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Spirituality in Education:

Promoting Children's Spiritual Development through Values

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on research in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) at the University of Warwick regarding an educational programme, which is based on what are perceived to be universal values. The programme aims to contribute to the spiritual development of children in schools, which is one of statutory requirements of mainstream school provision in England and Wales. The Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) offers material which seeks to promote 'human values'. The paper explores what these values are and why they are perceived to be of a universal nature. The focus on values introduces spiritual dimensions which are examined with reference to the educational contexts in which they are conveyed. The contents of the programme and the development from its inception are described. The paper is based on ethnographic data collected in classrooms and other educational environments where the programme has found application.

Introduction: The Research Project at Warwick

This paper is about research in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) at the Institute of Education in the University of Warwick, which examined the application of a relatively new educational approach in British schools. The programme which takes this approach is called Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV); as its name suggests, it is connected with a Hindu-related new religious movement, the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation UK (SSSSO), an organisation which formed around 1940 in India and has spread since the mid-1960s throughout the world. The research project at WRERU was a one-year ethnographic study (January–December 2003, with an extension until summer 2004) funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB). The project was carried out by a team consisting of the authors of this paper and Professor Robert Jackson.

The project followed a previous study at WRERU, which was concerned with another values-based educational programme: 'Living Values: An Educational Program'. This, too, is sponsored, among other institutions, by a Hindu-related new religious movement, the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU), an organisation which was founded in the mid-1930s in India and, like SSSSO, has spread since the late 1960s throughout the world. (see Nesbitt and Arweck 2003; Arweck and Nesbitt 2004a, 2004b)

Both programmes have thus a broadly Hindu background; they are both based on the notion of values and both aim to transmit values in an educational context, which is why values-based education programmes have evolved within their organisations. Therefore, the two WRERU projects complement one another in a number of aspects and one of the aims has been to compare and contrast the data which were collected. (see Arweck, Nesbitt and Jackson 2005a, 2005b)

Part of the project's brief was: to explore how the Sathya Sai organisation and the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programme are connected with one another; to find out how the SSEHV programme is introduced into schools in Britain and how it is used in the classroom, once it has found its way into a school. Therefore, our research sought first of all to identify schools which have adopted this approach (the organisation which promotes the programme—the British Institute of Sathya Sai Education or BISSE—claims that over 100 schools are implementing the programme across the UK) and then to look at the chain of transmission involved in this process, tracing the steps which the programme has taken from its origins to the application in the classroom. Our brief did *not* include an evaluation of the educational or pedagogical merits of the programme or an assessment of its effectiveness and impact in terms of the programme's stated aims. This would have involved a judgement of its general value and thus a value judgement, which the overall purpose of this research did not allow for.

Fieldwork consisted of contact with and participant observation in primary schools and at two Sathya Sai centres, as well as informal interviews with those who are part of the school environment (head teachers, teachers, advisers, pupils, parents, governors), those who are associated with the SSEHV programme (those who have developed it, those who promote it, those who train people to use it). For one of the authors, it also involved going through the formal training course for those who intend to use the SSEHV programme in a school or other educational contexts. We also followed the steps which led to the development of the Sathya Sai Parenting Programme. Its first course (which consists of seven sessions) started in late October 2003.

In order to gain an understanding of the Sathya Sai organisation and its teachings, fieldwork included participant observation in two urban centres of the organisation in Britain. This component of the fieldwork involved two

levels of observation: firstly, attendance of activities which involve the whole community of Sai devotees, for example, devotional singing (*bhajans*), study circles, special festivals, and secondly, the educational wing of the organisation, intended for the children of Sai devotees, namely Sai Spiritual Education or SSE (formerly referred to as Bal Vikas).

Setting the Framework

The SSEHV programme needs to be seen in a wider context: on the one hand, it can be seen against the background of a variety of educational initiatives, concerned with values, which originate outside mainstream publicly funded education in Britain and which aim to influence or complement mainstream education. There is, for example, Human Scale Education, a movement which promotes small schools, and Antidote, which describes itself as a 'Campaign for Emotional Literacy'. Further, there are schools which are based on a particular ethos. In contrast to faith-based or faith schools (Gardner, Cairns and Lawton 2005), a particular *Weltanschauung* underlies such schools, for example Steiner (or Waldorf) schools or Brockwood School (founded by Krishnamurti in 1969). There is a growing number of web sites which offer material for spiritual and moral education. There are other values-based programmes, such as Living Values New Zealand, which was developed by independent Schools of New Zealand in 1999, a programme which has no connection with the Living Values programme mentioned above—it is a coincidence that the two programmes have the same name.

Therefore, an educational programme like SSEHV represents one resource among a wide variety of available resources. Further, the Sathya Sai organisation is not the only religious or spiritual group to be associated with an educational programme; there is, as mentioned, the Living Values Programme, which is sponsored by the Brahma Kumaris; there is also the Virtues Project,

developed in 1991 by Linda Kavelin Popov, Dan Popov, and John Kavelin, all of whom are Baha'is and have thus drawn the ideas of the Project on Baha'i teachings and concepts. (see www.virtuesproject.com, access date: 16 & 17/9/02) These programmes can also been seen in the wider context of character education (Lickona 1993, 1996), values clarification (Kohlberg 1981), moral education, emotional intelligence (Goleman 1995), and spiritual intelligence (Zohar and Marshall 2000).

Another aspect is the experience or even experimentation of new religious movements (NRMs) with religious nurture. As NRMs have matured over the years and a second generation has grown up in them, they have explored ways of providing religious nurture for their young and have developed concepts and structures regarding the way in which this should be done.

Yet another aspect concerns ideas and practices promoted under the 'label' of the New Age and human potential movement, with various projects and programmes promising to develop human potential. Also, the rising importance of personal trainers or coaches is connected with this.

A final, yet crucial component of the wider context are changes in government policy and curriculum development, especially the requirement of the 1988 Education Reform Act that schools pay attention to what is referred to as SMSC—the Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural development of children. A complex set of developments occurred since the 1988 Act, resulting in a considerable number of discussion papers and guidelines which the various bodies responsible for curriculum policy issued. In 1990, the NCC (National Curriculum Council)—then responsible for curriculum policy—issued various forms of non-statutory guidance to schools (see Taylor 1998:5; NCC 1990a; 1990b). These guidance documents referred to 'values' with regard to both SMSC and citizenship. In 1993, the NCC issued a discussion document on

spiritual and moral development (NCC 1993), which was re-issued by NCC's successor body, SCAA (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority), in 1995 (Taylor 1998:6). This document encouraged schools to develop a whole-school approach and a values statement (ibid). However, at that time, curricular guidance consisted in policy proclamation and exhortation to schools and these documents lacked statutory force and resource support so that pronouncements on values were of low priority (see ibid). It was the statutory requirement of 1992 that OFSTED inspections report on SMCS development of pupils which had a considerable impact on schools with regard to the place of values in the curriculum and in the life of the school. (see ibid) Values were accorded new attention when SCAA set up the 'National Forum on Values in Education and the Community' in the mid-1990s, whose 'values statement' was adopted by SCAA to support school practice (Taylor 1998:8). In 1997, SCAA held further consultation meetings with a view to develop curriculum guidance for SMSC development in pupils (see ibid), while the QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)—the successor body of SCAA—developed material for successful school approaches. When the QCA issued draft guidance for pilot work in November 1997, March 1998, and May 1998, one of these documents, the 'Draft Directory of Resources' of March 1998, included material by the Brahma Kumaris, but an introductory note stated expressly that "The resources in this directory are not endorsed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority". This initiative was then overtaken by another development, namely the inclusion in the curriculum—as from September 2002—of education in citizenship. In England and Wales, citizenship education was introduced as part of the national curriculum for all secondary schools and as a non-statutory part of the curriculum for primary schools.

In summary, the following five points can be made: firstly, the curriculum documents referred to 'values' with regard to both SMCS and

citizenship and encouraged schools to develop a whole-school approach and a values statement. Secondly, most of the documents lacked statutory force and resource support and therefore assigned values low priority. Thirdly, the inclusion of SMCS development of pupils in OFSTED inspections had a considerable impact on the place of values in schools. Fourthly, in the mid-1990s, a special body was set up to discuss values, namely the 'National Forum on Values in Education and the Community', from which a number of documents and projects resulted, most of which speak about a link between spirituality and values. Fifthly, with the ascent of citizenship education, values receded into the background, although it is acknowledged that values are closely bound up with issues concerning citizenship.

The important point is that the definition of values and the role of values in schools (explicit or implicit)—often also in connection with the notion of a school ethos—have been topics which have been discussed and explored throughout the 1990s and have led to a sizeable body of research and literature (see Halstead and Taylor 2000). Those who promote SSEHV draw on this literature. Also, the notion of 'spirituality' has exercised teachers in trying to understand what 'spiritual development' in children should entail—this in the light of a general trend away from 'religion' towards 'spirituality' (Rose 2001). Again, a link emerged between 'spirituality' and values. The recent debate in Britain regarding the creation of faith(-based) schools indicated that the government recognised that such schools had a particular ethos and aimed to bring this particular ethos to schools, even if it may not have been entirely clear what this ethos was exactly. However, what emerges from discussions is that teachers and head teachers clearly feel that the ethos of a school is connected with 'values'—however defined.

Although the introduction of citizenship education has pushed the values debate into the background, educationists realise that values are also

connected with the notion of citizenship. The question of what makes a 'good' citizen involves rights and responsibilities, the role of individuals and communities, the way we behave according to culture and ethnicity, the much discussed ideas of 'respect' and 'tolerance' — topics which are also (or perhaps especially) pertinent to schools of a multi-faith/-cultural/ethnic character. Programmes, such as Living Values and SSEHV engage with the debate about values, values in school, school ethos, and citizenship and those who promote them argue that this kind of programme allows schools not only to meet curriculum requirements regarding Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE) and SMSC, but also to contribute towards preparing pupils for responsible citizenship in multi-cultural Britain.

The SSEHV Programme

The SSEHV programme is described as "a simple and structured method of developing positive values in young people" aged 6 to 16 years (Alderman 1996:8). The programme is based on values which, it is stated, "have underpinned the noble thoughts and achievements of mankind throughout history and which are an inherent part of the human personality" (ibid). The programme is "designed to allow young people to experience and recognise the values for themselves […]" (ibid). The programme provides a method of teaching which "helps children develop their full personalities and potentials" (ibid) and is "essentially a self-development programme, the journey through which may be sometimes challenging, often exciting and always worthwhile" (ibid). The course on parenting, mentioned above, is also described as a self-development programme. The idea of the journey and the challenges which are involved underline the importance of training for those who want to use the programme so that they have gone through this journey themselves and experienced the challenges.

The programme "relies on the positive attitude of the teacher" and the teacher's willingness to teach the values by personal example (see ibid). The part of the teacher as role model elevates the teaching profession and makes it estimable: "Of all the professions, the teacher's is the noblest, the most difficult and the most important." (ibid:9)

The programme is used worldwide and is "developed and culturally adapted for use in countries as far apart as Australia, the UK, Sweden, Canada, India, Malaysia, Thailand and Zambia" (ibid).

Given the technological advances of our time and the rapid changes these have brought to our private and working lives, there are challenges to our moral lives which need to be met. The question is what role education should play to meet such challenges and what the purpose of education ultimately is. (see ibid:9) The SSEHV programme is based on the view that the current focus of education is on the development of intellectual and physical skills, which neglects the development of the full personality and the need to "bring out innate human qualities" (ibid). The programme is predicated on the belief that "True education makes a child fit for life, not just fit to earn a living" (ibid).

This idea is echoed in the "Key Concepts Underlying SSEHV" (Press Release, September 2003):

> — Education should prepare students to be fit for life, not just for earning a living
> — SSEHV never seeks to *impose* rules of conduct on children and the young, but rather, to provide a secure base, through the teaching of human values, from which they may arrive at their own informed decisions.
> — The first rule for parents and teachers is to be good role models.
> — Human values education is for people of all religions or no religion. Any reference to spiritual development within SSEHV is that concerning the "human spirit" i.e. human values, which are non-denominational and non-religious. (punctuation as in original)

Therefore, the programme aims to "enable children and young people to learn the ideals of service to the community and to accept and positively enjoy the differences between other people and themselves. It teaches them to bring love and peace into their family and the community, to respect themselves as well as their parents, teachers and peers." (Alderman 1996:9) The programme aims to address "practical matters, such as good health habits and behaviour" as well as "academic, emotional and spiritual growth"(ibid). The programme aims to counter the trends of this world, which is one of declining morality and human values, a world in which science and technology have advanced to the point where mankind is capable of destroying the entire planet. (see ibid)

The programme is therefore "universally relevant and value-based" and transcends all cultures and backgrounds. Because "Each child is a unique and creative being", s/he "learns to recognise his/her own worth and that of others", when s/he is treated as such. (ibid)

The programme allows for the "examination and thorough development of all aspects of the whole personality" and thus "provides the framework for the growth and expansion of children's creativity" (ibid:10). "It helps understanding by encouraging children to look into what they do and why they do it" and this "may develop a greater awareness of the consequences of their actions" (ibid). This process requires constant practice, hence the programme and the lesson plans in the manuals. (see ibid)

Thus, apart from being a method to develop positive values, the programme is "a tool for the development of character" (ibid:11), because character is the ultimate aim of education (see ibid). The programme wants to encourage young people to get in touch with their own feelings and nurture their awareness of the qualities within themselves which form a good character. This allows them to understand themselves better and to make informed choices about their behaviour:

> In today's multi-cultural and multi-racial society, with its changing norms and expectations, it can be difficult for a young person to know what is right. It is not the purpose of this Programme to dictate the actions of the individual, but rather to offer them a secure base from which they may arrive at their own informed decisions. (ibid)

This process is founded on five values: truth, peace, love, right conduct, and non-violence. These values are considered to be "inter-related" (ibid:14), "unifying", and "eternal core values which are shared and recognised world wide" (ibid). These values are "an inherent part of a person's makeup", but they "need to be drawn out" (ibid). Developing these values is the answer to the current social ills—rising crime, racism, violence, drug abuse, etc. "The process of building and practising these values is the essence of character building."(Majmudar 1998:2)

The Programme can be fitted into the curriculum, as it can be used in PSHE and for SMSC development as well as across the curriculum subjects. How it can be integrated is demonstrated in two booklets which cover Key Stage 1 and 2, respectively (see Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Trust UK n.d.). The values are conveyed (or "taught", see Alderman, 1996: 14) through five teaching components: theme of the week, silent sitting, story telling, group singing, group activities. Silent sitting is an exercise which involves pupils to sit quietly for two or three minutes, becoming aware of their posture, senses, and breathing. Silent sitting can also take the form of guided visualisation, which encourages pupils to imagine times when particular things happened to them and how they felt then. These events link in with the other teaching components. One particular guided visualisation focuses on 'Universal Light', which involves pupils imagining light filling their bodies. The light symbolises purity and wisdom. Silent sitting is usually accompanied by soft music. (see Alderman 1996:51–53)

The values are associated with five fruits: truth is symbolised by an apple, love by a strawberry, peace by a pear, right conduct by a pair of cherries, non-violence by a bunch of grapes. (see ibid:16) Since 2003, the fruits have become animated, like characters in a cartoon, and convey particular messages, for example 'If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours'.

The five values are also related to five aspects of the human person: truth relates to the super-conscious mind (discernment and intuition), love to the energy of the mind, peace to the sub-conscious mind (emotions and memory), right conduct to the conscious mind (the five senses), non-violence to the whole or universal or spiritual (global and environmental awareness). (see ibid:38)

The programme claims to benefit both children and teachers. While it gives children the opportunity to

—explore and discover for themselves what is meant by right & wrong
—develop greater empathy & therefore more compassion for others
—acknowledge the uniqueness, value and worth of themselves & their friends, teachers & families
—take greater responsibility for the consequences of their actions
—discover how to be happy, confident and respectable members of society (see SSEHV promotional leaflet)

teachers benefit from

—ready-to-use lesson plans which require minimal preparation
—calmer classrooms, as children become more considerate towards their teachers and one another
—profound insights into how they themselves respond to situations; improvement of self-esteem after going through SSEHV training (see SSEHV promotional leaflet)

Those who promote the programme offer free training to individuals and schools, such as in-service training (INSET) days or a seven-day course which is taught in modules, the seventh (optional) module leading to accreditation with the Open College Network (OCN).

The modules of the training course deal with the values and teaching components in detail and require participants to become involved, for example by going through various exercises, practising the teaching components (such as silent sitting) and team work, and preparing lesson plans which they then use to teach the group. The last module which leads to the accreditation includes a formal presentation of the programme.

At the time of our research (2003), the training courses were led by a small core of about four to give people who have been closely involved in developing and/or promotingthe programme. Most courses were taking place in the London area, with the occasional course being offered in various parts of England when the number of participants (about a dozen) was sufficient to warrant the organisation of a course. This would usually happen in conjunction with a person active in promoting the programme in their locality. Since 2003, the number of courses has increased and the course locations are on a slightly wider geographical scale, although the number of trainers offering the courses is still relatively small (under ten). The qualifications for being a trainer—such as we are aware of them—are an intimate knowledge and understanding of the programme, an ability to 'deliver' the course, and availability in terms of time and commitment. An aspect of BISSE's role is to monitor quality of training and ability of trainers.

As to the history of the SSEHV programme, it "originated in India in response to the prevailing education policy in the late seventies." (Majmudar 1998:2) The programme bears the name of Sathya Sai, as it emanated from a workshop given by Sathya Sai Baba to an international group of educationists and academics and was developed by the working team as an international programme for application world-wide. (see Majmudar 1998:2) Information about the way in which the programme is received in countries outside the UK is available in reports in the SSEHV newsletter and on the SSEHV web site.

These speak of the successful application of the programme in various cultural contexts and the positive reception at local (school) and government (ministry of education) level, in some cases leading to the inclusion of SSEHV in teacher training programmes. Our research focused on the UK and although we paid some attention to the international dimension of the programme, we did not become aware of any research similar to ours elsewhere, which might have revealed cultural variations in reception.

When the programme is introduced, Sathya Sai Baba is briefly referred to as the person who inspired the programme. No other explicit link is made between the programme and the spiritual values it seeks to convey or their connection with Sathya Sai Baba. It is up to the schools (head teachers and claasroom teachers) to explore this link. The nature and extent of this link are—as we have found during our field research—somewhat sensitive issues and draw attention to an interface between religious movements and community schools which had also emerged in our research on the Living Values programme (see Nesbitt & Arweck, 2003). In Britain, the programme began in the mid-1980s (see Sathya Sai Society for Education in Human Values 1985), but the current manuals were not published until 1995. Further details about the history of the programme and how it developed in this country are below (see section on Sathya Sai Baba).

The British Institute of Sathya Sai Education (BISSE)

In January 2003, the British Institute of Sathya Sai Education (BISSE) was set up to promote the SSEHV programme. BISSE is affiliated to the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Trust UK, a registered charity, which holds the copyright for the SSEHV manuals. BISSE has regional and county co-ordinators who work on a voluntary basis.

According to the press release of September 2003 (7–8), BISSE's role comprises the following: it

—Prepares adults to teach human values to children through nationally recognised and accredited training provided free of charge to participants.
—Studies and develops techniques for teaching children, including course content, lesson plans, teaching methodologies, etc.
—Produces Teaching Workbooks and other resources to enable people to teach SSEHV either in the classroom, or in extra-curricular activities such as after-school/lunch hour clubs, summer camps, sports/drama projects, etc.
—Liaises with other Institutes of Sathya Sai Education around the world, to improve and develop the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Programme for the benefit and upliftment of society.
—Liaises with other educational organisations within the UK to share information about best practice in values education, PSHE and Citizenship.
—Provides information, resources, training and volunteer teachers to schools to enable them to implement the SSEHV programme.
—Provides all appropriate support to individuals and organisations wishing to found Sathya Sai schools.

As to the task of liaising with other Institutes of Sathya Sai Education around the world, there is the Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Bangkok, Thailand, ISSE, set up in 1997, and other, affiliated institutes in India, Africa, and the Philippines. ISSE has issued a manual, 'SAI 2000', a quality standard. The institutes have similar logos (see SSEHV web site: www.sathyasaiehv.org.uk). Regarding the support to individuals and organisations wishing to found Sathya Sai schools, "Sathya Sai Schools […] Follow Sathya Sai Baba's philosophy of education and the SAI 2000 Standards (Sathya Sai Schools' Quality Assurance Manual) […]" (ISSE 2001:2).

Another aim of BISSE's is listed in the programme's January 2003 newsletter: "To contact and introduce the concept of Sathya Sai Education to Academics, the Department of Education and Skills, and other approved local or national authorities"—an aim which is pursued through contacts with

education ministers and representations to the DfES (Department of Education and Skills).

Educare

BISSE's press release of September 2003 (p. 2) also mentions the concept of 'Educare' and states that it is equally fundamental to the SSEHV programme. Educare, it says, "refers to putting the 'care' (and human values) back into all systems of education. It comes from 'educere', a Latin word meaning 'to draw out'." (see also Billington's explication of 'educere' and 'educare') This is underlined by a quote (ibid):

> The word Educare means to bring out that which us within. Human Values are latent in every human being; one cannot acquire them from outside. They have to be elicited from within. Educare means to bring out human values. To 'bring out' means to translate them into action. (Sathya Sai)

The statement adds that "Educare recognises that all life is interdependent and that we share the same essential elements with everything that surrounds us. This leads to the understanding that caring for others actually benefits us, and when we hurt others or the environment we hurt ourselves. (ibid)

Educare fits into a set of care programmes which are promoted by the person who inspired the SSEHV programme, Sathya Sai Baba: Educare is part of 'Sociocare' (service to society) and 'Medicare' (provision of medical resources for people). There is a wealth of material on Educare (including web sites), Gowing (2001), for example, explicates the principles of Educare and traces its origins in Sathya Sai Baba's Summer Showers discourses in Brindavan in 1990.

Sathya Sai Baba

In the SSEHV manuals, Sathya Sai Baba is described as "a world teacher who teaches by example", as someone who has "varying roles as educator, healer,

spiritual leader and social worker" and who "tirelessly works for the welfare of humanity" (e.g. Alderman 1996:66). Thousands of people all over the world are said to have been affected by him. BISSE's press release of September 2003 refers to him as "an international educationalist of world renown and one of India's foremost social reformers" (p. 1).

Sathya Sai Baba is at the centre of an organisation, the Sathya Sai Service Organisation, which has its headquarters in India, in Puttaparthi, Andra Pradesh, where he was born in 1926. At that time, Puttaparthi was a small village in the south of India. Today, it is a town in its own right, of which the Sathya Sai ashram, Prashanti Nilayam, forms a township. For thousands of people (mostly Indians, but also many people from the West), the ashram is a place of pilgrimage, because to be in the presence of Sathya Sai Baba (to have *darshan*) is an important experience for those who consider themselves devotees. According to one source (Harris et al. 1993:311), the organisation claims 10 million devotees worldwide, according others (e.g. Flett 2004), 30 million.

As this is not the place to even sketch a history of this organisation, some brief information about Sathya Sai Baba and the organisation will suffice to convey a sense of this Indian guru and his devotees. Sai Baba claims to be the incarnation of a nineteenth-century mystic or holy man, Sai Baba of Shirdi, a town in the district of Maharashtra, in the north of India, who died in 1918. Sathya Sai Baba claims to be in a line of three such incarnations, the one after him to be Prema Sai. He also claims to be an *avatar*, the living incarnation of God. As the incarnation of God, it is said that he is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

Sathya Sai Baba is well-known for his supernatural or paranormal powers, in particular his 'miracles', such as healing the sick, and materialisations, especially holy ash (*vibhuti*) and objects, such as jewellery or

fruit out of season; also telepathy, precognition, and appearances in devotees' dreams. These supernatural powers are contested, with some people believing that the materialisations are trickery or sleight of hand. So far, Sathya Sai Baba has resisted any attempts to test his powers in scientific experiments or to subject them to academic scrutiny. (see Haraldsson 1987) As is often the case with leading figures like Sathya Sai Baba, his 'unusual' qualities revealed themselves at an early age and (mythical) stories abound which recount how these qualities manifested themselves. Sai Baba's powers and other aspects of the organisation have raised controversy and contention over the years, with allegations reaching a crescendo in 2000 and 2004 — the latter in connection with the screening, on 17th June 2004, of Tanya Datta's documentary on BCC2 on *The Secret Swami*.

The Indian part of the organisation has engaged in a range of charitable activities, notably schools and an institute of higher learning ('a deemed university'), also hospitals and water projects. These sometimes interlink with the values: for example, the African Institute of Sathya Sai Education in Zambia uses values to teach about the use of water in Africa and the founder of the Zambian Sathya Sai School, Victor Kanu, has addressed UN organisations about water management.

The organisation came to Britain in the 1960s, the first branch outside India, where it is officially known as the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation UK. The number of devotees in this country is said to be 10,000 (see Harris et al. 1993:311), but as there is no official membership, it is difficult to know precise numbers. Our own research suggests about half that number of devotees. The organisation consists of local centres which in turn have various sub-groups or wings: spiritual wing (group devotional singing, study circle, workshops, celebration of festivals, etc.), service wing, youth group, Sai Spiritual Education.

The Sai Spiritual Education underlines the emphasis of education in the organisation and the role of the schools which have been set up within it. These Sathya Sai schools run on the principles of Sai Baba's teachings, in particular the five values which form the basis of the SSEHV programme. Sathya Sai schools have been established around the world, for example in Thailand, Australia, and Canada. The most well-known is 'the Miracle School' in Zambia because the changes it has wrought in students are described as so dramatic as to border a miracle. Sathya Sai schools are independent schools which follow the respective national curriculum of the particular country in which they are located, but have a strong 'Sai ethos' in form of the human values. Two such schools exist in the UK, with a third seeking to transform its out-of-school-hours activities into a fully fledged school in its own right during our research period. Given the activities which BISSE lists in its brief, there is some link between BISSE and the Sathya Sai schools.

Sai Spiritual Education is an activity of the Sai centres and consists in lessons outside school hours for devotees' children. The classes are taught by Sai devotees and are based on a curriculum devised internally by the organisation, with national examinations at certain stages. Although these lessons, too, include human values, they are broader in that they educate children about other world faiths as well as about Sathya Sai's teachings.

As mentioned, the five 'core' values on which SSEHV is based are central to the Sai teachings. Sathya Sai Baba started the five values in the 1970s and intended them as a programme for children. In 1983, during an international conference, he stated that *all* children should be taught the five values, as a way of complementing their cultures and values, but adjusted to their respective countries. A number of teachers from the UK attended this conference and this led to the first manual in the mid-1980s, as mentioned. According to Sathya Sai Baba, values in education will bring world peace—a notion closely related to

the idea of 'universal peace' which forms a central part of many other religions, including new ones, such as the Unification Church, the Brahma Kumaris, the Sri Chinmoy movement. The material of the first manual was further developed in the early 1990s and led to two programmes, 'Education in Human Values' (EHV) and 'Sathya Sai Education in Human Values' (SSEHV), both based on the five values. Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) runs in parallel to SSEHV and the two can be said to complement one another. While the basic structure (teaching components) of the SSEHV programme remains, the manuals have gone through a number of editions and the material has been refined and updated in that process and tailored more closely to children's ages. Our research indicated that the impetus for further development comes mainly from internal assessment and feedback, mainly through the volunteers who use the programme in various contexts, including schools. Our research did not reveal the processes (if any) involved in seeking feedback from schools as to how the programme is received or adapted. (However, endorsements for the effectiveness or impact of the SSEHV programme in schools are actively sought.) The manuals are now also translated into other languages. Additonal material, such as new CDs and posters, have been developed. Some of these resources have now also become freely available online, on the SSEHV web site.

While the SSE programme is distinctly religious or spiritual in content, SSEHV focuses on values without reference to any religious framework which, it could be argued, allows the spiritual and non-denominational (or universal) elements to come to the fore. The claim that the values are universal and universally applicable is derived partly from the status accorded to Sathya Sai Baba by his followers, partly from the Hindu tradition. Sai Baba's emphasises the importance of the five core values for mankind, especially as men and women come to realise their essential divinity. This teaching has to be seen against the Hindu belief that the world is in Kali Yuga, an age (*yuga*) of

decadence, violence, and darkness, during which all individual and social values are undermined. According to Sai Baba, society (in India and the West) is permeated with secularism and materialism. As the incarnation of divinity, his task is to reintroduce the Eternal Teaching (*Sanathana Dharma*, the traditional Hindu teaching), which is valid for all mankind. (see also Taylor, 1984)

SSEHV in Schools

Field research consisted of a complex set of opportunities to explore the application of the programme, including classroom observation, attendance of assemblies, conversations with teaching staff and pupils, contact with advisors in County Council Education Services. Overall, we had contact with ten primary schools in various parts of the country, rural, urban, and inner-city. Classroom observation was possible in five schools and contact with teaching staff was possible in a further four schools. One school did not wish to co-operate with our project at all. One school was found to have been working with the other of the two programmes, EHV.

We found five LEA advisers who are aware of the SSEHV programme, one of whom is no longer in post. Of these, three have organised INSET days for schools which included workshops for the programme. Some schools have subsequently taken up the programme. This is one way in which the programme reaches schools.

Another way is personal recommendation, which was the case for one of the schools where we observed. A third way—and probably the most usual way—is through people who have completed the SSEHV training course—sometimes parents—who have a connection with the school, either as teaching assistants or in some other capacity. These volunteers are likely to approach the head teacher or deputy head teacher at some point and bring the programme to

their attention. However, it is ultimately up to the head teacher or senior management team to make the decision of whether and how exactly to adopt the programme. A fourth way in which the programme reaches a school is through summer camps or holiday schools (now referred to as Values Alive Events, which started in London in 2001.

In general, schools include the programme as part of their provision for PSHE (we have observed only one assembly in which the material was used and have not observed any Religious Education lessons where SSEHV would have been used), sometimes in conjunction with other activities, such as circle time or singing practice. Circle time is widely used in primary schools to develop pupils' personal and social learning. It involves a range of activities which are designed to promote such skills, with pupils sitting in a circle. (see e.g. Mosley 1993; 1996; Taylor 2003) In most schools, the material is used in a flexible way—flexible in the sense of time (a rotation of school terms in which SSEHV is used, e.g. one term out of three) and flexible in terms of content. Whether SSEHV is used in conjunction with other spiritually related programmes depends on individual schools and individual teachers, although the time constraints which the curriculum imposes make it unlikely for a range of such programmes to be used simultaneously. Some schools use programmes designed for use in assemblies where cross-references to the values in SSEHV may be made, but this will depend on the skill of the teachers leading assemblies to draw out such links.

The lesson plans in the manuals are designed for a 60-minute lesson, but most schools have 35- or 40-minute lessons and this makes it impossible to go through one lesson plan in one session. Some teachers therefore choose components from the lesson plan, often the theme of the week and the story and maybe the song or a group activity, or spread a lesson plan over more than one session. In schools where the volunteers provide the SSEHV lessons, a 60-

minute slot is provided once a week for a whole lesson plan to be covered. In one or two schools, the volunteers' strict adherence to the lesson plan appeared to go against the teachers' general flexible approach to teaching materials. This highlighted the difference in attitude between teachers and volunteers towards the way the programme is used. The former see the material as a resource, to draw on and to draw from, as they see fit, while the latter see it a set programme which follows a step-by-step sequence. The teachers' approach modifies the universalisation of the programme in terms of resisting 'uniformity' of delivery.

In one school, a 'Values Club' was offered to pupils during lunch time, but this has now moved from the school premises to a community centre in order to make it available to children from outside the school and to expand the facility. The club now takes place at the weekend and the idea is spreading to other schools.

Classroom teachers appreciate the fact that the lesson plans can be used with minimal preparation, although they do adapt and select according to what they believe is appropriate for the children they teach or for particular situations which arise regarding behaviour. However, teachers do look critically at the material and scrutinise its pedagogical merits: some indicated that some of the stories are a bit 'twee' and they are able to anticipate pupils' responses.

To what extent teachers share the model of the person or the child which underlies the SSEHV programme or perceive it as problematic did not feature in any conversations with classroom or head teachers. Our impression is that the philosophy implicit is in the programme is not directly addressed by teachers. They see SSEHV as a pedagogical tool or a means to an end—children behaving better, satisfying a particular curriculum requirement, namely looking after children's spiritual development—rather than a programme whose philsopsophical approach they share. Headteachers saw the programme as

fitting in with the school's ethos or overall humanistic outlook, but mainly saw in general social terms, such as 'being quiet and discussing things is good for pupils' and 'providing space for pupils to think about things which they would otherwise not think about'.

Schools appreciate that training for the programme can be provided and value the assistance of the volunteers. However, no-one felt able to attribute any improvements in the school directly to the fact that the programme was used. The benefits are there, (head) teachers commented, but they could be the result of a combination of measures adopted by the schools and the benefits could not quantified. The benefits were of a qualitative nature, reflected in the general atmosphere and pupils' behaviour. Most (head) teachers said that the programme was complementary to what the school already does, which is why they adopted the programme — it fitted in with the school's 'ethos'.

None of the schools could (or would) claim that SSEHV brought a clearly measurable improvement to the issues which each school wanted to address, but they all agreed that the programme is a valuable part of their strategies of tackling behaviour issues and that the degree or measure of the impact was not that important.

Conclusion

This paper sought to show what the SSEHV programme is, how it is embedded in the wider educational context, to provide some information about the organisation from which it emerged, the Sathya Sai Service Organisation, and to report on observations in schools. The latter suggest that schools use the programme — in curriculum terms — as part of PSHE provision, but see it as contributing more generally to the overall behaviour of pupils. The programme thus forms one part of a school's strategy to encourage good behaviour and

responsible action in pupils. Unsurprisingly, the commitment of the head teacher or deputy head teacher or subject co-ordinator plays a vital role not only in bringing the programme to the school, but also in maintaining the momentum for implementation over a sustained period of time.

Despite some educationalists' reservations, the attraction of the programme seems to be that it is not tied to any set religious framework or belief system, while conveying moral values and providing space for pupils to discuss and reflect on important issues, especially issues which are directly relevant for pupils' behaviour in their daily interactions with one another and school staff.

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