

Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conferences

A report by the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

With Divine Blessings and Approval of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sai educationists all over the world are preparing for the Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference to be held in Prasanthi Nilayam from 20 to 22 July 2008. The conference theme will be: "Principles, Authenticity, Accountability and Service to Mankind". This will be a unique opportunity for Sai educationists everywhere to contemplate deeply on the spiritual teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba which have inspired and guided the Sri Sathya Sai Education movement throughout the world. The objective of this conference is to establish a universal understanding of these principles so that these could be applied authentically in all Sai Education Programmes everywhere. Organised jointly by the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation and the All-India Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, the Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference will bring together Sai educationists active in SSEHV, SSE teachers and teacher-trainers, educators in Sathya Sai Schools and Institutes and leaders of Sathya Sai Organisations from India and more than 80 overseas countries.

In accordance with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Guidance and Instructions, 84 national and regional Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conferences are being held in countries around the world in preparation for the Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference. Of these, 80 Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conferences had already taken place by the end of May 2008. There are 73 countries participating in these Pre-World conferences. This issue carries highlights of Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conferences held in different geographic regions.

North America

Three national Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conferences were held in Canada, the United States and the West Indies. The Pre-Conferences afforded a fresh opportunity for Sai educators to come together from different regions of the vast continent and share their experiences and love for Bhagawan that had motivated them to adopt Bhagawan's Divine Teachings into a variety of educational programmes over the past thirty years.

United States

Thirty-five Sai educators, Young Adult leaders and senior office bearers from the United States gathered in Los Angeles on 3 May 2008 for a Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Conference convened by Dr. David Gries, the Zone Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation in North America, in preparation for the World Education Conference in July.

Dr. Michael Goldstein, Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, discussed the themes of the July Conference—Spiritual Principles, Authenticity, Accountability, and Service—and stressed the need for *unity*. Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Director of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, also spoke about the need for unity and extolled Sathya Sai Educare as a way to help people to understand and practice the five Human Values, the underlying value being Love. Dr. William Harvey of the Prasanthi Council also added insightful comments. These inspiring talks, encouraging all to work together in unity, set the tone for the rest of the meeting.

Dr. Ronne Marantz, member of the Education Committee of the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, provided perspective on the evolving Core Syllabus.

Mrs. Berniece Mead, National SSE Coordinator, and Mrs. Bea Flaig, National Coordinator for SSEHV, reviewed the long and rich history of educational programmes in the U.S. and facilitated discussions on how to meet challenges facing the programmes. Mrs. Doris Hampton, the Community SSEHV Coordinator provided a stimulating example of educational programmes working in cooperation with the community that had been widely recognised. The last part of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of creating a U.S. Institute of Sathya Sai Education.

Canada

Canada organised its Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conference in Toronto on 26 April 2008. A total of 138 delegates came from all over Canada to participate in the conference. The conference began with Dr. V.P. Singh, the Central Co-ordinator for Canada welcoming the delegates and introducing the concept of Sathya Sai Educare. Mr. T.R.Pillay, the former Principal of Sathya Sai School in Toronto then gave a succinct review of the *Global Overview of Sathya Sai Education*, focusing specially on the future perspectives, emphasising how all should work in unity to achieve the highest goals of education espoused by Bhagawan. Dr. David Gries, the Zonal Chairman, emphasised the importance of suffusing all educational programmes with Bhagawan's Love which was the undercurrent of all Human Values. Dr. M.V. Kanchana, National Education Co-ordinator for Canada, explained the theme of the conference and introduced the four topics of the World Conference: Principles, Authenticity, Accountability and Service to Mankind. This highly interactive conference brought out the unity and love underlying all Sai education programmes and underscored the close relationship between educational and other activities of the organisation. The participants finally articulated some questions for consideration at the World Conference.

UK and Continental Europe

Five national Pre-Conferences took place in the UK, Germany, Hungary, Spain and the Netherlands by the end of April 2008.

UK and Ireland

The United Kingdom Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conference was held on 19 April 2008 at the Sathya Sai School in Leicester - the 'Midlands' area of England. The event brought together 106 participants from the UK Sathya Sai Organisation, the British Institute of Sathya Sai Education (BISSE) and the Sathya Sai School in Leicester. The UK National Chairperson of the Sathya Sai Organisation,, Rev. Rosemary Perry, opened the conference.

After a meditative and inspiring film on Educare, presented by the National Youth Coordinator, Mathan Arulvel, five key speakers addressed the participants. Mr Ishver Patel, Central Coordinator for the UK and Ireland highlighted the Regional Education Consultation held in England in January 2007, the National Sathya Sai Education Conference held in September 2007, and finally the objectives of the present Pre-World Conference – all preparing the Sai educationists in the UK and Ireland for the World Education Conference in July 2008. Mrs. Carole Alderman followed this with a brief account of BISSE activities and an update of recent changes in its administrative structure. Dr. Prabodh Mistry, the representative for Sathya Sai Schools to the UKCC, gave an update and overview of the Sathya Sai School in Leicester. Mrs. Lakshmi Puvanendran presented a succinct and comprehensive account of every aspect of SSE in the UK and Mr. Jiten Patel, Head of Training in BISSE, summarised SSEHV in both the community and in wider society, and described resource development and training.

This was followed by four workshops on the theme: 'Principles', 'Authenticity', 'Accountability' and 'Service'. The programme closed with a Human Values song from one of BISSE's repertoire and sung in unison: "Happy are they who in friendship, willingly work together."

Germany

A National Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Conference was held in Bad Wildungen on 5 April 2008 with the participation of national and regional SSE Coordinators, teachers who are implementing Human Values in their classes and conducting SSEHV Programmes all over the country, teacher-trainers of the ESSE Institute and Young Adult Coordinators – a total of more than 30 participants. The meeting was inaugurated by the Central Coordinator Petra von Kalinowski, followed by her detailed presentation of the *Global Overview of Sri Sathya Sai Education*. Another presentation laid stress on the "Sathya Sai Schools all over the world" and gave some vivid examples of their educational programmes.

In different workshops the participants reflected on Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Divine Teachings which lay the foundation of Sathya Sai Educare. Another session was devoted to the issue of maintaining authenticity in Sai Educational Programmes and the accountability of the teacher's work and how all these could contribute to the service to mankind which epitomised Bhagawan's teaching of Love All, Serve All.

Spain

Twenty-nine participants from the mainland/Balearic Islands and Canary Islands joined a Pre-World Education Conference held in Madrid on 19 and 20 April 2008. The speakers pointed out that Sai Educationists in Spain had been active with educational programmes for the past thirty years and the Pre-Conference had served well to unite all these individuals. It was a delightful surprise to many to be aware of the progress and achievements that had been made in the area of Sathya Sai Education in different parts of the country and how this had helped in their individual transformation. Everyone felt that the Pre-World Conference had given a new momentum in the area of Sai Education.

Africa and the Middle East

Six national Pre-World Conferences were held in South Africa, Mauritius, Zambia, Kenya, Oman, and Kuwait by the end of April 2008. Reports from the early conferences already held demonstrate how the universality of SSEHV transcends culture, religion and ethnicity.

South Africa

The South African Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conference held in Durban on the 17 February 2008 was attended by 600 delegates. Organised by the Sathya Sai Institute of South Africa, delegates included the institute faculty members, principals and teachers of all four Sathya Sai Schools, Sathya Sai Education Council members, members of the Boards of Management of Sathya Sai Schools and eminent educationists.

Among the recommendations made were: to encourage more qualified youth to join SSE Teacher Training Courses; to set up a Teacher Resource Centre to facilitate teacher training courses in other parts of the country, namely Cape Town, Johannesburg and the Natal Midlands area. In the area of SSEHV, it was resolved to adopt a State School and to introduce Bhagawan's Educare principles into the teaching process; to train 220 public school teachers this year; and to address the specific needs of children with learning disabilities.

Mauritius

A Pre-World Conference was held on the 27 April 2008 at Anandam, Mauritius, with 200 participants in attendance. Notable among the participants were senior officers from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, the Queen Elizabeth College, the Indian Ocean Centre, Islamique Des Mourides, and eminent educationists from the Indian Ocean Island.

Presentations highlighted the role and function of the Indian Ocean Centre for SSEHV, the ongoing SSE and SSEHV programmes and the needed refinements in the light of the draft Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation Guidelines in circulation for Sathya Sai Schools and Institutes.

Zambia

A Pre-World National Education Conference was held at The African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (TAISSE) in Zambia from 7 to 9 January 2008. In attendance were 30 teachers from the three Sathya Sai Schools in Ndola, TAISSE faculty members, and 20 senior officers of the Sathya Sai Organisation. Speakers included Mr. Victor Kanu, Mrs. Genoveva Kanu, Sathya Sai School Administrators and senior teachers.

The Pre-World Conference discussed the principles and practices of Sathya Sai Education. Regular training workshops were suggested for Sathya Sai School teachers so that they could become conversant with the principles and the philosophy of *Sathya Sai Educare*.

Oman

The Sultanate of Oman held a Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World National Sai Education Conference on 28 March 2008 in Muscat. Organised by the Education Wing of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation in Oman under the leadership of the National Chairperson Mr. G. Venkatesh, 82 participants attended the conference including teachers from Middle East Nursery School, SSE and SSEHV teachers and Sathya Sai Organisation Office-bearers.

They presented various aspects of Sathya Sai Education, beginning with the Divine Teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba which underlie Sathya Sai Educare. The participants explored the historic development of the Sathya Sai Education programmes and institutions; Two well-structured group discussions followed these presentations to prepare the delegates to participate effectively at the World Education Conference in July.

Latin America

Sri Sathya Sai Education has been taken to heart in Latin America. There are currently 8 Sathya Sai Educational Institutions and 14 Sathya Sai Schools in 11 countries in south and central America.

Bolivia

February and March 2008 saw three Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Conferences organised in La Paz, Sucre, and Cochabamba by the National President of the Sathya Sai Organisation in preparation for the Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference in July. Luz Marina Genera, member of the ISSE in Colombia facilitated a meeting for 30 participants who discussed the themes of true education, the *Sathya Sai Educare*, the role of teachers as exemplars of Human Values, and teaching methods, techniques, and evaluation.

Asia-Pacific (Outside India)

Four national Pre-Conferences were held in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Singapore by the end of April 2008.

Australia

A National Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Conference was organised by the Australian Institute of Sathya Sai Education in March 2008 in Sydney. Sai educationists attending the meeting included current staff and students of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Advanced Diploma students, SSE teachers, and professional teachers in the Sathya Sai School.

The research findings were presented by Advanced Diploma students of the Australian Institute on the impact of SSEHV on education, health, parenting and youth. The National Education Coordinator, Mrs. Padma Ayyagari presented a new vision of a unified, harmonised and consolidated Sathya Sai Education programme for Australia.

New Zealand and Fiji

Sri Sathya Sai Organisation in New Zealand held a national Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conference in the Mangere community within Auckland on 19 and 20 April 2008. Thirty-eight participants including senior members of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education NZ, SSEHV Teachers, the Sai School Principal, and Institute of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE) teachers attended the conference.

The major themes discussed were spiritual principles underlying Sathya Sai Educare; a comparison of SSEHV and SSE; a critique of current curriculum and practice; educational standards and quality assurance; coordination between Sai education functions and other activities of the Sathya Sai Organisation; and priority action areas in Sathya Sai education.

On 6 April 2008, the Sathya Sai Institute of Human Values in Fiji organised a Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conference at the Sathya Sai School, Drasa, Lautoka, Fiji. Twenty-three participants were in attendance including the Institute staff, Sathya Sai School teachers, SSE teachers and Office bearers of the Sathya Sai Organisation of Fiji.

Singapore

The Singapore Sri Sathya Sai Organisation organised a Sri Sathya Sai Pre-World Education Conference on 5 and 6 April 2008. The event was attended by 216 participants including Bal Vikas teachers involved in the SSE activities in Singapore and teachers from the Sathya Sai School of Singapore.

The two invited keynote speakers, Dr. Art-ong Jumsai and Ms. Lorraine Burrows from the Sathya Sai School and Institute in Thailand explained the purpose of the World Education Conference and what was required from the deliberations in each country. The spiritual principles underlying Sathya Sai Education were explained and the need for enhancing teacher training and teaching-learning resources were emphasised. Lorraine Burrows, in addition to her talks on the World Conference topics, also conducted a workshop on lesson planning.

Epilogue

Our Lord Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba gave His Guidance to convene Pre-World Sri Sathya Sai Education Conferences. His Guidance became an Instruction to Sai Educators all over the World. His Instruction became the Inspiration for the assemblies of Sai Educators worldwide who met, shared, and communicated in a spirit of selfless Love and Unity was achieved.

The Sai Educators are now prepared to effectively participate in the Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference and to receive the Divine Message of our beloved Bhagawan.