

Shree Prajapati Association (UK) Secretary's Report Year 2008/2009

Jai Shree Krishna to SPA (UK) Trustees, Executives, Prathindhis and all our fellow members.

Once again this year has been very busy and the last 12 months have just slipped away fast. I will try and summarise the activities of the past twelve months.

Soon after SPA (UK)'s AGM; many branches were also busy holding their own AGMs. By May\June all branches had elected their new committee for the year 2008/09. By this time the sub-committees had already started to undertake their tasks to organise various functions for the coming year. Below is the summary of each of the sub groups' achievements. Full details can be found in the sub-committee's reports

SUB-GROUPS

Sandesh

This year's 33rd edition concentrated on giving us an insight into our mother tongue, Gujarati. The Sandesh committee collected and analyzed the questions that were answered by each branch. The 17 pages report in English gave us a good view of how each branch is trying to do to maintain the continuity of the Gujarati language to the younger generation and the use of our mother tongue during their local meetings. The summary was also given within 6 pages in Gujarati. This required a tremendous effort from the Sandesh committee who constantly perused each branch for their input to the questionnaires. Definitely a big thank you goes to the Sandesh sub-committee which consists of Dahyabhai (Leicester) Manubhai (Tameside), Ambubhai (Birmingham), and Surendrabhai (Leicester) and is led by Dineshbhai of Preston as the editor. Under the leadership of Dineshbhai, we have seen the quality of our Sandesh raised by 125% this year with Surendrabhai joining the team as a graphic designer, the high quality of articles and especially the facts about Gujarati language brought to us by Ambubhai of Birmingham. We should all be proud to distribute this magazine to our members throughout UK and also Prajapatits in various parts of the world. This sub-committee requires help from each and every branch and I urge you to help with collection of advertisement to make the publication self financing, so that the sub-committee can concentrate on their work to put the magazine together.

In a move towards publishing Sandesh in an industry recognised standards, future editions will be in A4 format., We recognise that it will be expensive to produce and distribute, but every penny spent would be justified by perceived members' satisfaction.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Dineshbhai for guiding the secretary and the editor of Canada and encouraging him to produce their version of Sandesh. We are fortunate that we have such hard working members within our community.

ITF (International trust fund)

SPA (UK) ITF chairman and secretary quickly picked up the tasks of ITF sub-committee after being appointed in January 2008 and have indeed carried out their duties that can be recognised today. The four main sub-committee trustees that led the ITF group are Hemandrabhai, Prakeshbhai, Manubhai and Amratbhai who quickly learnt their tasks by holding many meetings to take the handover from their predecessor, Jamnadasbhai and Uttambhai. Prakeshbhai has established links between SPA (UK) and many South Gujarat Samajs. Today we receive approximately 10 to 50 applications for education grants and the sub-committee leaders have always summarised and provided enough details to the other ITF sub-group members so that a fair and balanced decision can be made at a convened meeting. In addition to the education programme, this year ITF sub-group took on board to assist Shree Prajapati Vidarthi Ashram, Navsari with Kanya Chhatralaya project where by the 3rd floor of this building is named as part of SPA (UK) donation. This project has cost SPA (UK) a good sum of money and all help is required from branches so that this project can become self financed. In addition to the international education grants; two grants were given from SPA (UK) educational fund. The ITF sub-committee has standardised various application forms thus making it easier for those who want to apply for assistance easier to submit the form. Throughout the year, three meetings were held by this sub-group. I would like to

thank the sub-committee members who have put in hard work and successfully given the service for the deserved causes.

Prajapati Samachar

This is the 2nd year since SPA (UK) started the Prajapati Samachar publication. Under the directorship of Jitubhai and Vipulbhai, the young team has delivered two editions in the year 2008/09, in September 08 and April 09. Gradually the team has now come up with ways of raising some funds towards the cost of this publication. Many branches have contributed articles in the Samachar and have worked in collaboration and in harmony. It is very encouraging for a young team to be able to assist SPA (UK) and to see branches work together and exchange their function news and ideas with each other. If anybody would like to contribute positively towards this Prajapati Samachar then please feel free to join the team; contact Jitubhai or Vipulbhai who will certainly welcome you. I thank Jitubhai, Vipulbhai, Jiten and Bhavesh for their time and help with these two publications and I do hope that you will encourage them by providing your input to them.

Youths

Can you believe that we have been holding the Sports day for last 30 years? Talk about the time running away!! It just shows how strong our roots are that we have been successfully running the Sports day for 30 years. 30 years ago the Sport day had only 5 games but now we have 10 games which straight away shows doubling of the number of games and the eagerness of our young members in taking part in activities within our community.. Although many of us say that we do not see youths taking an active role within our community then I suggest that you attend the Sports day. This year's 30th Sports day was held in the renowned Loughborough University and was co-hosted by Leicester and Loughborough branches. This year no major injuries were reported and the day was thoroughly enjoyed by all participants and spectators. The day was very well organised and in fact the games finished early so that the members could then participate in 30th Sports Anniversary party that was organised by Leicester branch. We missed Bradford branch as they could not attend due to their major local function. Special thanks go to Kishorbhai of Loughborough and Mahendrabhai of Leicester who worked very closely with their teams and the youth team leader. All games were controlled well and managed as per plan. Although Leicester branch had another programme at their local branch level they managed to juggle their volunteers and executives between the two events and I would like to thank both Leicester and Loughborough branch for the smooth running of the 30th Sports day.

In the year 2009 the Sport team has met at least twice as a sub-committee and twice with the London Sports team who are organizing the 31st Sports Day on 22nd August 2009 which will be held at Hatfield University. The 31st Sports day will yet introduce some new sports like swimming and over 35's category in sports like badminton and squash.

The 13th Youths Ball, Latino Fever was held in Solihull in February where appropriately 350 youths were in attendance. An opportunity was given to two members from Wellinborough and Birmingham together with the ITF trustee, assistant treasurer and the PRO who represented SPA (UK) executive. This year's Youth ball team was led by Pritesh from Preston and assisted by Kapila from Tameside and Hema from Walsall who certainly organised the event with attention to all details. The event was enjoyed by those who attended it but in the future the youth team may want to review this function and may want to replace it with some different as this year the sale of the tickets was hard work and taking expenses into consideration, the return has not been significant.

Melisa requires support from all the branch youths and I am hoping that the branches will be able to encourage their youths to support Melisa in the coming year. Well done Melisa.

Mahila

On Sunday 22nd June 2008, the Family Funday was held at Wicksteed Park, Kettering where approximately 400 people attended this event. Although it was a little windy on that day it did not stop members enjoying the barbeque and picnics. Plentiful delicious food was consumed and we had to find a way to digest it all. Everyone young and old joined in various games like cricket, netball and football apart from walking. Of course we had to pay a visit to the market stalls that were set up in the park on the day.

The 29th Mahila Samelan was organised by SPA (UK) with assistance from all 13 branches on 26th April 2009 in Bedworth at Nicholas Chamberlaine Technology College. Coventry, Birmingham and Bradford branches helped with the preparation work on Saturday so that we could start the programme on time. Everybody arrived in good time to enjoy the delicious breakfast that was served by Coventry. The programme started on time with Aarti and prayers at 10.00 am on Sunday morning and by this time the hall was full with nearly 650 members. The subject for the 29th Mahila Samelan was "Going Green" and the members were enlightened with the facts by three speakers who talked about what and how we can recycle our waste and put it to use by ourselves, how we can put three "R"s into practice – Rethink, Reduce and Reuse and the last speaker explained to us about the environment and how we can help by reducing the use of cars and air flights and make a difference to the changing weather pattern. Gujarati translation of all speeches was also provided for the benefit of our elderly audience Rugby branch and SPA (UK) Youth team helped in the kitchen during the lunch hours and they were so efficient that all 650 members were fed within one hour so that the afternoon session could be started on time. People enjoyed the Bhajan program together with Leicester and London branches play that were presented as entertainment. The programme finished on time after acknowledging the new Mahila Convenor and Secretary who had been shadowing the outgoing Mahilas for the last two years. All member left with goodie bags that contained water saving device that was donated by Severn Trent Water, recycle shopping bags and some information leaflets which were all donated by various suppliers. Further information will be given by the Mahila sub-committee. Congratulation goes to Hasmitaben and Hansaben for achieving a successful 29th Mahila Samelan.

Social Event

A sub-committee is formed with approximately 7 members from various SPA (UK) branches to discuss how and what type of event should we organise for our youths so that they can meet each other with the aim to find their perspective life partners. After long discussion it was agreed that we need to try and find out information from other organizations and get their views on the success rate of such events. Anilbhai from Luton took the task on board to talk to various organizations and then to prepare a survey form which can be circulated at various SPA (UK) activities i.e. Youth Ball, Mahila Samelan and Sport Day and then analysis the results before we make a decision on what type of event to hold.. This work is continuing in the background by Anilbhai and I am hoping that Anilbhai will be able to give us some type of a report at the AGM.

Public Relations Officer (PRO)

Jitubhai has been fulfilling this duty for last five years. Jitubhai has liaised with various individuals who are involved with the fund raising activities and guided them accordingly. Jitubhai worked closely with the National Newsletter\Prajapati Samachar and has successfully produced four issues since it was launched. Shree Prajapati Association is represented at Hindu Forum of British by Jitubhai. Jitubhai represented our association and attended various organisations and functions as SPA (UK) as well other SPA branches. SPA (UK)'s membership and its organization is respected and thought of very highly all across the world. We have received publicity through radio, TV and the written medium. Some of the events for which we have received publicity are 30th Sports Day, Youth Ball, Charity walk like Waendel Walk which is held in Northampton and our Navsari Kanya Chhatralaya project.

Constitution

The discussion on constitution was revived again and Champakbhai and Hemantbhai circulated the 1st draft in February 2009 which was passed to all branches for their comments after the sub-committee had amended the document with the suggested changes. Good feed back was received from many branches. 2nd draft was circulated in April and as result an Extra-ordinary General Meeting is also incorporated with the Annual General Meeting on 17th May 2009.

Other Organizations

SPA (UK) and its 13 branches are now registered with Hindu Forum and members like Jitubhai, Kiranbhai and I have participated in their meetings and attended the Diwali show that was organized in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Eleven members of London branch were encouraged to volunteer at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and help HFB with their Diwali function. These members had an opportunity to meet MPs, councilors and members of other organisations. SPA (UK) was represented by members from branches like Leicester, Bradford, Luton, London and Jasuben.

There were three main events that took place in the SPA calendar – 25th Anniversary of the Bradford temple; Raam Katha in Leicester Samaj hall and SPA (UK) 30th Sport day celebration on the final day of the Raam Katha in Leicester. I represented SPA (UK) at these events and I think we should all be proud that apart from these branches participating at SPA (UK); level they actively carry out such big events at their branches for the benefit of their local members. London branch had Murti Prasthia in their newly refurbished building too.

I am constantly in touch with the other Prajapati organization across the globe via email and exchange views and news of national and international Prajapati.

In March 2009 I attended the Bhagwat Katha programme at Lohana Samaj in London and represented SPA (UK) and also sold 10 of our Bhajan books as this information was given to me by our ITF Secretary Prakeshbhai.

Prathindhi and Executive Meetings

Two executives meetings were held this year; 9th August and 15th November both in Leicester where

At each of these meetings; the sub-groups, Mahilas and youths held their separate meetings for the first part of the day whilst the Prathindhies discussed and agreed on points listed below:-

1st Executive meeting – 9th August 2008

- o London loan draft agreement that was drawn by SPA (London) was discussed with the Prathindhies.
- o London branch's proposed constitution changes were discussed and other branches had some questions on the associate membership and the problems that are faced by other branches.
- o Letters written by Shilpa of Mistry Marketing
- o Charity laws and the need to issue clear guidelines for the accountability for actions by volunteers and organisations
- o Responsibilities for the 29th Mahila Samelan
- o Requirement for guidelines for hosting branches and SPA (UK) sub-committees when organising events
- o Discussion on Prajapati Samachar and Sandesh publication. It was agreed that future Sandesh size will be A4.

2nd Executive meeting – 15th November 2008

- o London loan agreement documents were signed
- o Reasons given as to why the changes were required to the London's constitution
- o Revised Gift Aid forms were circulated to all branches
- o The sub-committee for constitution agreed to look at the constitution and to incorporate Charity act 2006 that is in force now
- o Revised price for Bhajan book agreed when bought in bulk
- o Mahilas outlined their Programme for the 29th Mahila Samelan and gave an update on the family fun day
- o Youth gave report on the 30th Sports day and update on the Youth Ball
- o London gave presentation on their proposal to hold 31st Sport day
- o Kiranbhai gave a brief outline for the "way forward" seminar that is being planned to revisit our aims and objectives of our associations and to see what we have achieved since 1975

Our 1st Prathindhi meeting for 2008/09 was held on 7th September in Tameside. The sub groups – Mahilas and Youths had their separate meetings whilst the first part of the main meeting was attended by all Prathindhi. The sub group leaders were able to present their reports and listen to other reports in the afternoon. The main points that were discussed and agreed at the 1st meeting were as follows:-

- o ITF sub-committee informed and updated the meeting on the Navsari Ashram Kanya Chatralaya project and 5 education grants that were approved by the sub-committee. They were thinking about the scholarship program in India and the proposal to branches about the request for small grants.
- o Discussion were held on the volunteer policies and Charity Law and Leicester Branches offered to help with the template as starting point for this project
- o Update was given on the proposed London Constitution changes
- o Sandesh committee proposed that future editions should be A4 size. It was also proposed that some donation should be given to the nominated charity from the surplus made on any project that Samaj takes on board.
- o Youths gave a report on 30th Sports day and on the Youth ball which is to take place in February 2009. London branch presented the proposal for the Sports day in 2009.

- Mahilas gave a report on the last Mahila Samelan and the next function will be held in Coventry on 26th April and will be hosted by SPA (UK). Family fun day for the year 2009 was proposed on 21st June or 28th June 2009.
- Bradford gave a report of the 25th Anniversary and the Rath Yatra festival that was held in August 2008.
- Hemendrabhai's MBE and Jagubhai's invitation by Her Majesty to the Garden party was noted and the secretary congratulated them both on behalf on SPA (UK)

Our 2nd Prathindhi meeting took place on Sunday 18th January 2009 in Wellingborough. Once again, two sub-groups (Mahilas and Youths) held their group meetings in the morning part whilst the first part of the main meeting discussed finance, Sandesh and ITF sub-group updates. The main points covered at this meeting were:-

- Treasurer presented his report of all accounts and informed the meeting the amount of donation that was so far collected towards the Navsari Ashram project
- ITF sub-committee informed the meeting that they had received replies from 10 Prajapati Samajs in India and they had received 13 applications which will be discussed at their meeting on 25th January in Birmingham.
- Champakbhai will review the SPA (UK) constitution and let the secretary know of the proposed changes so that it can be circulated to the branches for their comments.
- Leicester branch informed the meeting that they were going through the major organisational change as at the moment there are two separate entities - as a limited company and as a charity. They took legal advice to set up a limited company by guarantee that is also a registered charity.
- London constitution changes were approved but not yet registered with the charity commission.
- Sandesh update for volume 34 was given and the theme would be why do we do certain rituals and religious ceremonies
- The theme of the Prajapati Samachar would be in line with the theme of the Mahila Samelan and that is "Going Green"
- Nine branches presented their donation cheque towards the Navsari project and photos were taken for the next Sandesh publication.
- Social Event sub-committee had a meeting on 12th January and the report as given where a sub-committee had decided to carry out the survey on this subject to get the feelings of the members.
- Kiranbhai gave a presentation and an update on the forum to discuss what we want to do and how to find a way forward. This would be a residential course for an extended weekend and can be held from 11th to 13th September 2009. 30 places are available on this seminar and so one member from each branch, one from SPA (UK) sub-committees and SPA (UK) trustees may attend this course. Each candidate may have to pay their own entrance fee or can come from their branch.
- It was agreed that the 31st Sports day would be held in London on 22nd August 2009 and will be hosted by London branch. A revised presentation was given as the venue had changed since the last presentation in September 2008. The youth leader gave the report and update on their activities; i.e. youth ball and Sports day 2009.
- Mahila sub-committee gave a report on their preparation of the 29th Mahila Samelan in Coventry and issued all branches with their tickets and packs containing all relevant information for the Programme and for Family fun day.

Although to date, two Prathindhi meetings were held; several meetings were held throughout the year. Three meetings were held with ITF Sub-group, two the Youth sub-committee, one with the Social Event sub-committee and two executives meetings. Constant communication is carried out with all 13 branch executives on various subjects and during the year 2008/09, I hope that I have replied to your queries satisfactorily and in timely manner. Nearly 80% of the communication is carried out via email and this year all correspondence related to meetings has also been sent by this method. I also attend the 25th Anniversary Bhajans in Bradford and the Raam Katha in Leicester. It is very rare that a week goes by without logging on to the Internet.

Conference call

One conference call was held by the SPA (UK) executive and a legal advisor so that appropriate correspondence can be carried out with Shilpa of Mistry Market who had sent SPA (UK) a legal letter via her solicitor. This matter has been resolved in a face to face meeting with the Mistry Marketing, Shilpa and the SPA (UK) president and our trustee.

I must thank you all for your support and to those branch secretaries who have met the demands to organise meeting hall sometimes at a very late notice. Many of you have supported these meetings by bearing all costs

of the meetings. Thank you for your support towards the Samaj and I hope that you all treat the future HQ Secretary the same way.

It is with great sadness but I must mention and thank late Dineshbhai who served the Samaj as a treasurer for two years and as an assistance secretary for two year in the last four years that I have been SPA (UK) Secretary. He was a silent worker who took minutes and sent the written minutes to me within couple of weeks. He also helped Mahila sub-committee by designing their function leaflets and tickets. Not only that he also helped out with the Sport draw and entry forms. It is sad and his loss will be felt by both Bradford branch as well as SPA (UK).

I acknowledge the hard work of the Prajapati Samachar, Sandesh, ITF, Mahila, Youth and Social event. Not only that but I thank Leicester branch for their help with Sandesh distribution and for organizing the venue for many meetings that were held on their premises. I would also like to thank Birmingham branch for their hospitality for the meeting that were held in their Samaj building as well as for helping install and manage their PA system at Sports day in Loughborough and at Mahila Samelan in Coventry.

There are many member of our association across UK who are not directly involved with SPA (UK) but have helped out, advised and guided us to achieve our goals to serve our community hence I thank Thakorbbhai of London branch for translating material into Gujarati and Gulabbhai for his legal guidance.

I often seek advice from Hansaben, Uttambhai, Jitubhai, Champakbhai, Dahyabhai, Kiranbhai and Hemandrabbhai and thank them for their guidance in accomplishing my task successfully. I would like to say big thank you to my sister Pushpa for her help and also for accompanying me to meetings. I would not be able to do these tasks without her help.

I have acted as the SPA (UK) secretary for last four years and I have learnt to handle difficult situations with some branches. I have gained a lot of respect from many of you and I hope that I have not hurt anybody whilst performing my duties. I have enjoyed the challenge and experienced various aspects of our organization and the way we work together with some challenges from individuals and some branches. May God give us all good health and inspiration to contribute in whatever way we can towards the charity work!

I conclude my summary report with a sincere apology for any mistakes I have made or upset anybody in the course of my duty so please excuse me for this. I thank you all for giving me an opportunity to serve the Samaj.

Jasuben Mistry
SPA (UK) Secretary (2008_09)