

Echoes MENA is a quarterly newsletter that provides updates, announcements and notifications on SMSF activities and events in the Middle East and North Africa region. [For Private Circulation](#)



### In his footsteps ....

Chariji has been touring India since January 15, 2010. He visited many centers such as Delhi, Moradabad, Rudrapur, Naukuchital, Satkhol and Jaipur before reaching Jabalpur where the three days Utsav celebrations of the Birth Anniversary of Lalaji Maharaj was attended by almost 3800 abhyasis. On January 31, 2010 he inaugurated the Zonal Ashram for Madhya Pradesh. On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, he conducted morning and evenings atsanghs and emphasized that the celebration never ends, but continues with us through remembrance of the great Masters. On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, he visited Nagpur centre and on the 4<sup>th</sup> he left for Kolkata. He was expected to return to Chennai by Feb.10<sup>th</sup>.



## Rev. Lalaji Maharaj Remembered

Sri Ramchandra (fondly known as Lalaji) was born on February 2, 1873 A.D. at Fatehgarh in the state of UP in India. His father Sri Harbux Rai belonged to a very distinguished family. His great grand father was a person of rare genius and his fine qualities and noble attainments won for him, from the Great Moghul emperor, unstinted praise and friendship. He resided in the town of Bhoomigram in the district of Mainpuri in UP India. The family which got affected by the after effects of the uprising of the Indians in 1857 migrated to Fatehgarh, U.P. Here he worked as tax superintendent and began to live with his family. But in the changed circumstances his state had been subjected to considerable damage and his assets were just enough to live the old aristocratic life.



Lalaji grew up into a perfect specimen of graceful manhood with perfect build and average height. His outward gracefulness was just an expression of the inner harmony he enjoyed. Lalaji did not like luxury of any kind. The clothes he wore were simple and clean. He wore no ornaments. He did not laugh aloud but simply smiled. His smile announced goodness and sweetness, and brightened others with its spiritual vivacity. He was a great lover of humanity and often used things given to him with love in spite of his own dislike for those things. He hated flattery and though he loved his followers with their faults he never failed to enforce stern discipline with love.

Lalaji established regular satsangh (group meditation) from the year 1914 and started training his followers. He did not put off his work even during his illness. After his retirement in 1929 he began to give all his time to his noble work. He spent two to three hours every day on dictating books, articles and letters to satsanghis.

Display of miracles was extremely disliked by him. Ego was likewise never allowed to grow. He advocated that the aspirants should always remain away from miracle mongering until they reach their goal and the discipline is perfected. When the aspirant reaches his goal, all his actions automatically become miracles. He held the opinion that the great miracle of a saint was to transform an animal man into a perfect man.

Lalaji was against idol worship. Though he allowed his photo to be kept by his followers, he never allowed them to worship it. Self praise was so much disliked by him that he did not allow people touch his feet in order to pay respects to him. Excess of tapa (penance) and japa (worship) was not liked by him. He considered love to be the greatest tapas. He preferred the middle way and regarded the meditation on the heart as the real sadhana. He attached great importance to prayer, but it was not to be for material gain. He himself constantly prayed for the soul of this world. Lalaji was very particular regarding conduct. He announced in unambiguous terms that realisation of Self was not possible without adhering to the standard moral code of conduct. He even forbade association and satsangh with immoral persons. He insisted that company should be kept only with those persons whose hearts are brimming with love for God and with those who could influence others with it.

Ram Chandra (Babuji)  
*Truth Eternal, pages 13-16*

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## YOUTH SEMINAR – MIDDLE EAST

### The Spirit of youth

Youth must never deteriorate into adulthood. Remember that the spirit, the soul, is eternal. It was, it is, it will ever be - so it cannot have age. It's not the spirit which ages; it's not the soul which ages; love has no age. It is the body which has all these problems of age, of decreasing efficiency, strength, health, until it ends in death. If a youthful heart is there, it realizes that while the body may grow old, I, the inner Self, am eternal; I have no age. Therefore I am neither young nor old: I am.

P. Rajagopalachari,  
January 22, 2006, Malaysia



### European Youth Training Programme 2010

The Mission in Europe is planning to organize a course of training for young abhyasis. The training sessions will be in English and will be held in two of our European ashrams on the following dates:

- \* Vrads Sande Ashram, April 24-30
- \* Vrads Sande Ashram, in August: a Bus trip from Vrads to Barcelona.
- \* Paris Ashram, November 18-21

For the first batch to be held in Vrads Sande Ashram, the deadline for application is April 7th, 2010.

To register for one of the batches of your choice please contact Pierre Studer, Regional in Charge :  
[pierre.studer@bluewin.ch](mailto:pierre.studer@bluewin.ch)

The first youth seminar held in the Middle East region took place on October 16, 2009 in Dubai. Sixty three abhyasis from various centres (Iran, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, etc.) attended this special gathering. The theme for the seminar, suggested by Chariji, was "New Future". Christian Macketanz from Berlin Centre was in attendance and played an excellent motivational role for the attendees and the organisers. The objective of this seminar was primarily to provide a platform for the youth in the Middle East to congregate in universal brotherhood and imbibe the key features of Sahaj Marg System, and to be motivated to participate actively in the mission's activities in the region. From Chennai, Chariji conveyed a message to the youth participating in the seminar (please visit <http://www.sahajmarg.org/literature/online/speeches/message-for-the-youth> for a copy of the speech)



The day started with satsangh followed by playing of Chariji's message. The full day's program was laid out, so as to let the speakers to share the key features of Sahaj Marg to an enthusiastic audience, in a tightly packed 10 hour schedule. The topics included character formation, ten maxims, diary writing, universal prayer, satsangh, volunteer service, etc. Christian led a lively and interactive session and a Q&A session to draw out the unspoken thoughts of the participants, and to engage them in a serious understanding of the goal of the human life in the

journey of the soul. Special emphasis was laid on balanced existence. Some of youth wing members had volunteered to present a topic, and came prepared with their respective subjects. This session was all the more special as the youth members used the occasion to speak straight from the heart about their practice, vulnerabilities, temptations and obstacles that they overcame in their daily life. A youth member from Bahrain gave a concise talk to explain how the human mind is conditioned and how our daily sadhana helps in un-conditioning it. A member from Iran wrapped up the youth wing talks with some inspiring and moving illustrations from her life. Closing remarks were made by Sanjay Meherish, Mohandas Hegde, and Kambiz Ravan. This seminar has made a profound impact on the participants as evidenced by the positive feedback received from them. A few of them are presented here:

"The youth seminar was just what I needed. Honestly, I was always thankful to Chariji and I wanted to be around him all the time but I hadn't till then developed a relationship with him as I didn't yet believe in him. I always wanted to feel something between me and him. I didn't even think that this seminar would do this to me. But then even from the first day of the trip I felt his presence there. The effect of the very first satsangh of seminar was unbelievable as I felt a kind of pain that I believed was the cleaning of all my hardships of the last few years. I felt this pain until lunch break but strange enough I didn't want it to go away. I was very grateful as I felt that he cares for me. As the seminar progressed, I observed that many of the topics automatically provided answers to my questions. I saw that everyone in the seminar tried to help us with love and not merely a sense of duty. After the seminar I couldn't wait to do my practice and that night when I sat for cleaning putting all my heart into it, in ten minutes or so I started crying and crying. After that I felt such peace that I haven't felt in a long time. So thank you very much again for making this possible."



*Youth abhyasi from Iran*

"Our youth group came back from the youth seminar and with no doubt they are transformed. When I talk to them individually their eyes shine with enthusiasm and hope. This is wonderful to witness specially in youth."

*Centre-in-Charge, Iran*

## INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME (ISTP)



Through the International Scholarship Training Program (ISTP), SMSF offers abhyasis from various nations a unique opportunity to live a simple life in an environment conducive to spiritual development. The aspiring scholars devote time to sharpen their practice and deepen their knowledge of the principles of Sahaj Marg, develop more awareness of the key aspects of spirituality and gain insights into the organization and administration of the Mission.

The program is held during December and January and lasts for 4 weeks per batch. Each year the training program takes place at ashrams or retreat centres of the Mission. The final week of the program is usually held at the Mission's Headquarters, Babuji Memorial Ashram, in Chennai. In this year's program twenty six abhyasis (Europe 5, CIS 5, Far East 3, Middle East 3, South America 9, and Africa 1) representing four continents participated. For further information about the International Scholarship Training Program please visit: <http://www.sahajmarg.org/resources/programs/stp-international>

### Thus speaks Lalaji...

- \* Never offer advice unless invited, otherwise it is likely to yield bad results. If you find any fault with anybody, pray for his freedom from it.
- \* Do not purchase a new thing if you can manage to carry on with your old belongings.
- \* Real discipline and etiquette were simply that the tongue should utter only that which was in one's heart.
- \* Every aspirant must have an able guide, but in selecting one all precautions should be exercised.
- \* It is good to be put to worries. The home is the training centre for submission and endurance, etc. It is the greatest form of penance and sacrifice.

### Chariji's 84th Birthday Celebration

will be held July 22-26 in Lucknow, UP. Full details are available at: <http://www.sahajmarg.org/24july2010/index.jsp>  
Abhyasis are requested to register themselves as early as possible, preferably before May 15, 2010.



### A taste of Truth

Before leaving for India to participate in this year's international scholarship training program, even though I had met Chariji once before in Dubai, I had no clear understanding on what others expressed about their experiences with him and very often I suspected some exaggeration in it. However immediately upon entering Kolkata ashram, the first thing that I noticed was how all my worries disappeared immediately. It was as if I belonged only to this time and place and nothing else mattered. After that, the next thing that impressed me was the amount of kindness and care that all participants and volunteers bestowed upon us. This act of caring was something very natural and without exaggeration so it impressed me a lot. I have always had a problem with Maxim 6 and did not believe that it is possible to treat others as one's brothers. But during this program I was treated by strangers as their brother and eventually I found myself subconsciously responding the same way. I can say that we lived the maxims during the program.

I was sad to be away from Chariji during the first 15 days that we spent in CREST, Kharagpur but during this time we learnt how to live according to the principles of Sahaj Marg. We were prepared for what was awaiting us in Chennai ashram where we were to spend the remaining part of the program. The secluded environment of CREST, its spectacular silence, the training programs and its simple routines created the right environment for us to introspect and rethink our lives.

Unfortunately often we realize the worth of what we have only when we have lost it. This happened to me many times within the program. I realized the special atmosphere of CREST and the ashram only when I would go out of them and my worries and fears would rush back to me. What I experienced at these times was just like a child who becomes fearful away from his mother and wants to go back to her as soon as possible.

The second half of the program in Chennai was very different. Despite the crowd and the vast environment of the ashram, what I experienced during my stay there is something I will never be able to experience again. The peak of my experience happened when I was made a prefect and I conducted my first satsangh in the main meditation hall. This and the individual sittings I gave after that felt like a miracle happening, and something slowly was lit within me. What was created in me or changed in me cannot be simply described. All I can say is that I am not the same person that I was before the program and I can not wait to go back.

*Scholar from Iran*

## EVENTS

### ABU DHABI

**UN International Day of Peace - 21 September, 2009:** After group meditation, abhyasis discussed the importance of bringing universal peace by starting with the individual self. At 9.00 pm special universal prayer for peace was held.

### SMRTI Abhyasi Induction Training Programme - 18 December, 2009:

The Induction Programme is a special training programme designed to help new entrants to learn about the method from the teachings of the Masters of Sahaj Marg aided by audio and video materials along with the training presentation. Forty Eight abhyasis attended. Feedback received by facilitators shows that many abhyasis benefited by enhanced understanding of their daily practice, change in their inner condition, strengthening of the inner connection, changes in attitude and behavior, inner happiness and a sense of balance.

### BAHRAIN

**Monthly Gatherings:** These meetings commenced at the Bahrain centre from November 13, 2009. In the first monthly program, the main theme was "Basics of Practice – Meditation". Group discussion and a presentation titled "Doing it right - Meditation" was held for 25 abhyasis present.

The second meeting was held on December 4, 2009. The theme for the gathering was "Basics of Practice – Cleaning". The 30 abhyasis present had a group discussion and presentation on the theme "Doing it Right – Cleaning". This was followed by a clarification session on 'Cleaning' and a presentation on "Importance of Ten Maxims". At the end of the session, abhyasis were given as homework to practice the first maxim for a month so that they can see the benefits of the practice themselves.

Value Based Education Program was held on both occasions to keep the children fruitfully engaged. They contributed to the events by singing song for the group.

**Lalaji Maharaj Birthday Anniversary – 2 February, 2010:** The morning Satsangh was held at 6.00 am. There were about 15 abhyasis present. After the satsangh, an audio message given by Babuji Maharaj during Basant 1971 was played. The evening satsangh was held at 7.00 pm. There were about 25 abhyasis present. The audio of Chariji's speech titled The Role of Master in Human Evolution was played. Dinner was arranged and all those who were present enjoyed the spiritual atmosphere that prevailed.

### DUBAI

**Lalaji Maharaj Birthday Anniversary – 2 Feb 2010:** A satsangh was held early morning in all zones and this was followed by a full evening program that included screening of the video of Lalaji's life which contains many lessons and messages for all abhyasis. Evening satsangh and dinner wrapped up this special occasion which was attended by over 150 abhyasis.

### EGYPT

Port Said centre celebrated Lalaji's Birthday by conducting satsanghs in the morning and evening. After evening satsangh, a video titled "Life Of Lalaji" was played for those present.

### OMAN

**Open Houses:** The open Houses were organized in Al Khuwait on 27 November, 2009, and in Sohar on 18 December, 2009. Over 25 aspirants attended these events of which 15 started the practice immediately. Muscat center ushered in the New Year with a get together in the Qurum Natural Park. Quizzes and several fun activities were held to regale the large gathering of abhyasis and their children.

### QATAR

**Abhyasi Training Programme - 20 November, 2009:** Beginner's Training Programme in Qatar was conducted for 35 abhyasis. The training session covered wide aspects of the Sahaj Marg System with briefs of Chariji's speeches, audio-video clips and interactive session with the trainees.

**Lalaji Maharaj Birthday Anniversary – 2 Feb 2010:** This event was celebrated with great reverence to our Lalaji Maharaj. We had a full day gathering with two satsanghs, VCD illustrating the Life of Lalaji and the discussion on Master's Speech about "Not doing".



Abu Dhabi - UN Peace Day



Bahrain - Monthly Gathering



Bahrain - Rev. Lalaji's Birthday



Egypt - Port Said



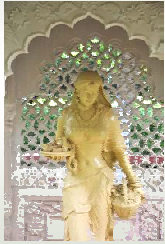
Oman - Open House



Qatar - Abhyasi Training



Qatar - Rev. Lalaji's Birthday



Ironic,  
 but one of the most intimate  
 acts of our body is death.  
 So beautiful appeared  
 my death  
 knowing who then  
 I would kiss,  
 I died a thousand times  
 before I died.  
 "Die before you die,"  
 said the Prophet Muhammad.  
 Have wings that feared  
 ever touched the Sun?  
 I was born  
 when all I once feared  
 I could love.

*Rabia al Basri*

To be a Sufi is  
 to cease from taking trouble;  
 and there is no greater trouble  
 for thee than thine own self,  
 for when thou art occupied  
 with thyself,  
 thou remainest away  
 from God.

*Abu Sa'id*

A man once asked  
 the mystic Bayazid:  
 Who is the true Prince?  
 The man who cannot choose,  
 said Bayazid,  
 the man for whom  
 God's choice  
 is the only possible choice.

*Bayazid Bastami*

Everyone sees the Unseen in  
 proportion to the clarity  
 of his heart,  
 and that depends upon  
 how much he has polished it.  
 Whoever has polished it more  
 sees more,  
 more Unseen forms  
 become manifest to him.

*Jalaluddin Rumi*

## KUWAIT

### Lalaji Maharaj Birthday Anniversary – 2 Feb, 2010:

The special day was marked with morning satsanghs at Salmiya, Mangaf and Abuhalifa, and a collective satsangh in the evening with over 100 abhyasis attending. A portrait of Lalaji drawn by an abhyasi was the highlight of the evening. A DVD of Chariji's Q&A session in Kharaghpur with Abhyasis from South Africa was played to help answer similar questions in those present that evening. The rest of the event was deferred to February 5th, being the local weekend holiday. After morning satsangh on February 5th, a two hour session was held including discussions, Q&A on Sahaj Marg and a DVD of Chariji's recent talk. The evening commenced with a Children's drawing competition with nearly 100 children participating. This opportunity was utilized to present Sahaj Marg to a large gathering of family and friends of abhyasis. A lively jam session on various quotes and sayings kept the adult audience gainfully occupied even as the children drew with gusto. An information kiosk and welcome desk manned by prefects kept interested aspirants fully engaged in learning about Sahaj Marg. The evening drew to a close with a variety of cultural events including a very thought provoking play titled "Balanced Existence of Life" which brought out the essence of the Ten Maxims. While on the surface the evening's programs appeared to be light hearted and cultural, the organizers ensured that the underlying purpose and the relevance of the celebration was maintained by presenting different aspects of our system at frequent intervals. The total attendance that evening was over 250 adults and children.



## SHARJAH

### Lalaji Maharaj Birthday Anniversary – 2 Feb, 2010:

The celebration of this special day commenced with the morning satsangh at 6.00 am. In the evening, abhyasis from the Emirates of Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah watched a video presentation on the life of Revered Lalaji Maharaj, followed by satsangh at 8 pm and dinner thereafter. 52 abhyasis and 12 children attended the celebration.



## VALUE BASED EDUCATION

Value Based Education continues to grow in strength as children increasingly flock to the weekly classes in various zones in the UAE. In the past few weeks, the focus was on the key values of love, courage and patience. Various interesting activities and games were conducted to reach out these values to the children. An open house with parents was held at the Deira zone, and all children were given an opportunity to show their talent in any field of their choice. All parents used this opportunity to provide feedback on the VBE classes.

A New Year party was organized at the Bur Dubai zone where the emphasis was on using the new year as an opportunity to build character and create new healthy habits.



Sharjah

Kuwait

Bahrain

Dubai

For contributions to the newsletter & further information on SMSF in the Middle East please contact: Email: [smsfdbx@eim.ae](mailto:smsfdbx@eim.ae), [uae.info@sahajmarg.org](mailto:uae.info@sahajmarg.org) - Website: [www.sahajmarg.org](http://www.sahajmarg.org)