



ECHOES

Middle East & North Africa (MENA)

Happy Diwali

Echoes MENA is a quarterly newsletter that will provide updates, announcements and notifications on SMSF activities and events in the MENA region.

For Private Circulation Only

Babuji Maharaj felt that for most people it would be impossible to meditate on the abstract. So, in Sahaj Marg system, Babuji has taken as the object of meditation what he thought, what he knows, what he has experienced to be the subtlest thing that we can have for meditation without making it gross or with a form or with a name, and that is: Divine light in the heart. So this has to be very clearly understood that in Sahaj Marg, the object of meditation is Divine light in the heart and nothing else.

The Practice of Sahaj Marg
P.Rajagopalachari



We are all delighted to have our beloved Chariji with us for the celebration of Diwali (Festival of Lights) in Dubai on October 28th, 2008 as a part of his Middle East trip, October 22-31, 2008.

Below is a selection of Chariji's informal talks with abhyasis in Dubai on this trip:

*...There is an instinct in a human being, which is with you from birth, which tells you this is right, this is wrong. You see, a baby stepping on a frog or killing a frog. It feels.

*....You see, it is very difficult to say what is not a samskara. In my opinion there is nothing that is not a samskara. The samskara determines. I determine that for my future evolution, in one life, to be liberated. I should be born as such and such, of such parents, in such a place. The soul determines, I am born. Now, the moment I am born, my desires take over. So in a sense I am corrupting my own program which I have myself written.

*Abhyasi: I want to know what is or what sort of a practice can be used to stay away from immorality, from not getting into anger, not getting into impatience, what is the tool we are advised to use?

Chariji: Just centre yourself in your heart and like a child looking out of the window, look at the world. I find enjoyment, fun, education anywhere. What I have learnt, I have learnt through observation of life.

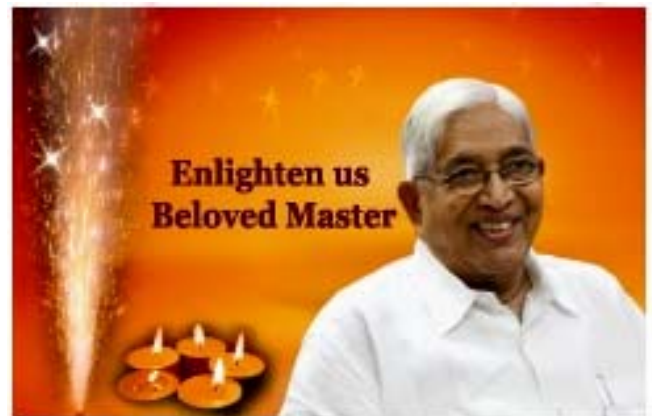
*Abhyasi: How do you use sadhana (with this respect)?

Chariji: I don't use anything. I live my sadhana. I try to tolerate wherever it is possible, you know. When I can't, I make jokes. I laugh. All my humour is when I am trying to tolerate myself. Not you. Myself.

*...I have an absolute Divine right to love everything, to like everything and to feel happy wherever I am, whatever I am, however I am. It is a sin against God to hate anything, person, places, things, you know, to be unhappy anywhere, and not to be comfortable. I tell you it is a sin and people who carry these hates and dislikes and prejudices, they poison the atmosphere. It is like a man with bad breath in the mouth, you know.

*...If people would only realise that personal likes and dislikes, prejudices, make you more miserable than anything else, they would give it up.

*Spiritual law says patience, tolerance and forgiveness, three cardinal virtues.



PONDERINGS

*The Principles of Sahaj Marg
vol. 12*

P. Rajagopalachari

TIME— We have enough time. We have more than we need. The secret is to appropriate the time to what we have to do.

FREEDOM— Real freedom is freedom from fear, not in freedom of movement, not in freedom to shake hands with whom you like. So long as there is fear, there can be no freedom.

SEEKING WITHIN— When abhyasis come to us, they do nothing but obey their impulse to seek within what they have been fruitlessly searching for outside.

IMPERFECTION— Such imperfection as we see is what we see because that imperfection lies in us, therefore when you see something as imperfect, remove the imperfection in yourself and you will see that as perfect.

PRAYER— Prayer must become something like the background of your existence when every heart beat becomes, not a prayer, but an utterance of your gratitude for the existence that He has permitted you to lead.

HAPPINESS— The higher we rise in the material existence, the greater this self-deception that everything is nice with me because I have a car and a nice wife and beautiful kids in the best schools. You ask a man, “Why are you happy?” He says, “Well, I have every reason to be.” A really happy man is one who says, “I don’t know,” because that is natural.

U.N. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE - SEPTEMBER 21

**“As I look around the world, I sigh, and think, we could at least give peace a try.”*

A small group of peace-loving people gathered together on September 21st in Abu Dhabi, UAE on behalf of SMSF to do just that—celebrate the International Day of Peace through prayer, meditation, and discussion of how people can contribute to universal peace. But central to the evening’s theme was the idea that peace must first be found in the heart, and only then can what is within can be felt outside.

A letter written by Babuji Maharaj to the United Nations in 1957 was read aloud, and seemed particularly relevant even more now than fifty years ago. He wrote, “To dissipate the idea of individual self and to work harmoniously for the common good is the demand of the time. The conferences and meetings held for the purpose may only be like spark to offer a temporary glow to the scattered fragment of peace. Their cries in the wilderness will not carry far on the path of success because of the material agony of faith working at the bottom. What we, therefore, require at present is only to improve the morals and to discipline the mind. We must learn how to create within the heart a feeling of universal love, which is surest remedy of all evils and can help to free us from the horrors of war.”

In the background, images of flags from different countries were projected on the wall, each accompanied with “May Peace prevail in (the corresponding country)” and “May Peace prevail on Earth.” The visual representations of inherent division and universality brought hope that with peace would come unification.

Another light of hope came from a presentation created by members of the youth: a broadcast from an imaginary news channel, Just Good News (JGN), that highlighted positive efforts and events from everyday life—something the current media tends to ignore in favor of negativity.

At 9 p.m., the group halted discussion to join together in meditation and prayer for fifteen minutes, to think, as encouraged by Babuji, about all brothers and sisters being filled with love and devotion, and real faith growing stronger in all people.

The evening concluded with a song sung in unison, the lyrics of which seemed to encompass perfectly what the day of peace had meant—and gave hope that perhaps every day could be such a day.

**“Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.”*

(*Poems by Jill Jackson and Sy Miller)

VALUE BASED EDUCATION



Value Based Education took its first step in the UAE in 1997 with about 15 children. Today classes are conducted at eight venues with over 100 children in attendance. Value Based Education caters to the inner needs of children from the age of 5 to 17. Children are divided into three groups based on their age, and classes are conducted to suit their age and level of understanding. Values are inculcated in a friendly atmosphere through stories, skits, role plays, paper craft, experiments, collage making, audiovisual presentations and many other such activities.



DAILY REFLECTIONS

GIVING

Spirituality says 'Give'. It doesn't even say, 'Give and take.' It only says 'Give.' Give and go on giving so that by the very fact of giving, you empty yourself of everything that you have, and then you will find this miraculous thing that there is a vacuum, and that has to be filled by Nature. I don't know how many of you have read Lloyd C. Douglas, who preached this very same thing. He said, 'Go on giving, irrespective of whether you have or not.' So, go on giving and don't expect because when you create a vacuum, it must be filled. This is the law of Nature.

The Principles of Sahaj Marg
vol. 6, p. 33
P. Rajagopalachari

THE DIVINE LIGHT

But when the eye is turned toward the Light of God

What thing could remain hidden under such a Light?

Although all lights emanate from the Divine Light

Don't call all these lights "the Light of God";

It is the eternal light which is the Light of God,

The ephemeral light is an attribute of the body and the flesh.

...Oh God who gives the grace of vision!

The bird of vision is flying towards You with the wings of desire.

Rumi

EVENTS

DUBAI - VOLUNTEERS WORKSHOP, 19 September, 2008

Fifty-five volunteers attended a highly interactive and enjoyable Volunteers Workshop in Dubai. The proceedings commenced at 8 a.m. with group meditation followed by a video recording of Chariji's talk to volunteers. The day's proceedings included presentations on 'personality of a volunteer,' 'service according to Master's teaching,' and 'work without expectation.'

DUBAI - TEACHER'S DAY, 5 September, 2008

On Teacher's Day the Value Based Education session focused on the topic 'teachers and the need for guidance.' Special exercises were done in the class for the children to understand the need to trust themselves and others, and to develop self confidence.

IRAN - PREFECT TRAINING COURSE

Beginning October 10th, small batches of prefects will attend weekly prefect training conducted by senior prefects of the centre. The same project is intended for abhyasis in the near future.

KUWAIT CENTER

On September 7th an open house was conducted in Mangaf, Kuwait. Presentation was done to 14 attendees and many showed keen interest in the system.

On September 21st, World Peace Day, universal prayer was held in three zones with reading and playing of Master's audio and video productions.

Value Based Education program resumed at Abukhalifa with participation of 14 children.



REMINISCENCES

LOVE AND DEVOTION

I am a mother with five children, three of which have university degrees and the other two, a son and a daughter of 20 and 18 years old, put foot in this world by the Divine will, with mental disorder.

Sahaj Marg was introduced to me by one of my friends, and I started in 2004 with physical illness, a wandering spirit and tearful eyes. Now I thank God when only after five years I see myself so lively and healthy. I always had this idea that living should be based on love and devotion, however being so depressed and full of anxiety I could not figure out what these beautiful words really meant. Now I know that one can find a way of living to be identical with nature. How beautiful it is when we have a capable teacher, and by our own efforts in practicing meditation, cleaning and being in constant remembrance, we become so light and peaceful that we can feel the nature in our body and soul.

By looking at water as an element of nature and fish as the most commendable inhabitant of oceans, with all its emancipation, constant wakefulness and immediate connection with water, symbolizing wisdom and true love, we learn to live with a truly conscious love towards God. By looking at a wheat seed and the way it grows in the nature, all the difficulties it tolerates to become such delicious bread, we learn surrender and devotion. And finally we learn from an ant to work hard and never have fear of difficulties of life and be brave to earn a pious living.

Let us sit every night at 9 o'clock for ten minutes as recommended by our revered teacher for the universal prayer and pray that the hearts of all people around the world be filled with love, faith and devotion for Divinity.

JOURNEY OF LIGHT

The chain is opened from my feet
 A path in front of me Alone?
 No, thousands of companions
 Together? No, each one alone
 Every eye looking at Him
 He looking at each one alone
 The more love, the closer He is,
 the brighter the path
 The harder the path, more of
 a lover He is, more mad I am
 Hands of us chained tighter
 Friends... have a safe journey
 of light!

An abhyasi from Tehran, Iran



Iranian Club, 24 Oct. 2008, Dubai



25 October, 2008, Dubai



MEDITATION AND STRESS: DARE TO BE

Have you tried to float freely in a body of water? If so, then you know the 'fear' of submerging and drowning. This is a familiar but not so pleasant feeling that makes us move, and change position, perhaps just to get away from the situation. It is even more puzzling when we are hundred percent sure that we will float freely, like when we are in a salt water sea, but still we can not let go for a long time because sooner or later the stream of thoughts of all sorts sets in, and makes us leave the joy of weightlessness and freedom. If we make an attempt to observe this situation closely, we find out that right before an urge to move away from floating there is most certainly a thought of a sort, "What if I go under?", "What if something happens in this stillness and silence?", or "Where am I heading in the water?", etc. and inevitably a sense of fear or anxiety makes us move. If we expand this to our life situations, we will see a familiarity between the two. We keep moving and doing things with relation to the stream of thoughts and the following emotions of anxiety, fear, desire, boredom, and so on. We rarely give ourselves the chance to be in the restfulness of "non-doing" mode like floating in the sea. Since this 'non-doing' rejuvenating state is unknown to many of us, therefore it is associated with boredom, so we find ourselves moving from one chore to the next, this hobby to the next hobby, this recreational activity to the next, and this spa to the next, moving constantly avoiding stillness and we come back from our holidays and weekend trips exhausted!

If we wish to define stress, how else can we put it other than 'being here but not being here completely'; being at the breakfast table but already gone to the office, at office but thinking of home, and so on. As if we have lost the skill of paying attention to what is going on in our life right here and now. This forgetfulness in some of us has gone to the extent that the thought of being here and doing what we are doing mindfully is an absurd notion so we become multi-task oriented personalities, driving with a mobile in one hand, a coffee in the other! And no wonder it has been reported that two-third of all family physician visits in USA are due to stress related symptoms and illnesses.

Meditation is to cultivate the art of living and being fully present with our lives. Through regular practice of sitting and paying attention to one single object we develop the capacity and courage to be, to exist. For those of us who do this for the first time we all know that we get overwhelmed by the 'busy-ness' of our mind, and streams of emotions that arise as a result of this seemingly easy, simple and natural act of sitting in silence. However, over time and with practice we realize that we have developed the ability to let go of distracting thoughts of the past and future, and dare to be here and now in touch with what is unfolding in front of us. This is deeply healing; personally, inter-personally, and I dare say globally.

An abhyasi from Tehran, Iran

IS MAN FREE?

A man comes to a master to ask how much man is independent, free. Is he totally free, or is there a limitation? Is there something like fate, *kismet*, destiny, a God who makes a limitation beyond which you cannot be free? The mystic answered in his own way, not logically but existentially. He said, "Stand up." The man must have felt this was a stupid kind of answer, "I am asking a simple question and he is asking me to stand up." But he said, "Let us see what happens." He stood. And the mystic said, "Now, raise one of your legs up." The man by this time must have been thinking he had come to a madman; what has this to do with freedom, independence? But now that he has come... and there must have been a crowd of disciples, and the mystic was so respected; not to follow him would be disrespectful, and there was no harm. So he lifted one of his legs from the earth, so one foot was in the air and he was standing on one foot. And then the master said, "That's perfectly good. Just one thing more. Now take the other foot up also." "That is impossible!" the man said, "You are asking something impossible. I have taken my right foot up. Now I cannot take my left foot up." The master said, "But you were free. In the beginning you could have taken the left foot up. There was no binding order. You were completely free to choose whether to take the left foot up or the right foot up. I had not said anything about it; you just decided. You took the right foot up. In your very decision, you made it impossible for the left foot to be lifted up. Don't bother about fate, *kismet*. Just think of simple things."

An abhyasi from Dubai, UAE

For contributions to the newsletter & further information on SMSF in the Middle East please contact :
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