



ECHOES

Middle East & North Africa (MENA)

Master's 83rd Birthday Celebration 24 July 2009, Tiruppur, India



PRAYER BEFORE EATING

We are still worried about our food and its purity. I'm not talking of the biological purity of stuff that we eat so that we don't get sick. But the so-called spiritual purity. Babuji taught us a way of making everything palatable and good for us spiritually. He said, before you eat, meditate for a moment and offer it to your Master. I don't see anybody doing it, not one. ...So just try that. Even if it's just a sandwich, or a cookie as they say in America for a biscuit. Just close your eyes for a moment and think that the great Master is eating it. And you'll find it becomes like nectar. It's no more Indian food, it's no more American food, it's not even food. It is nectar, and nectar belongs to all. Nectar is of the gods. So let us try these things in our assemblies. Let us not try artificially to make everybody our brothers and sisters. Let us feel it in our hearts.

Chariji, August 2003
Molena, Georgia, USA

The historic celebrations of Chariji's 83rd birthday was held from the 23rd to 25th July 2009 at Diamond Jubilee Park Ashram in Tiruppur, India. Around 35,000 abhyasis from over 60 countries gathered, demonstrating their deep and committed love for their Master. The elaborate arrangements made by the local functionaries and volunteers made it possible for all abhyasis to go through the celebrations in reasonable comfort and security.

Despite the pressures on his time, Chariji took the trouble of giving two talks and sittings to 1600 prefects from all the over world, teaching them to be good abhyasis first. A revised Code of Conduct was also distributed to them.

Cultural programmes were held both in the morning and evening which included songs by the Iranian abhyasis, flute recital by Br. Shashank, veena recital by Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh and bhajans by Sr. Aparna Ghosh, Sr. Ranjana Mehta and Br. Gurpreet.

This celebration will be etched in the minds and hearts of all participating abhyasis. The feeling of brotherhood felt by abhyasis hailing from different cultures and linguistic groups, who meditated together, mixed together in dinning halls, canteens and had serious meetings for coordinating the Mission's activities on a global scale.

Extracts from Echoes India Newsletter— Special Edition
<http://www.sahajmarg.org/newsletter/india>



CREST, KHARAGPUR INAUGURATED



Chariji inaugurated the 2nd Center for Research, Education, Sadhana and Training (CREST) in Kharagpur, West Bengal on 28th September. The Kharagpur centre took 9 months to complete and is full of beautiful green open spaces allowing those present to inhale the very essence of nature and provide an idyllic atmosphere for learning, introspection and meditation. An elaborate library with books handpicked by Chariji from different corners of the world, will provide access

to knowledge and guidance on a plethora of topics. This CREST will lay special emphasis on the subject of Morality and Ethics as the foundation of character.

The Inaugural Stone in the beautiful meditation hall reads "To the eternal hierarchy of the Masters of Sahaj Marg and to the great Master of this age, Shri Ram Chandraji Maharaj of Shahjahanpur. On the 28th of Sept 2009 this CREST facility at Kharagpur was reverentially dedicated by Shri P. Rajagopalachari, the managing trustee of Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation".

"Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation", "SMSF", "Sahaj Marg" and the Foundation's flag are registered in U.S.

ON LOVE ...

What is love? It is the shadow of the Ultimate, and the principle jewel of man. The shadow disappears when it comes under light. In worldly matters one generally loves the pleasure of the senses. It is easy because the senses are inclined towards it. If the same thing is molded towards That, then everything can be achieved. That is, if love is developed for that Infinite bliss, excellent results will follow. Its use has been wrong so far. In short, love alone is the secret of success. It helps the aspirant to such a degree that it takes him to the top, and itself disappears there.

Lalaji



We should love all without getting soiled with attachment. Really speaking, in this way we learn non-attachment attachment. Life in a family is a life worth having, because in it we learn how to love others. It is a school for training for real life. You have to remove only the brokenness and you will feel the love flowing equally to one and all, and it becomes universal.

Babuji

AN INFORMAL SESSION WITH CHARJI

On the 6th of August 2009 Charji invited a group of Iranian abhyasis to his home to say goodbye when they were leaving Chennai after participating in his 83rd birthday celebrations in Tiruppur. We had the privilege to sit with him for a few hours, during which we had a satsangh, some snacks and an enlightening Q & A session. The following is a gist of the session:

* When a sister expressed her frustration with the fact that only a few have the opportunity to be around Master, and that sometimes they will tell others what to do and how to be around him, he explained that discipline is necessary. He went on to make the example of the river and said that it belongs to all. The bigger your vessel (the heart), the more water you can take from it. So he reminded us that in order to receive more, we should make our hearts bigger. He also mentioned that such questions are raised from the head and not the heart, and that we should have a big heart and a small head and not the other way around.

* The next question was from a brother who wanted to know what love is. Charji said that love has no definition, and that anything that can be described is neither love nor God. He further explained that when we give love frequently, our vessel expands and becomes empty and so we should give more to keep the vessel empty. But when we give little, our vessel becomes smaller and we expect to receive more and more, and finally we turn into beggars. He also explained how fear can become an obstacle in the process of giving and receiving, and that we should learn to both give and receive without any fear in our hearts.

* A sister asked Charji how it is that the more love we give, especially to close family members, the more they disappoint us and make us angry? Charji replied that disappointment came from self-interest and that we should give unconditional love without expecting anything in return. He also explained that the only way we can turn enemies into friends is by seeing the inner Master in all people, instead of focusing on their shortcomings and bad behavior.

* A brother was concerned for the abhyasis who have little or no access to Sahaj Marg literature. Charji explained that he transmits both knowledge and experience in every sitting, and that we should be able to absorb it through our hearts and not our minds. He went on to say that he only knew that, after each sitting he received from Babuji Maharaj, he was a changed man, and that was all that mattered.



SATKHOL VISIT

A batch of 22 abhyasis and children from Kuwait Center visited Satkhol in the first week of April. The trip from Kuwait to Delhi and a day's travel by bus to Satkhol was full of anticipation and childlike enthusiasm about being on our way to what is considered as a spiritually endowed place nestled amidst the Himalayan Ranges in Uttaranchal, India.

On reaching Satkhol, we felt as if it was waiting to welcome us on our spiritual quest. We experienced an atmosphere filled with warm brotherhood and whole hearted support by the volunteers and fellow abhyasi brothers and sisters from other centers. Our 5 days flew by quickly as we soaked ourselves in the calm and serene environment. When the time came for us to leave, we all felt as if years of togetherness was coming to an end. We bid farewell to all abhyasis and reluctantly boarded our bus to leave this abode of tranquility. Our group's unanimous comment was "we all have experienced in these 5 days something which we cannot describe in words, but surely filled our hearts with joy and reaffirmed our commitment to our Self on this spiritual journey towards the Goal."



Abhyasis from Kuwait



Malampuzha, Kerala India



Pune, Maharashtra, India



Spurs, Austin, Texas, USA

CHANGES IN RETREAT CENTER'S USAGE

Beginning October 1st, 2009 there will be a change in the usage of the SMSF Retreat Centers. Sisters and brothers abhyasis will be allotted separately in alternate months. The following months – October 2009, December 2009 as well as February, April, June, August, October and December 2010 will be exclusively for sister abhyasis. The months of November 2009 and January, March, May, July, September and November 2010 will be exclusively for brother abhyasis. All those who have already received prior approvals are requested to reschedule their dates as per the new guidelines. A separate email will be sent to each of them individually. Questions regarding this may be sent to retreat@sahajmarg.org It is to be noted that children are NOT permitted at any time during the retreats.

SMSF RETREAT CENTERS

The dictionary defines Retreat as ‘the place one goes for peace’ and the word ‘withdrawal’ is aptly one of its synonyms. Retreat into oneself is identified as a key to progress in spirituality and in recognition of this need, SMSF has established Retreat Centers which provide the right environment to practice ‘retreat’ and ‘withdrawal’ from the mundane and daily chores of life. There are currently three such centers, two in India and one in the USA, which provide the right blend of natural ambience, serene atmosphere, remoteness that enable silent contemplation, introspection and meditation on the inner self. The emphasis is not so much on the physical self as much as on the mental and spiritual self. Those who spend time in these retreats return back rejuvenated and fully centered on their inner Self.

"A retreat was for always the few, who needed to retreat from everyday life, and retire in seclusion to introspect, meditate, brood over one's inner condition etc. The purpose was to re-enter normal everyday life refreshed spiritually to face life with a renewed sense of purpose, to restore balance to one's life. A retreat could never be for the many or for the multitude."

Chariji

"So here we look into ourselves, find ourselves as we are with the courage to look at what we see, and to accept what we see, and then comes the boldness and the determination to change what we see into what it should be. That is the culmination of yogic practice."

Chariji

Post-retreat insight

As a part of a small group I had the opportunity to spend a few days at our retreat centre in Malampuzha, Kerala. What I would like to share with all is the conviction that grew in me as a result of the intensive inner work. I came to experience the importance of “will power” in our spiritual practice. Once you dive deeper and deeper, you realize that our moments of forgetfulness and mindlessness are those when we intentionally let go of awareness. No matter how much we think that these moments are out of our control, they belong to us and at a certain level we are in charge of them. Refined consciousness allows us to see how much of our unconscious acts are in fact within our access if we choose to see them. And quite to my astonishment I realized that we do not want to be fully aware until perhaps the time when we choose willfully to stay awake. This might be what our beloved Chariji has hinted on as "instant realization". It is up to us.

An abhyasi from Iran

For more information on our retreat centers visit <http://www.sahajmarg.org/smww/retreat-center-overview>

EVENTS

KUWAIT

Chariji's 83rd Birthday Celebration - 24 July, 2009: Kuwait centre celebrated the occasion with an extended session featuring skit by kids on “meditation, cleaning and prayer”, and presentations on “biography of Chariji”, “brotherhood” and other such interesting themes. There was a lively group discussion on various topics in which 60 abhyasis participated.

Gatherings and Extended Sessions in Kuwait:

Extended sessions are held in Kuwait on the first Friday of every month. Nearly 40 – 50 abhyasis participate and the sessions are usually very interactive, informative and the ambience helps abhyasis to deepen their understanding of the principles of Sahaj Marg.

Humility, patience, maxims 4 & 5, non-attachment and character building were the topics discussed during the extended sessions held in April, May, June and July. On the occasion of Babuji's birthday, 30th April 2009, all abhyasis gathered in the evening to watch a rare video titled “Babuji's life in Shajahanpur”.



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](#)



I WRITE OF THAT JOURNEY

I remember how my mother would hold me.

I would look up at her sometimes and see her weep.

I understand now what was happening. Love so strong a force it broke the cage,

and she disappeared from everything for a blessed moment.

All actions have evolved From the taste of flight; the hope of freedom moves our cells and limbs.

Unable to live on the earth, Mira ventured out alone in the sky –

I write of that journey of becoming as free as God.

Don't forget love; it will bring all the madness you need to unfurl yourself across the universe.

Mirabai

With the Beloved's water of life, no illness remains
In the Beloved's rose garden of union, no thorn remains.
They say there is a window from one heart to another
How can there be a window where no wall remains?

Jalaluddin Rumi

ABU DHABI

Babuji Maharaj's Birth Anniversary - 30 April, 2009: Abu Dhabi Centre celebrated Babuji's birthday with two satsanghs. The evening session started with lively discussions on selected quotes of Babuji Maharaj followed by a video presentation of "A Journey in Time". Seeing this video was a great experience and many abhyasis were in tears as it was their first experience to listen to Babuji Maharaj's voice, feel his deep penetrating eyes and enjoy his mischievous smile apart from the immense spiritual benefit gained from his conversations. Around 50 abhyasis were present for this celebration.

BAHRAIN

Babuji Maharaj's Birth Anniversary - 30 April, 2009: Babuji's 110th Birthday was celebrated in Bahrain with the usual enthusiasm and zeal. There were two satsanghs held on that day. The morning satsangh was followed by reading of messages from "Whispers" and breakfast. This was attended by about 20 abhyasis. The evening satsangh was followed by listening to one of Chariji's messages. There was also a short clarification session by brother Jaffar who reiterated on the regularity of practice by abhyasis for better spiritual development. There were about 25 abhyasis attended evening satsangh. The day ended with a group dinner.

Guru Poornima - 7 July, 2009: The Guru Poornima day was celebrated with a special satsangh in the evening. Even though the permission came late in the afternoon, there were about 20 abhyasis gathered on this special day. There was a short speech on the practice by brother Jaffar which was triggered by the clarifications sought by some abhyasis.

Chariji's 83rd Birthday Celebration - 24 July, 2009: The 83rd birthday of Rev. Master was celebrated in Bahrain with a special satsangh in the morning. About 25 abhyasis attended the satsangh which was followed by a video session presenting Chariji's talk during Diamond Jubilee Celebrations. Breakfast was served. The day was remembered with joy produced by the spiritual condition.

DUBAI

Chariji's 83rd Birthday Celebration - 24 July, 2009: It was a very joyful occasion and abhyasis who could not make it to Tiruppur were looking forward to celebrating it with love and prayers. The group meditation was conducted at the Iranian Club and around 240 people attended. A DVD presentation titled "Love for the Master" was played after which brunch was served to all.

Youth Seminar - A dedicated Youth Wing Seminar titled 'NEW FUTURE' is being organised in Dubai on 16 October 09. About 55 abhyasis from all over Middle East of age 18 - 35 have confirmed their attendance. This is the first such seminar for Youth that is being conducted in this region. A full report will follow in next edition of MENA Echoes.

VALUE BASED EDUCATION

Value Based Education programme is being conducted in Kuwait Centre since October 2008. Around 25 children eagerly participate in the activities ranging from presentation of moral stories, skits on values, songs on building self-confidence and hope, story narration and creative tasks encouraging team work.

Based on their involvement in multiple activities at VBE class, children have enthusiastically staged a musical drama based on the theme "courage", poetry recital "I walk alone ...He is within me" and classic dance on the theme "Be Cheerful - Loose your Blues".

Seeing the overwhelming joy in the performances of the children during the activities at VBE classes, many other kids have started to join. Based on the exposure to activities of "Children's Center" during Tiruppur celebrations volunteer abhyasis are compiling children activities in the format suggested by Children's Center in Chennai.



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