. This trip was the first of its kind as the youth from the UK would travel to see Swami whilst conducting medical camps over five days. Knowing I wouldn't be allowed to be part of the trip, as I was only 15 at the time and not technically a "youth" the thought didn't cross my mind until, one of the brothers asked me if I had the option, would I consider being part of the group? This being potentially my first group trip to see Swami I agreed without a second thought and he said on my behalf he would speak to Shitubhai (who was National Youth Coordinator at the time) who agreed. This pilgrimage was a journey to develop spiritually. Prior to the arriving in Prashanthi, monthly meetings and all night bhajans were organised with the encouragement of personal Sadhana. This trip definitely changed my life, being able to go to villages serving people under Swami's name was a great honour and having Swami's Darshan at such an auspicious time during His birthday was a true blessing. I clearly remember the golf buggy Swami came to Darshan in, His hair looking particularly volumised and His radiant smile. Additionally we were blessed to see Swami in His array of colourful robes he wore on special occasions (the deep red during the convocation ceremony and Swami's beautiful white robe on His birthday).

Another experience I would like to share is from the 2nd National Youth Pilgrimage which took place two years later in November 2006. My yearning to see Swami again came soon after the announcement that another National Youth Pilgrimage was to take place. This pilgrimage was a true test of faith as I felt there were many hurdles I had to pass before I could see the light that was Prashanthi Nilayam. The more I yearned for His Darshan the more challenges I faced. Eventually jumping the hurdles the path was clear and I was enroute for Prashanthi. I remember as we drove past Puttaparthi airport and as I saw the Ganesh statue in the middle of a roundabout just as you enter the main road I was overcome with emotion as I couldn't believe I was actually there.

Then, all of a sudden in the midst of my teary moment the coach driver started driving more manically than a normal Indian driver. I was holding on for dear life thinking Swami had just turned off the light of this tunnel! I had no idea what was going on. As we were speeding through the village we could see large groups of people congregated, another unusual sight was the Ganesh gates were closed. The driver sped through the main gates and just stopped outside the South Indian canteen and lo and behold Swami had just driven out of the Sai

Kulwant Hall and watched us drive in to His humble abode! God welcomed us into His home! This was the beginning of an amazing two weeks.

The UK group were graced over these two weeks with special seating to have Swami's Darshan. During this busy period, we were addressed by eminent speakers of the Sri Sathya Sai Trust, the brothers performed for Swami on numerous occasions, and the sisters were fortunate to perform on Ladies Day. Another special treat included watching the Harlem Globe Trotters perform at the newly inaugurated indoor stadium in Swami's presence.

Another experience I would like to share also happened on this trip, this was not Swami's physical Grace but more of a reminder he of omnipresence. One day after having my lunch, a friend and I decided to make a phone call by the STD/ISD phone booths by the Gayathri temple within Prashanthi Nilayam. I'm not sure how but a Russian devotee managed to slip in between us in the queue. About two minutes after sitting in the queue the devotee tapped me on the shoulder and started talking in Russian. I apologised and told her I only knew English. She then started saying "Baba! Baba!" and attempted to say a few phrases in Russian. I still didn't understand so I pointed to Swami's picture and said "yes that is Baba". How ridiculous of me, of course she knew who Baba was! She then said "I see Baba", and thinking that she didn't know what time Darshan was I added "yes so do I in the Kulwant hall, get there for about 2pm so you can queue and have His Darshan." Then she slowly said "no, I see Baba in you!" At this moment my eyes opened wide and I had the most puzzled look, she pointed to my heart and said "I see Swami in your heart" and then she started silhouetting Swami's crown around my head.

We should all reflect and cherish our memories with each other of the moments we had with Swami in His physical form. We should all be honoured that we were alive whilst this Poorna Avatar came down to earth and blessed His devotees. Remember that Swami's life was His message and His mission was simple... to spread and practice the essence of the five human values: Love, peace, truth, non-violence and right conduct realising our divinity within. This mission by no means has ended in fact, it has just begun! Our duty as devotees is to have firm faith and see the mission through, see divinity within each soul and remember...

There is only one religion, the religion of Love;
There is only one language, the language of the Heart;
There is only one caste, the caste of Humanity;
There is only one law, the law of Karma;
There is only one God, He is Omnipresent ~ Baba

With humility and reverence I pray that Swami gives us the strength to overcome any maya (attachment) we had to Swami's physical form and continue to spread and live by His good name and message.

Jai Sai Ram

Gobika Mohandas
Bromley Sai Centre, Region 1

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