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Peace and Non-Violence: Sathya Sai Education in Human Values in British schools¹

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Not only is peace one of the values at the heart of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV), it is also presented as one of the programme's outcomes. The SSEHV programme seeks to promote 'human values' in British schools, also with regard to educating pupils from different social, cultural or ethnic backgrounds towards greater tolerance and understanding. The programme aims to achieve this as part of the statutory provision of physical, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship education as well provision for the social, moral, cultural and spiritual (SMCS) development of pupils in community schools. This article reports on an ethnographic study of SSEHV in the UK, which was conducted by members of the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) at the University of Warwick. The research reported here focused on the development of the programme, its contents (including the value of 'non-violence' and the practice of 'silent sitting'), its application in the classroom, and its reception by pupils and teachers. Further, this article seeks to embed SSEHV in the wider theoretical context of peace education and suggests theoretical discussions to which this investigation contributes.

Introduction

There is a growing literature on peace education—the *Journal of Peace Education* attests to it—which reflects a broad and interdisciplinary field. A range of aspects are associated with this topic: the history (see e.g. Smith & Carson, 1998), philosophy, and definition of peace education, including different approaches, among them gender (see e.g. Reardon, 2001), social justice and equality (see e.g. Schniedewind & Davidson, 1998), ecology, and human rights (see Smith and Carson, 1998). The definition of peace and peace education presents its own challenges, with different cultural perspectives and personal experiences informing and shaping particular emphases. 'It is clearly', as Salomon (2004) states, 'different things for different people in different places'. Smith and Carson (1998) illustrate culturally different approaches to understanding peace and explain that these are necessarily value laden and reflect personal and local understandings; also, inherent in them is a particular worldview or model of how the world should work. The distinction between 'negative' and 'positive' peace forms a broad framework: the former refers to practices which limit and prevent war and collective violence—it includes disarmament, the international court system, conflict resolution, school security, and peace keeping forces; the latter is about establishing life-long values as a pre-condition to peace and building relationships (with self and other, self and society, self and planet) (Hicks, 1988; Boulding, 1991). Peace education is understood to be the transmission of knowledge needed to achieve and maintain peace. Peace education is also about developing critical and reflective capacities to apply knowledge in order to control, reduce, and eliminate forms of violence. Peace education is thus both a philosophy and a set of learned skills and strategies for social change (see Harris & Morrison, 2003). Educational theorists promote a combination of both negative and positive peace concepts so that the empowerment of children to change their situations is at the heart of peace education (see Hutchinson, 1998).

Conceptions of war, peace, and peace education are informed and underpinned by the teachings of the world religions and their interpretations by theologians (such as

Teilhard de Chardin) and writers (such as Leo Tolstoy). The thought and practice of well known practitioners of non-violence, such as Mahatma Gandhi or Martin-Luther King are further sources of motivation and inspiration. The various religious underpinnings of peace point to a close connection between religious education and peace education (see Baratte, 2007; Jackson & Fujiwara, 2007a), thus a dimension of the curriculum and education (in the wider sense), which is related to values rather than a discrete 'form of knowledge' (Hirst, 1965) or 'realm of meaning' (Phenix, 1964). The notion of values links education to citizenship education, another growing international interest (see also Jackson and Fujiwara, 2007a).ⁱⁱ

Peace education also relates to the philosophy of education, spanning the theories of Plato, Rousseau, Dewey, Skinner, and others, as it does to the pedagogy of educational thinkers, such as Maria Montessori. The view of human nature, as proposed by peace education, is congruent with the progressive educational tradition derived from Rousseau, Dewey, A. S. Neil, Illich, and Paolo Freire: it is the conception of human goodness, with individuals finding their true identity and expression through adhering to non-violence (see Synott, 2005: p. 9–10).

Shanti (peace) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) figure recurrently in India's literature. The Sanskrit invocation of peace (*om shanti*) is frequently used by Hindus. *Ahimsa* is central to Jain teaching as well as being a key principle in Mahatma Gandhi's 'experiments with truth' (1927). However, as Vidal, Tarabout and Meyer (2003) show in their collection of essays, violence and non-violence sit side by side in Hinduism, with many aspects of Indian society and culture effectively contradicting ideas, often taken for granted since Gandhi, about the role of non-violence in Hinduism. This article traces one small part of the interaction of these Indic values with Western institutions, by examining the development, application, and reception of an educational programme, with historical linkages to Indian tradition which incorporates them. The programme in question, currently being used in a small number of British primary schools, is Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV). According to Carol Alderman, its principal author, '[t]he programme teaches [children and young people]

to bring love and peace into their family and community (1999a, b, p. 9). The individuals who have designed the SSEHV programme have identified peace as one of the core values that the programme teaches and as an outcome of the programme as a whole. Indeed, according to a long-time advocate of SSEHV, O-A Jumsai, 'It is through education that peace will be established in the world' (2005).

After suggesting theoretical contexts (other than peace education) in which this study can be situated, and discussions to which our findings can contribute, the article briefly describes the research project on which it is built. Our summary of the evolution of the SSEHV programme necessitates some attention to the controversial South Indian guru, Sathya Sai Baba (b. 1926). He is the spiritual leader of the Sathya Sai Service Organisation (SSSO), a Hindu-related organisation which originated in India around 1940 and has spread across the globe since the mid-1960s. We then describe the SSEHV programme itself, with particular reference to peace and non-violence. Next, pupils' and teachers' reactions to the programme are reported before our concluding reflection on the programme and on the challenges posed to researchers.

The following two sections outline theoretical frameworks to which our research contributes: the interface between the study of new religious movements and educational programmes on the one hand and the place of 'values' in British schools, as embedded in curriculum subjects.

The interface between new religious movements and schools

The Sathya Sai Service Organisation UK (SSSOUK), the institutional structure which is linked to the promotion of the SSEHV programme, is not the only religious or spiritual group to be associated with an educational programme. The authors of this article earlier investigated the Living Values programme, which is sponsored by another Hindu-related organisation, the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) or Organization (BKWSO).ⁱⁱⁱ Like the Sai movement, BKWSU was founded in India (in the mid-1930s) and has spread internationally since the late 1960s (Nesbitt & Arweck, 2003; Arweck & Nesbitt, 2004a and b). It, too, promotes peace, including it

as one of its 'living values'. Thus, the teaching of peace through SSEHV belongs to the larger picture of peace education initiatives by religious bodies. Other examples include Baha'i initiatives (Gervais, 2004) and the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education project set up by Warwickshire Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) (Nesbitt & Henderson, 2003).

In terms of South Asian studies and religious studies, Sathya Sai Baba's devotees arguably constitute not so much a religion or denomination as a *sampradaya*, a guru-led movement (Nesbitt, 2007, forthcoming; Nesbitt & Arweck, 2006). For sociologists of religion, the institutionalised devotion to Sathya Sai Baba, on which a complex international network of organisations established in the latter half of the twentieth century is based, fits the criteria for classification as a new religious movement or NRM (Arweck, 2006). As the SSEHV programme has developed under Sathya Sai Baba's auspices and through the efforts of his devotees and those associated with them, one theoretical context is the study of the maturation of new religious movements (NRMs) and their interaction with secular society.

Another relevant aspect of the interface between NRMs and mainstream education is their experience of religious nurture. With most NRMs coming to prominence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, some now include a second or even third generation and so have been faced with issues concerning the socialisation and education of the young. Some NRMs have experimented with providing religious nurture for the new generation(s) and developed educational structures based on their concepts of how this should be done.^{iv}

Having outlined the interface between religious organisations and education in schools, we now turn to the place of 'values' in the British curriculum.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and citizenship in UK schools

Educational studies offer another frame for this study. In the UK, schools' uptake of SSEHV and similar initiatives follows on from changes in government policy and resultant curriculum development. The 1988 Education Reform Act made it statutory

that schools pay attention to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) development. The way in which provision for this requirement has subsequently evolved is complex, with a range of discussion papers and guidelines issued by the bodies responsible for curriculum policy. Importantly, discussions about how to promote SMSC development led to a debate about 'values', a debate which continued through most of the 1990s and revealed the congruity between values and citizenship. Exploration of SMSC development and values led from non-binding recommendations to teaching aspects being subject to inspection (by the Office for Standards in Education or OFSTED) and finally to assimilation in the citizenship debate. The inclusion of SMSC development in OFSTED inspections in 1992 had a noticeable impact on the place of values in schools. Due to the shift of emphasis in the debate, from values towards citizenship, and the introduction of citizenship education in primary and secondary schools (although only mandatory from 2002 in the latter), values have somewhat receded into the background, although there is a strong values element in citizenship education in England and Wales, one of its three strands being 'social and moral responsibility' (see e.g. <http://www.citizenship-global.org.uk/> access date 14 Sept 2005). The statutory curriculum areas of religious education (Jackson & Fujiwara, 2007b) and personal, social and health education (McLaughlin & Alexander, 2005) also provide scope for peace education.

The last two decades have seen an increased legitimation internationally for peace education (Synott, 2005) and recognition of the imperative to create 'peaceable classrooms' (Levin, 1994; O'Reilly, 1993). In this context, not only SSEHV's emphasis on the values of peace and non-violence, but also its induction of pupils into the practice of 'silent sitting' (Jumsai, 1985, p. 18), as described by Jackson and Nesbitt (1993, p. 108), calls for wider recognition by teachers and researchers.

Having sketched theoretical contexts within which our study is set, we provide details about the research of SSEHV.

The research project at Warwick

The ethnographic study reported here was conducted by the authors from January to December 2003 in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) at the Institute of Education in the University of Warwick, UK. Research was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB).^v The SSEHV project built on a previous study (October 2001–September 2002), which was concerned with ‘Living Values: An Educational Program’ (see above) and belonged to a succession of Warwick studies concerned with *sampradayas* represented in England, as outlined by Nesbitt and Arweck (2006), and religious nurture.

Observation of and reflection on education for peace contributed to the wider exploration of how the Sathya Sai organisation and the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) programme are connected with one another, how the latter is introduced into schools in England and Wales, and how it is used in the classroom, once it has found its way into a school. According to the British Institute of Sathya Sai Education (BISSE), the organisation which promotes SSEHV in the UK, over 100 mainstream schools (primary and secondary) are implementing the programme across Britain. Therefore, our first step was to identify schools which adopted this approach. We then investigated what we conceptualise as a ‘chain of transmission’ involved in this process: the steps which the programme took from inception to application in the classroom.

Fieldwork consisted of contact with and participant observation in eleven schools (all primary, all in England) and (mainly) two (urban) Sathya Sai centres (in England), informal and semi-structured interviews with those who are part of the school environment (head teachers, deputy head teachers, teachers, local authority advisers, pupils), those who are associated with the SSEHV programme (those who developed it, promote it, offer training, run ‘summer camps’ or ‘holiday schools’^{vi}). Fieldwork also included participation in formal training in the programme, the SSEHV Foundation course, available to those who wish to prepare themselves for using the programme in schools or other educational contexts.

The aim of participant observation in the Sai organisation (outside the school context) was twofold: firstly, to gain an understanding of the organisation's structures (in the UK and worldwide), teachings, practices, and membership; secondly, to explore the possible overlap or continuity—in terms of organisation or content—between the organisation and the programme. Fieldwork in the Sai centres again involved two levels of observation: firstly, activities which bring together Sai devotees (for example, devotional singing (*bhajans*), study circles, particular festivals); secondly, the educational wing which organises classes for the children of Sai devotees, referred to as Sai Spiritual Education or SSE.^{vii}

The next section examines the connection between Sathya Sai Baba, the leader of the Sai organisation, and the history of the education programme which bears his name.

Sathya Sai Baba, the Sai organisation and the evolution of SSEHV

Where there is purity of heart there is beauty of character.
Where there is beauty of character there is harmony in the home.
Where there is harmony in the home there is order in the nation.
Where there is order in the nation there is peace on earth.
(Sathya Sai Baba quoted in Bhagwati, 2004)

This quotation illustrates (a) the explicit importance of peace in Sathya Sai Baba's teaching, (b) the assumed, possibly causal connection between individual qualities and global peace, and (c) the centrality of Sai Baba's sayings for individual followers: they derive from them guidance as well as justification for their actions. The quotation also exemplifies the affirmative, uncritical tenor of Sai Baba's utterances. These observations strengthen the need for introducing the controversial figure of Sai Baba and raise questions about the implicit and explicit assumptions underlying the educational programme which is associated with him.

The SSEHV programme 'originated in India in response to the prevailing education policy in the late seventies' (Majmudar, 1998, p. 2). It bears the name of Sathya Sai, as it developed from a workshop which Sathya Sai Baba gave to an

international group of educationists and academics; a working party then shaped it into a programme for world-wide application (see *ibid*). When the programme is introduced to newcomers, Sathya Sai Baba is referred to as the person who inspired it. The manuals (Alderman, 1999a, b; 2001, 2002) include a page (e.g. Alderman, 1999a, p. 66) about him, describing briefly who he is, what he teaches, and his impact on those who encounter him. (see also below) Described as ‘a world teacher who teaches by example’, Sathya Sai Baba has ‘varying roles as educator, healer, spiritual leader and social worker’ and ‘tirelessly works for the welfare of humanity’ (*ibid*). Thousands of people all over the world are said to have been affected by him. BISSE’s press release of September 2003 (p. 1) refers to him as ‘an international educationalist of world renown and one of India’s foremost social reformers’. According to Sathya Sai Baba, values in education will bring world peace and this view underlies the rationale of the SSEHV programme.

These summary acknowledgements give no indication of Sathya Sai Baba’s standing among devotees. He claims to be the incarnation of a nineteenth-century mystic or holy man, Sai Baba of Shirdi (in Maharashtra, north India) who died in 1918,^{viii} and to be one of three such incarnations, with Prema Sai to follow him. Sai Baba also claims to be an *avatar*, the living incarnation of God. He 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 jewellery), but also telepathy, precognition, and appearances in devotees’ dreams (e.g. Haraldsson, 1987). Sathya Sai Baba is at the centre of the Sathya Sai Service Organisation, whose headquarters are in India, in Puttaparthi, in Andhra Pradesh, where he was born in 1926.

The Sai organisation formed around 1940 in India and has spread since the mid-1960s throughout the world. The first branch outside India was established in Britain in the 1960s. The number of devotees in the UK is estimated to be 10,000 (see Harris *et al.*, 1993, p. 311). However, as there is no official membership, it is difficult to establish precise numbers.^{ix} The organisation consists of local centres which run a range of wings: a spiritual wing (group devotional singing, study circle, workshops,

celebration of festivals, etc.), service wing, youth group, and Sai Spiritual Education (SSE). SSE is congruous with the emphasis of education in the Sai organisation and the Sathya Sai schools (see e.g. Institute of Sathya Sai Education, 2001). It consists of (usually weekly) lessons outside school hours for children of devotees. Taught by Sai devotees, these classes follow a nation-wide internally devised curriculum. Although this includes human values, the content is broader, including instruction in other world religions and Sathya Sai's teachings. Central to the latter are the five 'core' values which form the basis of SSEHV. These are (in this order) right conduct, peace, truth, love and non-violence. They are considered to be 'inter-related', 'unifying', and 'eternal core values which are shared and recognised worldwide' (Alderman, 1999a, p. 14).

According to Taylor (1984), Sathya Sai Baba indicated these values in his teaching from the 1950s: they are vitally important as men and women come to realise the essential divinity that is at the heart of everyone. As the incarnation of divinity his task is understood by his followers as reintroducing *sanatana dharma* (ageless righteousness/Hindu tradition) in the current age of decadence (*kali yuga*). In this regard, SSEHV can be seen as supporting this task in resisting prevailing social attitudes. Sathya Sai Baba introduced the five values in the 1970s as a programme for children and stated during a conference in 1983 that *all* children should be taught the five values, as a way of complementing, but adjusted to, their respective cultures.

Sai Baba's pronouncement moved teachers from the UK who attended the conference to develop the first manual, which was ready by the mid-1980s (Sathya Sai (U.K.) Society for Education in Human Values, 1986). The material was further developed in the early 1990s and led to two programmes, Education in Human Values or EHV (which is outside the present article's remit) and Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV). In Britain, the programme thus began to take shape in the mid-1980s, but the current manuals were not published until 1995. SSE runs in parallel to SSEHV and the two are to some extent complementary to one another. While the

former is distinctly religious or spiritual in content, the latter (as used in England and Wales) focuses on values without reference to any religious framework.

Having provided details about the inspiration and origins of the programme, we now turn to the steps which lead it to British schools, a process which we conceptualise as a chain of transmission.

The ‘chain of transmission’

Free training (for all or parts of the SSEHV Foundation course) is available to individuals and schools, either as training for teachers on school premises (in-service training or INSET) or as an intense seven-day course or in modules spread over seven weeks. The seventh (optional) module leads to a certificate from the Open College Network (OCN), a British organisation which provides accreditation for academic and vocational skills in tertiary education. For those who promote the SSEHV programme, training is considered important for gaining an understanding of, and ability for, teaching it. The modules deal with each value and teaching component in detail and require participants to become involved—through the experience of various exercises, practice of the teaching components (such as silent sitting) and team work, and preparation and delivery of lesson plans.

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. Volunteers act as BISSE’s regional and county co-ordinators. BISSE’s brief includes a range of activities which fall into five clusters: firstly, training adults to teach the programme’s human values, shaping the programme’s content and teaching methods, and producing workbooks and other resources for teaching SSEHV in the classroom or as part of extra-curricular activities. Secondly, liaising with other institutions, such as other Institutes of Sathya Sai Education around the world and educational organisations in the UK. Thirdly, making provision for schools, including information, resources, training, and volunteer teachers, so that they can apply the

SSEHV programme. Fourthly, introducing Sathya Sai Education to academics, the Department of Education and Skills, and other approved local or national authorities (SSEHV Newsletter, January 2003). Fifthly, providing 'appropriate support to individuals and organisations wishing to found Sathya Sai schools' (BISSE press release, September 2003).

Contrary to what one might expect, most of the primary schools in our study which adopted the programme were not characterised by multi-cultural populations. Such schools were the exception. Most schools had a high proportion of white English pupils, with some of them being voluntary aided or church schools. The motivation for adopting the programme varied according to the needs and policy of the school. In one case, a school was prompted by an OFSTED inspection report requiring attention to PSHE provision. In another case, the senior management team wanted to address issues around pupil behaviour. In some cases, the (perceived) fit between the school's established ethos and the programme contents led to its adoption. In some cases, the decision was made by the senior management team, without involvement of the general teaching staff. Most of the teachers we observed were not members of ethnic minorities. However, as might be expected, some SSEHV volunteers were from an Asian background, but by no means the majority.

The programme is designed in such a way that it can fit into the curriculum, either as part of PSHE or SMSC development or across the curriculum subjects. Separate booklets (also available on the SSEHV web site: sathyaiaehv.org.uk) lay out how SSEHV can be integrated in PSHE for Key Stages 1 and 2 (ages 5–11, the primary school period in the UK). The link is made with citizenship education, which forms an 'integral part', so that pupils 'develop a sense of their own self worth' and learn 'to respect and appreciate others, regardless of their cultural differences' (p. 1 of Key Stage 1 booklet). It is described as a means for children to learn about democratic rights and responsibilities and how to become involved in their own local community, while being aware of the wider context of the world (see *ibid*).

The following three sections deal with the contents of the SSEHV programme. We first describe the programme as a whole, before focusing on two of the five core values: peace and non-violence. The frequent quotations from the manual are a deliberate attempt to allow the programme to speak for itself and thus convey some of its quality through the way it expresses its intentions.

The programme

The programme's values are conveyed or 'taught' (Alderman, 1999a, p. 14) through five teaching components: theme of the week, silent sitting, story telling, group activities (in this order). The SSEHV programme is a 'simple and structured method of developing positive values in young people' aged 6–16 (Alderman, 1999a, p. 8). It is based on values which 'have underpinned the noble thoughts and achievements of mankind throughout history and which are an inherent part of the human personality' (ibid, p. 8). The programme is 'designed to allow young people to experience and recognise the values for themselves' (ibid) and provides a method of teaching which 'helps children develop their full personalities and potentials'. It is 'essentially a self-development programme, the journey through which may be sometimes challenging, often exciting and always worthwhile' (ibid).

The manuals describe the five teaching components in detail (see e.g. Alderman, 1999a, pp. 40–5). The theme of the week tends to be a quotation which expresses the lesson's focus value. Quotations, short poems, and universal prayers develop memory and concentration (ibid, p. 40). Silent sitting is considered a tool for finding 'inner peace' (p. 41). The exercise can be described as time for reflection and is often accompanied by music. It is comparable to guided visualisation. Stories are 'an important medium for teaching young people about life, their own identity, and their relationship to the world about them'. Group singing is 'a medium through which young people may experience their emotions' (p. 44) and express themselves as well as facilitates learning. Group activities 'are designed to help children to understand and trust each other' (p. 45). Also, learning through practical experience is thought to be

more easily absorbed and retained. Group activities include role play, attitude tests, games, group work, and creative work.

The five values are related to five aspects of the human being: right conduct relates to the conscious mind (the five senses), peace to the sub-conscious mind (emotions and memory), truth to the super-conscious mind (discernment and intuition), love to the energy of the mind, and non-violence to the whole or universal or spiritual (global and environmental awareness) (see *ibid*: 38). Sometimes the Sanskrit words for the values are used: *dharma* (right conduct), *shanti* (peace), *sathya* (truth), *prema* (love), *ahimsa* (non-violence). Each value is associated with a set of sub-values, for example, right conduct includes: self-help skills (care of possessions, diet, hygiene, modesty, etc.), social skills (good behaviour, manners, not wasting, etc.), and ethical skills (courage, duty, punctuality, etc.). (see *ibid*: 28)

Students learn to associate the values with five fruits: right conduct with a pair of cherries (because they remind of a pair of arms and legs); peace with a pear (because the two words are spelled in a similar way); truth with an apple (because it reminds of the story of Adam and Eve); love by a strawberry (because it is shaped like a heart and is sweet); non-violence with a bunch of grapes (because non-violence results when the other four values are put into practice and the grapes symbolise unity). (see *ibid*, p. 16)

The following two sections examine *shanti*, the value of peace, and *ahimsa*, the value of non-violence, in more detail in order to explain the way in which they are understood and communicated within the SSEHV programme. Explanations from the manuals, lesson plans, and curriculum tables inform these sections.

The Value of Peace

Peace relates to the sub-conscious mind or the emotions and is thus a state of emotional equilibrium. This occurs when we realise that fulfilment is within us, not dependent on outside stimuli. The mind controls and directs the senses. The senses gather information from around us and stir the mind. Impressions are held in the sub-conscious memory. They disturb the mind's equanimity and rob it of peace. Therefore,

emotion within has to be seen, accepted, and controlled. Unpleasant experience can be turned into experience which strengthens the individual's mental muscles. (see Alderman, 1999a, p. 20). This notion is reinforced by a quotation from Robin Skynner, author of *Life and How to Survive It*: "allowing a single intense feeling of hate or violent self-pity—let alone nurturing it—can sometimes contaminate your internal atmosphere for the rest of the day!" (ibid).

The value of peace has a number of associated values: attention, calm, concentration, contentment, dignity, discipline, equality, equanimity, faithfulness, focus, gratitude, happiness, harmony, humility, inner silence, optimism, patience, reflection, satisfaction, self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-control, self-discipline, self-esteem, self-respect, sense control, surrender, understanding, virtue (see ibid, p. 21, 28). The 'related values' seek to express aspects of the value of peace and elicit its various meanings. They also serve as the focus of values lessons to convey the different aspects. The intention is that, over time, the cumulative effect of such lessons increases pupils' awareness and experience of the various facets and extends their mental and emotional 'horizon'.

The SSEHV manual uses Mother Theresa's saying that 'Peace begins with a smile' (see ibid, p. 20) to connect peace with happiness: we smile when we are happy and contented. Contentment is further explored: we achieve it, when we cease to want things which the senses convey to us. Willpower allows us to discern real needs and superfluous desires. When the urge to want things stops, the inner agitation stops—we feel peaceful. (see ibid, p. 20) The (negative) linkage between desire and peace is conveyed through stories which reinforce the motto 'ceiling on desire'. They show that acquiring more and more material things to satisfy desires only results in a less and less peaceful life.

The relation between peace and the sub-conscious, the mind's control of the senses, and the individual's willpower to discipline desires (put a 'ceiling on desires') throws the responsibility of recognising the 'value' of peace and practising it on to the individual: peace, the manual states, begins with the individual. From the individual, it

spreads: it draws circles into the community, the nation, and the world (see *ibid*). In Sathya Sai Baba's words: " When there is peace in the individual, there will be peace in the family. When there is peace in the family, there will be peace in the community. When there is peace in the community, there will be peace in the nation. When there is peace in the nation, there will be peace in the world." (quoted *ibid*)

In order for the individual to control the mind, 'whole-hearted service to others' is recommended (*ibid*). This can be taught by group activities, one of the programme's teaching components. The rationale is this: if the mind is engaged in good thoughts and deeds, it cannot be occupied with useless, random thoughts. The practice of 'silent sitting' (another teaching component) also assists in this. Learning, the manual states, requires self-esteem, calmness, and freedom from anxiety. Both silent sitting and self-reflective exercises in the group activities foster these qualities. (*ibid*)

The lesson plans on the value of peace focus on particular related values by arranging the teaching components around the objective of thinking about their importance and relevance in our inner and outer lives. They also explore some aspects experientially in guided visualisation or activities. In order to give an idea of what the lesson plans look like, here is the outline of one of them (1.14): the values related to peace are patience and self-discipline. The objective is 'To think about the importance of patience and self-discipline in obtaining the things in life that will make us happy'. The quote is 'Being kind brings peace of mind'. The text for the 'silent sitting' revolves around thinking of oneself as a rubber ball on which everything just bounces off without disturbing one's inner peace. The story ('Tom's Peace of Mind') and following questions are about a seven-year-old boy's dilemma—should he be in time for an audition for a coveted part in the school drama or stay with his sister, who is hurt, until help arrives? The group singing is 'peace is flowing through me'. The suggested group activity is either colouring in a picture with animals or a piece of music and exploring what music means to pupils. The lesson concludes with pupils forming a circle and saying 'Good values show us how to succeed peacefully' (see Alderman, 1999a, p. 141ff)

The value of non-violence

The value of non-violence is the most obvious companion to the value of peace. Non-violence results from the combined practice of the other values (right conduct, peace, truth, love) and symbolises the value of unity. It means that 'life is lived without harming or violating anything else' (ibid, 26). This is considered 'the highest achievement of human living, encompassing respect for all life—living in harmony with nature, not hurting by thought, word or deed' (ibid). Non-violence has two aspects: the psychological—compassion for all—and social—including appreciation of all cultures and religions and care for the environment (see ibid). An exposition of the SSEHV programme dating from the mid-1980s refers to the two dimensions of non-violence in relation to living beings (absolute non-violence is impossible, therefore inflict minimum violence) and elements of nature (do not waste water, fire or energy). 'Who gives us life? God. So water is nothing but the manifestation and an element of God himself.' (Jumsai, 1985, p. 16)

The SSEHV manual describes non-violence as 'universal love'; it does not violate the natural laws which create harmony with the environment. It arises from the practice of the other values: truth (inspired by intuition) activates love. Love in turn stems the stream of desires, which engenders inner peace. This leads to right conduct. Therefore, for those who practise non-violence, the whole world is their family.

Non-violence relates to the spiritual or universal aspect of being and is the sign of 'a well integrated, well-balanced personality' (Alderman, 1999a). This aspect allows for a range of experiences: awe and wonder for the universe; a feeling for unity of all; the desire to improve quality of life for everyone; feeling part of a larger whole; feeling part of the planet and feeling love for everything on it; awareness of an underlying order of Creation; love and respect for the diversity in the human family. Therefore, 'True knowledge is that which establishes harmony and synthesis between science on the one hand and spirituality and ethics on the other.' (ibid, 26) There is considerable overlap between this exposition of non-violence and that in 'Human values in relation

to human beings' (*Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Hatfield Monthly Magazine*, June 2003, pp. 7–12, especially pp. 10–11).

The teaching components which convey the value of non-violence are quotations (theme of the week), story telling, and group activities. The related values include, for the psychological aspect, benevolence, compassion, concern for others, consideration, co-operation, forbearance, forgiveness, good manners, happiness, loyalty, morality, universal love, and, for the social aspect, appreciation of other cultures and religions, brother/sisterhood, care of the environment, citizenship, equality, harmlessness, national awareness, perseverance, respect for property, social justice. (Alderman, 1999a, p. 29) The lesson plans are structured as described above.

Lesson plan 1.24 has the following outline: the lesson is about 'living without waste' and 'use of time'. The objective is 'To realise time is precious and that it is important how we spend it'. The quote is 'Watch your Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character, and Heart' (an often quoted motto of Sai Baba's). The 'silent sitting' is about awareness of the peace inside and that there is always time to do the things one needs to do. The story ('The Early Bird') and following questions are about a little girl who is always late, but experiences the joys of being on time, after she is lured out of bed one day by the beautiful song of a bird. The group singing is 'The Word is Watch' and the group activity is about how to use time in different situations. The lesson closes with pupils forming a circle and affirming: 'We will watch how we spend our time'.

As the practice of silent sitting is considered to promote inner peace, we shall briefly describe its place in the SSEHV programme.

Silent sitting

Although the silent sitting component of lessons is not usually explicitly focused on peace, the stilling nature of the discipline of sitting silently—with guidance offered for pupils' thoughts and imaginations—is intended to contribute to the experience of peace both by individuals and the group.. This intention is implicit in the programme, but all those who practise it refer to it in one way or another. Indeed, some teachers expressed

the view that the 'silent sitting' element of the programme is important. One commented that it is the time to sit still, to contemplate and reflect, which is important for the pupils because they are not given the opportunity to use their imagination in school. Another commented that in a busy world like ours, it is good for pupils to have time to sit still and reflect (cf Stone, 1997; Farrer, 2000, p. 83). However, our fieldwork suggested that only those—whether teachers or pupils—who could see the value of stilling the inner self and who felt comfortable with the idea of sitting still and allowing the inner mind's eye to rest on suggested images or letting one's thoughts find their own course were open to this practice and its potential benefits. Some teachers and pupils could be observed to avoid silent sitting.

Measurement of the effectiveness of programmes such as SSEHV is problematic, as Gervais (2004, p. 220–221) points out. While measurement or evaluation was not part of our study's remit, we nonetheless want to give an indication of the effect which some of the values lessons had on the pupils we observed.

The Effect of Values Lessons

A values lesson in a year 5/6 class focused on peace; the theme was 'happiness comes from within, not from external things' and 'The grass is always greener on the other side'. The pupils were first encouraged to give examples from their own lives when they thought the grass was greener on the other side, but came to realise that this was not necessarily so. They then heard the story of the couple who sail to an island where all their desires are fulfilled. However, the moment they become dissatisfied with the things they have wanted, these either disappear or develop a fault. When asked how to comment on the story, some pupils replied: 'It makes you appreciate what you got', 'The couple were spoilt—they had nothing to dream for', 'Spoilt people don't have feelings for others'. In another school, the values lesson on peace in a year 6 class focused on the related values of gratitude and appreciation, using the same theme—'the grass often seems greener on the other side of the fence'. The pupils found it difficult to grasp the concept which the saying seeks to convey. Even after both class teacher and

SSEHV volunteer (who took the lesson) had provided examples to illustrate the sentiment of the saying, they could still not cite appropriate incidents from their own store of experience.

Yet, one of those who promote and practise the SSEHV programme claims that values lessons foster affective competencies and choice of values in two areas: the affective/emotional and individual identity, the values that determine the construction of the individual as a person and in his/her relationship with others (see Devi, 2002, p. 6). Values lessons based on the SSEHV programme make ‘moral citizens’ or, as Majmudar (2000) puts it, ‘persons with “human excellence”’, people, who, in addition to academic abilities and strength of character, are equipped with ‘inner resources’, ready to fulfil their role in family, society, nation and the global community of which they are part’. According to Devi (2002, p. 7), ‘This objective places the other two competencies within a social context and provides meaning in everyday personal and social life. These capacities express themselves through a variety of opportunities, including, the capacity to live co-operatively with others, the capacity to resolve conflicts in accordance with the principles of democratic law and the capacity to take part in public debate.’ In the context of SSEHV, raising individuals’ awareness, so that they act in accordance with truth, allows them full use of the cognitive abilities through intellect and intuition. The inner conscience becomes a guide for their dispositions which is expressed through the physical domain, in right action. In order to have access to the intellect, individuals need to be in a state of mental and emotional calm or peace. The culmination of all the four qualities draws on the spiritual aspect of the individual and non-violence or concord is experienced through harmony of the head, heart, and hand. In this way, individuals use their hearts to decide on the appropriateness of a thought (head), which, if positive, is acted upon (hand). (see *ibid*)

The approach to peace and non-violence in the SSEHV programme overlaps with that in the (Brahma Kumaris sponsored) Living Values programme. Both programmes include peace as a core value and regard it of primary importance, but differ on the emphasis on non-violence: only the SSEHV programme includes non-

violence as a core value. The Living Values programme promotes it implicitly through the other values, especially respect and tolerance. Further, the SSEHV approach to non-violence is distinct from that of the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project (WMQPEP) set up in the mid-1980s. Although this programme accords the value of peace central importance, it is oriented towards conflict resolution and thus conceptualises peace as a process, rather than, as the explication of the values of peace in the SSEHV manuals indicate, an inner disposition. The development of interpersonal skills and the use of drama and role play in the SSEHV programme provide the basis for the peer mediation which WMQPEP promotes (see Nesbitt & Henderson, 2003).

Having indicated the effect of the programme on pupils, the following two sections will report on the teachers' and pupils' views of the programme as a whole.

Teachers' views

As teachers and head teacher indicated in interviews, the attraction of the SSEHV programme is that it is not tied to any religion 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. This is especially important for those whose homes are noisy, where TV is on all the time, etc. The head teacher of a school in the Midlands, which has a strong view of itself as a 'community school', explained that the SSEHV programme fits the role and the ethos of the school arising from this community aspect.

One teacher mentioned that, when it was pointed out that the SSEHV programme had drawn from different religions and traditions, this raised her expectations of encountering a multi-faith/-cultural programme. She agreed that if one 'boils all religions down', they can be seen to share the values. However, she found the stories in the lesson plans to be all basically 'Christian' and 'Western', even those with non-Western characters in them. Another teacher found the stories 'class-laden', 'twee', and 'worthy', reminding her of Sunday School. A third teacher remarked that

the material needed to be made relevant for the pupils whom one taught. The stories were often not 'realistic' in the sense that they did not reflect the pupils' reality. Therefore, a teacher needs to know the pupils in the class well to use the material and cannot leave values lesson to a supply teacher or a teacher who covers. Nor could values lesson be 'taught at speed'. A number of teachers expressed reservations about the programme regarding various aspects, related to both practical matters and contents of the programme (some of which are mentioned above); some even indicated that they were not fully convinced of the benefits of the programme. Many teachers could not see any immediate tangible or measurable changes in the pupils, but thought the benefit to be cumulative.

Pupils' views

The pupils, too, expressed a range of views: some said they liked the stories and the silent sitting. A boy in a Year 4 class said he liked the values lessons, because 'it tells you how people can have a good life or a bad life'. A group of Year 6 pupils indicated that they were not overly enthusiastic about the values lessons. After having had a set of such lessons, they felt them to be predictable and repetitious, with little direct involvement on their part. Regarding the stories, they indicated that they were not relevant to them. They had mixed opinions about the importance and role of values in their lives. One boy stated that we needed violence in our lives, explaining that there are people who are evil and the only way to deal with them is by using violence or even killing them. This was countered by a girl who said that there was something good in everyone and that nobody was all bad or evil, because even a thief loved someone. Another girl pointed out that we needed values such as love and kindness, because without them we would not be here. She added that we also needed non-violence, even if there were areas in the world where there is war and violence.

Underlying this range of opinions among both teaching staff and pupils is the variety of ways in which the SSEHV programme finds application in the schools. Only a study of the longer term use of the programme will reveal its effects and benefits.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how the values of peace and non-violence contribute to the SSEHV programme, what this programme is, how it relates to the wider contexts of education—and peace education more specifically—and the sociology of religion, and provided some information about the Sathya Sai Service Organisation under whose auspices it has developed.

If values instilled in young people are the key to reducing violence towards, or preventing abuse of, others, the SSEHV programme may offer a way of ‘schooling’ young people in moral and responsible behaviour, as the promoters of the programme propose. Our data suggest that schools use the programme flexibly—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 part of a school’s strategy to encourage good behaviour and responsible action in pupils. It is not the purpose of the programme to dictate the actions of the individual, but rather ‘to offer a secure base from which individuals may arrive at their own informed decisions’ (Alderman, 1999a, p. 11)

This view connects with the inherent goodness of the person, posited by Rousseau and others, and with the related notion (or Hindu belief) that individuals already possess all the ‘good’ qualities (including non-violence) within them. Education (in the widest sense) allows such qualities to come to the fore and emerge from their dormant state into awareness and daily application. A number of aspects pertaining to peace education and other peace education programmes (see Gervais, 2004, p. 207–209) resonate in SSEHV, for example, the intention to instil peaceful behaviours, peace education as a set of skills, peace education as a means to resist prevailing social attitudes and practices, and others. It is also clear that cultural and religious content colours the underlying view of the world in the programme. Therefore, it is important to note that those involved in the SSEHV programme do not connect in any way with wider discussions or theories about peace or peace education. They are not educators motivated by pedagogical concerns in bringing the programme to educational contexts.

They are representatives of a particular worldview, in which education is highly valued, who seek to harness pedagogical devices to communicate their message. Hence, the use, for example, of group activities like role-play and (dilemma) stories to engage young people with learning content—elements which are also found in materials for school-based education for peace (see e.g. Schniedewind & Davdison, 1998; Jones & Compton, 2003). Hence references to generally applauded exemplars of the values, such as Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sathya Sai Baba. Hence, perhaps, educators' impression that the SSEHV is somewhat 'precious' and idealistic or even naive. This may also explain the lack of critical engagement with wider theoretical frameworks, such as peace education or education for peace.

However, it will be down to the particular teachers, as this is not inherent in the programme itself, to distinguish peace education as a strand in values transmission from values clarification. Conspicuously missing is encouragement to think critically about peace or any of the other values. According to one detractor, 'the hidden curriculum of Sathya Sai "Education"'—which he identified as one of the 'names' for 'the Sathya Sai spiritual education program'—is 'to develop devotion to SSB [Sathya Sai Baba] and to suppress critical thinking' (Baldaev, 2006). While the SSEHV materials (for use in schools) do mention Sathya Sai Baba, teachers themselves are largely unaware of the devotional aspect. Fieldwork findings thus suggest that critical thinking can easily be overlooked.

Such thinking would need to deconstruct peace, distinguishing the disposition and the practice, as well as disentangling the individual and the societal. In terms of practice, pupils could be equipped with the conflict resolution skills which mediation-centred programmes (such as that examined in Nesbitt & Henderson, 2003) in addition to (as they are encouraged to do) considering non-violence in relation to other creatures (human and animal) and environmental resources. Teachers' observed eclecticism in implementing SSEHV may have a greater potential for a rounded approach to peace education than the materials on their own provide, thus pointing to the central role of

teachers, not only in terms of teaching skills, but also personal stance towards issues related to peace and non-violence.

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NOTES

ⁱ An earlier version of this article was presented at 'Religion and Violence: The Role of Religious Education and Values' conference of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values XIV, Philadelphia, July 2004.

ⁱⁱ A special issue of the *British Journal of Religious Education* is dedicated to international perspectives of 'Peace Education and Religious Plurality' (see Jackson & Fujiwara, 2007b).

ⁱⁱⁱ The change of name probably occurred in late 2001 and BKWSO appears on the BKs' main web site (www.bkwsu.com), although not consistently, with references to 'university' on a number of web pages.

^{iv} 'Anti-cult organisations' have voiced concern about children growing up in 'cults' (e.g. Eimuth, 1996; El Mountacir, 1994), but academic research regarding children in NRMs is still scant, with Palmer and Hardman (1999) and parts of Lewis and Melton (1994) making notable contributions to this field.

^v The AHRB is now the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

^{vi} As of March 2004, 'summer camps' or 'holiday schools' are referred to as 'BISSE Values Alive Events'.

^{vii} Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) was formerly called Bal Vikas.

^{viii} A number of contemporary 'gurus' claim the Shirdi Sai Baba lineage, see e.g. Swami Kaleshwar (<http://www.swamikaleshwar.de>), and there is a considerable 'cult' of Shirdi Sai Baba in contemporary India (see e.g. Srinivas, 1999; also Hardgrove, 1994; Rigopoulos, 1993; Kamath & Kher, 1991).

^{ix} According to Harris *et al.* (1993, p. 311), the organisation claims 10 million devotees worldwide. Taylor (1984) speaks of a large following in India, said to number millions.