



Echoes of North America

Shri Ram Chandra Mission

Issue 4

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Master's news

Compiled by Lakshmi Aravind and Hema Whitlam

Raipur: Master reached Raipur about 12 noon on March 17th. After dinner at an abhyasi's home, he came out and told a story about a young boy's faith. "The boy was innocent. Someone had told him that a dip in the water of the river Ganges would take him to heaven. So in a small pond of water, thinking that to be the Ganges, he was taking a bath. A saint told him that this was not the Ganges and that the river was a little far off. This happened many times - the boy thinking a pond to be the Ganges and the saint telling him that it was not. And finally they both died. The saint went to hell and the boy went to heaven. The saint asked God why this happened, for which God replied, 'Every time he took a bath in the water thinking it to be Ganges you tried to spoil his faith. Because of his faith he goes to heaven and because you spoiled his faith, you go to hell.'" Master summarized by saying religion was behind all that had gone wrong, especially in India.



Amleshwar: On March 18th, Master visited Amleshwar and laid the foundation stone for a meditation hall. After the morning satsangh he gave a speech. He said, "All the paramaparas of the Gurus were present to give their blessings and to bless everyone today. I don't know how many of you realised that! I pray that all those who are here reach the goal in this birth only, however long they may live and let this be their last birth. Life is not for knowledge but to reach the goal. We should be cheerful with whatever is given to us." Later on he was also talking about the Paramahansa where, "It used to take milk from the mixture of milk and water. We have to take the good and leave the bad. The five senses are not given for pleasure, but to get us to the goal. In other sansthas, the thorns have to be removed and the

direction has to be known. But here the thorns are removed and the way is set. You have to simply follow him."

Kolkata: On March 20th, Master arrived in Kolkata. In informal conversations with abhyasis he said, "Children have innocent eyes because they don't judge." And, "What you see outside is the reflection of what is inside. Change yourself first and others will change. You light the candle within before it is lit for others."



*"Children have innocent eyes
because they don't judge."*

Chennai: On March 29th, he went to Omega School and had a meal with the students who were celebrating the completion of their exams. Some students sang a song and others showed him their work, he attentively looked at some of the younger ones' drawings as they queued to show him.

Trichy: On March 5th, Master arrived in Trichy and he stayed at the Janaki farm. An abhyasi asked him about the Goal and how it changes as we move on. He said, "Ultimately Babuji says we reach a wasteland like area - which would not be attractive to us. It is a lifetime's journey to reach a point where you realise that all of life's states are ephemeral, and then it is eventually a relief to be in the wasteland state." Then he went on to talk more about how the goal is becoming Love... At the end of that week he went on to Coimbatore, Tirrupur, Bangalore and Ahmedabad.

Baroda:

110th Birth Anniversary of Revered Babuji Maharaj

On April 30th, Master released, 'Whispers from The Brighter World, Volume 2' around 8:30 am. Master did not give a talk, however, he did ask Sister Diana Waycott to speak about Whispers, Volume 2. Diana lovingly insisted that everyone get a copy of Whispers and read one Whisper every day. Master gave the first copy to her.

While in Baroda, Master had some informal conversations with abhyasis. One abhyasi asked Master to help him choose his career, and asked how to choose one from the two opportunities he had. Master thought for a moment and said, "Give up your desire and you will find the best for yourself." In general day to day work, Master said that everyone should put their whole heart into that work. He said, "Then you can become a creator, else you remain only a builder."

Feature Story

Being with Master – April 2009

by Bharath Madhavan

The opportunity began with a thought. I had never attended Babuji's Birthday celebrations in Master's presence and I just had a fleeting thought that it would be so nice if it could happen this year. It turned out that for work purpose, I had to travel to Shanghai, China, for 2 weeks in the beginning of April. I was able to easily convince my manager to book my tickets with a stop-over in India on the way back. Due to Master's recent visit to China, there is a lot of energy and enthusiasm in the centers there. For one weekend, we attended an open-house on Sahaj Marg in a city called Xi'an. About 30 people attended the event in a yoga place. I had a unique experience of giving the talk in English which one sister translated into Chinese. Only later did I find out that Master, during his visit, had expressed keen interest in this city and had mentioned that it would be an important city for Sahaj Marg. I felt happy and humbled to realize that we are just mere tools in his hands, put to work on an as needed basis, whether we are conscious of it or not. It is always best that we make ourselves available and leave the rest to him.

After China, I met Master in Bangalore, traveled with him to Ahmedabad, and then on to Baroda. It was amazing to observe the drastic changes in his appearance over very short durations of time. One day in Bangalore before morning satsangh he appeared so weak and tired and had to rest. After satsangh, we went to see him again and one sister next to me said, "He is looking 10 years younger!" Master, in one of his jovial moods, said, "People who are making pots and pots of money still feel they are affected by this economy. It looks like I am the only person who is not affected. I live like a king, thanks to my abhyasis." Master gave us lots of opportunities to be with him. As usual, I had so many things in my mind to talk about with him, but in that atmosphere, everything vaporized and only silence remained. I deeply cherish those silent sessions, where everyone is sitting near him and nothing else seems to be happening. It is a very precious feeling.

It is amazing how a simple thought can get actuated in his presence. I was sitting in Master's cottage in Baroda and I just had a thought, "Master, give me some work." Almost instantaneously, someone came to me and for the next 5-6 hours I was very busy with work. I felt analogous to batteries getting used, then coming back to him to get recharged, only to be used again. At one point, Master was talking about work and He said, "If one has no work, we must be



happy and learn to relax and be in remembrance. It is a modern day problem that we always want to keep doing something." He went on to say, "He also serves, who stands and waits." I feel that during such celebrations we also learn to balance between "Being" and "Doing." There are times when we are doing nothing, just hanging around, and then there are times when we are doing work, helping around.

Regional Coordinators Corner

John Barlow, R.C., East Region

I suspect that throughout this edition of Echoes there will be many references to gatherings held around the country. The Regional Coordinators have been traveling extensively within their regions and have been meeting with prefects and attending local and region-wide gatherings. I had the opportunity to visit our Ashram in Molena for four days over Babuji's birthday. There were approximately 250 abhyasis gathered to spend time together on this auspicious occasion. I felt as if I had returned home to a special place where our Master's presence was palpable. I hope we can continue to have gatherings there and more and more of us will be able to visit. More news will be made available as gatherings are planned for Molena in the coming months.

You will also see in this issue that our Master has approved proceeding with the next steps in obtaining the site plan for the eventual purchase and occupancy of the New Jersey (Cranbury) Ashram. A project such as this is no small matter and takes many hours, days and weeks of committed research, planning and consultation. It is a time for learning what it means to really work together for the good of the Mission. As Master once said when doing this type of work, we're like a bag full of potatoes rubbing together getting cleaned.

As we think about the expansion of the Mission, there is, or course, a cost. Giving to the Mission comes from the heart, when we feel compelled to give because we are thankful for what we have received. But we also need to be aware of the environment we're living in and make donations only from surplus funds.

Master has commented upon the importance of "character development." But what does this mean and why do we have to even consider it (except that he has requested we do)? This is what I think it means.

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One time Babuji was asked how we can tell if we're making spiritual progress, and wasn't it like traveling by train where we know where the next stop is and when we have reached the destination? Babuji's reply was, yes, this seems to be the way it would be, if you were traveling by train. But what about when you are traveling by plane? Then you're up above the clouds. How do you know where you are or how fast you're going? He said, Sahaj Marg is like traveling by plane due to the "utilization of the divine energy for the transformation of man"—transmission. With transmission everything changes. What in the past took decades could be done almost instantly now by our Master. With such rapid inner change it's hard to really understand the extent of what's happening on the inside.

Therefore, we need to make an extra effort to come in touch with that inner condition when we're interacting with our environment (and the people in it). It's what we call being in remembrance, getting in touch with our inner condition before we respond to outer situations. Pause, reflect, remember, and then naturally our response will be more selfless. I believe this is how we will ultimately form that "brotherhood of man" we so often talk about.



Kim Hansen, R.C., Canada/Alaska

During the month of March I visited our centres in B.C. and Alberta. It was a magical, Master-filled journey, a month-long 'moving' gathering, reminiscent of traveling with Master. The welcome extended in each and every centre was brimming with warmth and affection. The daily satsanghs were sublime. It was a beautiful time shared with my sisters and brothers in western Canada – not to mention the superb scenery along the way – from coastal sea, to valleys of the interior, and up into the snowy mountain ranges. I had the extraordinary opportunity of visiting our centre in tiny Masset, B.C., situated in an exquisite ancient rainforest, where we have one prefect and a growing group of dedicated abhyasis. Masset is on the Queen Charlotte Islands, known as *Haida Gwaii*, the land of the Haida First Nations people. Treat yourself and take a minute to look at a map, going northward along the west coast of Canada, almost to Alaska. Thank you, Master, for making this visit possible! We were bathed in your infinite Love, and emerged in a fresh and happy condition that goes on and on.

In Babuji's "Whisper" of March 3, 2009, he emphasizes the importance of the 9 pm prayer. He says it should not be neglected by abhyasis. "It is about a rallying point, and union between the hearts, on a vibratory level" where a subtle bond is created between practicing abhyasis. He said, "It would be wise for all to become aware of it." Although I have been doing this 'universal prayer' for many years, Master's note citing Babuji's message seems to have breathed a fresh new vitality into it. (See *Sahaj Sandesh*, March 8th.) I'm sure many others have felt this infusion and inspiration. Once we experience it, we don't like to miss it – ever! For info about the 9 pm prayer, go to <http://www.srcm.org/literature/articles/uprayer.jsp> and <http://www.sahajmarg.org/smrti/education/clarif/9pm.html>.

In April we introduced seven seekers in Olean, NY (near Buffalo), to the practice of Sahaj Marg. Now there are nine active abhyasis in Olean Centre who gather weekly for Sunday satsangh. They will be happy for visits from abhyasis and prefects alike.

Back in Canada we celebrated the 110th birth anniversary of Babuji Maharaj in all centres. We look forward to several events leading up to the Tiruppur celebration of Master's birthday: regional gathering at Camp Waupoos near Kingston, Ontario (May 22-24); Eastern Canada prefects meeting (June 20-21); camping gathering at Fort Langley, B.C. (June 26-28); and the Annual General Meeting of SRCM Canada at our Toronto Centre (July 5th). All are welcome to join us for these events! For more info, srcmcan@ica.net.

And just in time for press, I am delighted to inform everyone that Master has appointed a new Secretary for the Mission in Canada, sister Janet Yates of Ottawa Centre. We wish her well in this new role in service of our Master.

Raga Ragavendran, R.C., Midwest Region

We had a very good celebration in Dayton, attended by nearly 140 abhyasis. The Cleveland center hosted the function with many sessions, keeping all of the abhyasis together throughout the two day function. Very interestingly, the picture of Babuji feeding a cat evoked a lot of discussion about Babuji's love for humanity. In Chicago, a day long gathering was well attended by over 50 abhyasis. It was a rejuvenating experience for everyone here. Last month, prefect workshops were conducted in Dayton and Chicago. Most of the prefects in the Midwest region were able to participate. In lieu of a nationwide gathering, workshops and local gatherings help all of us to meet face-to-face and bring out togetherness and a sense of community. Prefects from Kansas, St. Louis, and Bloomington have been travelling to neighboring satellite centers on a regular basis and conduct satsanghs. In June, there will be a regional gathering in St. Louis. All are welcome to participate in this gathering.

Balaji Narayanan, R.C., South Region

It is often we forget that it is through the Mission we found our method and our beloved Master. I joined the mission

when I was 22 years old. I learned a lot by participating in the mission activities. I got trained in mundane activities like cooking and washing vessels then progressed to public speaking, organizing events, raising my hand for what I believed in, and above all learning to do the work in his remembrance. Mission work is a gift. It is very easy to get carried away in looking at the not so pleasant aspects of an organization and lose our focus. The mission is an important tool through which new aspirants find their practice and Master. Our brothers and sisters of the Mission are the conduits for that. I am grateful for their help in my journey. They deserve my love and respect. If the Mission work is done with the right attitude, it can be a learning of highest order and serve as a mirror to our spiritual journey.

SPURS Retreat Ranch, Austin Texas, Spring 2009

(by Tom Stoner, Resident Prefect, SPURS)

This morning looking out our kitchen window shortly after sunrise, about fifty feet from the house, there was a wondrous sight—a doe licking her new-born, wobbly-footed fawn. Spring is a special time here and there is continually something of wonder to observe. In addition to the deer, there are our nine resident peafowl that Master requested we acquire, the wild turkeys with their curious mating rituals, the many nesting songbirds and numerous butterflies along with humming birds that dart about seeking the blooms with nectar. We can't help but feel that the special atmosphere at SPURS noticed both by abhyasis and workers from outside, draws the wildlife to this safe haven.



Spring also brings wildflowers to Texas in abundant and unusual variety. Equally as impressive as their beauty is their hardiness in surviving under adverse conditions—poor soil, minimal rainfall, drying winds, and unrelenting heat. Yet these flowers thrive, beautifying rocky fields and popping up in barren nooks and crannies. Such “lions” of the plant world remind us of how we can use the life we’ve been given, whatever the circumstances, to give up our sheep-like ways and work on ourselves to become what we must become.

Brothers and sisters have told how their time here has helped them to confront their weaknesses and have given them a renewed feeling for the importance of the Goal and an urgency to reach It in this life. Master has likened the experience one can have in spiritual retreat to smelting iron ore. The process, he says, will “refine you, purify you, and give inside you not the steel of the metal, but the steel of integrity, the steel of devotion, the steel of determination that ‘I shall achieve this goal within this lifetime.’”

The glimpses nature gives of new life in the fields of SPURS ranch is echoed in the renewal of the inner life of abhyasis who come to retreat in its profound quiet. To date, 179 abhyasis have been blessed with the opportunity to spend time at SPURS in such renewal. SPURS is a gift from Master that we hope many more sisters and brothers will avail themselves of. For more information, please go to our website at <http://sahajmarg.org/welcome/retreat/austin/index.html> or call 512-314-2104.

Grateful to Master for My Time at SPURS (by Arely Achenbach, Austin, TX)

On March 1st through March 4th I participated in my second retreat at SPURS in Austin, TX. My excitement began when my heart asked me to go back to SPURS and lasted all through the retreat. I began this new journey without any expectations, remembering this being suggested by brother Tom before my first retreat. The weather during all those days was impressively beautiful, especially for Texas which is usually incredibly hot or cold. Unlike my last retreat when I was by myself the entire time, this time, I lived with two more sisters. I experienced and discovered something so BEAUTIFUL, UNIQUE, and INSPIRING and which I could always take with me in my heart. I learned that the way to communicate with God was through silence! It sounds too simple and maybe vague, yet I discovered it is an incredibly powerful and intense and direct channel of communication with God. There were many times during my retreat that I felt as if time had stopped, as if there was actually no time, and all my senses, mind, and heart were for the very first time in harmony; I felt for the first time living consciously in the present time. I felt immensely happy—I smiled to the sky, to Master, to nature. I felt in harmony, grateful, and aware.

Another thing that I experienced was the sense of a natural “rhythm” in doing the practice. And even though I think it is easier to follow a natural rhythm when you are at Master’s home, I think that this is something that I can try to continue at home in my everyday life. My meditation felt so consciously natural in the morning, followed by reflection or sometimes by exercise. Then, in the evening, there was this special moment where it felt right to do the universal prayer, later on my cleaning, and last my prayer. In other words, one thing called for another and I consciously felt and enjoyed each naturally.

Also, I experienced getting an answer to a question that I have asked Master for a long time. That moment was so special, powerful, and yet subtle. The answer made my heart vibrate because of the happiness, acceptance, peace, and harmony it brought to me. I felt the answer and I may say that I “saw” the answer with my heart. I don’t know how else to explain this but it was another blessing during this retreat. Thank you Master!

Ashram & Center Reports

Beavercreek Ashram, Beavercreek, Ohio

The nearly 130 abhyasis who attended Babuji's birthday gathering at the Beavercreek Ashram immediately noticed a rare and uplifting atmosphere, which braced our hearts against the rain and cold. We gathered together in the barn for the first meditation, and afterwards watched a video featuring rare footage of Babuji in Shahjahanpur.



The Cleveland center organized the program with the theme "Union of Hearts," emphasizing co-operation and remembrance as the tools to integrate unity with the divine into our everyday lives. Every sitting brought us closer to realization of these aspects of sadhana, as we experienced resonance within ourselves. Special attention was paid to "listening with the heart" - attempting to imbibe the words of the readings and videos without analyzing with our minds.

Those fortunate to have met Babuji in this lifetime were asked to share their experiences. Uniformly, they mentioned one or two experiences of being with Him physically, and then went on to share experiences of communion with Babuji after his passing. One could feel Babuji's presence as their words produced a vibration in resonance with His divine nature. And of course, we were reminded of our Master Chariji, who exemplifies this resonance on a daily basis.

The gathering came to a close and we said our fond farewells, enjoying the beautiful sunny weather that had unfolded over the course of the celebration. Though we are now spread far and wide, continuity can be observed, as we each resonate with our Master through our daily practice. (Vijay Chitkara)

Sunderland Ashram, Sunderland, Massachusetts

What a pleasure it was to be in the company of so many of our brothers and sisters for Babuji's birthday celebration at Sunderland. As usual, the local abhyasis made sure that everything was well organized and administered with grace and

love. While the Boston center was officially the "host," we know better. Over the three day session there were close to 100 participants from the New England states as well as from New York, New Jersey and Eastern Canada.

The satsanghs were deep and compelling and many commented on the benefit of extending their absorption by delaying the readings for what might have been up to fifteen minutes after the sittings. We all felt that "brooding" over our condition and spending several minutes passing from a deep meditation state to a waking state helps us develop sensitivity and is a very effective way to practice "constant remembrance."

The theme of the "bandara" was brotherhood. We found a SMRTI document on brotherhood prepared by Chari and absorbed his uncommon insights into what brotherhood is and how it can lead us to the real goal. One thing he said was to love the Master and all these things come pretty naturally. He also stressed that we must keep diversity, that we need not agree on all things but understand that with a common "Father" and one Goal, all of humanity may benefit. Other than the satsanghs, the hit of the event seemed to be the video: "Love Him Who Loves All." This video contains very old footage of Babuji in His home at Shahjahanpur and is narrated quite extensively by Chari. Many had not seen Babuji in such a natural state and even on old film His divinity, his power and His majesty were apparent. (Jim Metz)

Other News from the Sunderland Ashram

Abhyasis from Hartford and southeast Connecticut Centers are co-hosts of the June regional gathering at the Sunderland Ashram. Abhyasis from the two centers are already working together sharing ideas for the theme of the gathering and volunteering to choose readings and DVDs based on the theme. We're looking forward to being together!

We will be painting the ashram sometime this summer. Volunteers welcome. Contact colleen Sackheim at colleensackheim@yahoo.com.

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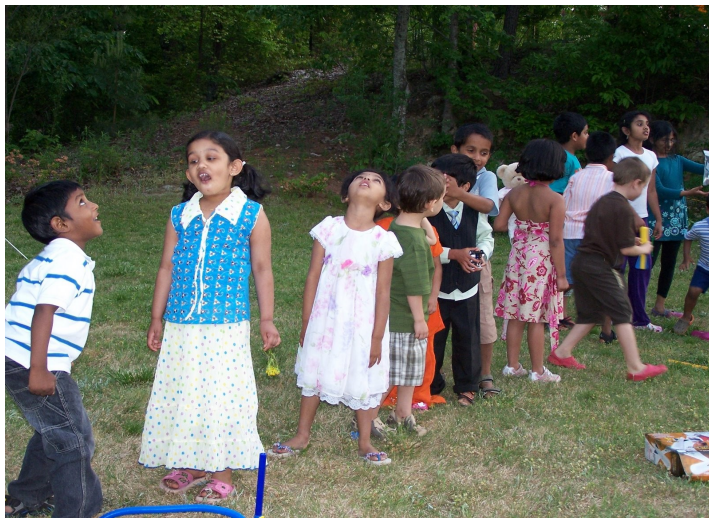
Molena Ashram, Molena, Georgia

When thinking about my time at the Molena ashram my heart is immediately warmed. I arrived with a feeling of a heavy heart full of worldly burdens. There was some apprehension and sadness but within moments of arriving I saw my dear friend and other familiar faces and then I crawled into my

bunk for the night. I remember taking a deep sigh of relief as I lay down and truly felt as if I was "home." Although the accommodations are minimal, there are few places that I remember sleeping so soundly.

Thursday began our celebrations. I was aware that my whole attitude and mood had shifted after the first satsangh. The worries were gone and replaced by a feeling of being totally taken care of. I felt like a child, safe in my parents' home. There was not much formal program the rest of the weekend, which allowed plenty of time for personal reflection and time to catch up with my abhyasi family.

All of the conversations and meetings or whatever I happened to be doing seemed to provide me with exactly what I needed. I was sure Master was carefully orchestrating the whole thing. I left on Sunday feeling as though my soul was nourished and the light in my heart was rekindled. When I arrived home my friends and co-workers asked how the weekend went. How could I possibly describe what went on in my heart on such a deep and personal level?...so I just smiled. (Heather Wrede)



Other News From the Molena Ashram

On Saturday, May 2, twenty-eight prefects attended a meeting conducted by John Barlow. Once again, he emphasized the need for prefects to do their practice diligently. Only by practicing can a prefect know enough about the practice, become an example, and be a clear channel for Master's work. John also spoke about the need for abhyasis to develop sensitivity as early on as possible. To this end, he encouraged prefects to invite abhyasis to arrive at satsangh 15 minutes before the sitting begins and also to take time after the sitting to "brood" over their condition. He also recommended that centers with more than one prefect have monthly meetings as a way of enabling prefects to develop affection, cooperation, mutual understanding, and improved communication. To learn more about Molena Ashram and the activities please visit <http://www.srcm.org/centers/na/us/ashrams/molena/index.jsp>.

(Victor Kannan)



FEATURE: TORONTO CENTRE

In late 2004 we outgrew the private home in which satsangh had been conducted for years. Fortunately, a city councillor sponsored the Mission, as a non-profit organization, for free use of meeting rooms. When satsangh moved to North York City Hall, Master told us that it is good to have satsangh in a "neutral" place. Though we weren't paying for space, we started a fund for an eventual centre. After some time, many abhyasis began to feel restless to have a place of our own where the spiritual atmosphere would be maintained and we could keep our library and booksale. We searched quietly for over a year. Two key criteria were central location and nearness to public transportation, as greater Toronto is huge and many abhyasis don't have cars.

Suddenly, by Master's grace a suitable venue revealed itself. Many saw the place; it felt right. We negotiated the lease with our landlord, whose window cleaning business is in the other side of the two-storey building. We agreed that two walls would be removed and so, three rooms became one, to form a meditation hall that holds 60 comfortably and up to 90 in a pinch. It's on a residential street, steps away from the bus stop and a short walk from the subway station. The large windows open for fresh air. A small room off the meditation hall houses the library. Our bookstore is behind glass doors in the meditation hall. We have a small kitchen. Our children's room is upstairs. Toilets for men and women are shared with other occupants. There is ample free parking in our allocated spots and on the street.

Our 'inaugural' satsangh and gathering was in celebration of Master's birthday on July 2006. What a joyful occasion! We are preparing to enter into the fourth annual lease by renewing donation pledges. Monthly rent is CAN\$2,300. Local abhyasis (now 100 active) contribute to the rent according to ability and willingness. Tax donation receipts are issued annually.

We have satsangh on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. We have periodic workshops, discussions, gather-

ings, movie nights, and U.N. programs. We celebrated and commemorated the United Nations International Day of Families on May 15. As part of the program we prayed for 15 minutes, thinking that all brothers and sisters are becoming peace-loving and pious, as suggested by Babuji in his 1957 letter to the U.N. We all left with a renewed sense of hope.

On Babuji's birthday this year the centre was really packed. It is big enough for now, but soon we will renew our search for a larger home for our spiritual family. We look forward to the day when we will be in a position to purchase. The centre is truly our spiritual home. Master was the first to move in. The atmosphere was special from day one. Upon entering the meditation hall one feels the sanctity prevailing in this 'centre of light.' Thank you, Master, for enabling us to have this place to meditate and 'be' together. We will be so happy to welcome you here someday! (Kim Hansen)

Maui, Hawaii

In February, the Maui center hosted a small impromptu gathering after Nanji Cohran North from Montana offered to bring the material she had prepared for a gathering in Seattle. Abhyasis attended from Phoenix, San Francisco and Montana.



One abhyasi wrote, "The gathering in Maui, Hawaii, was just the right thing needed in my spiritual practice. The coming together of a small diverse group of locals and abhyasis from mainland was almost like a divine gift. The theme 'Path of the Heart' and related discussions were so relevant and interesting that we ended up having a post-gathering half day session! Prefect Betsy was the perfect host in this beautiful paradise-like location, and we felt totally nourished in body, mind and spirit. I felt myself fill to the brim with a welcoming atmosphere overflowing with love and grace. An excellent collection of Sahaj Marg videos and books kept the group immersed in the practice in every way and participating in the daily chores made it feel like a home away from home."

Hawaii center is grateful for the continued enrichment of visiting abhyasis. We invite preceptors and abhyasis to visit our center in S. Kihei, Maui, when travelling to Hawaii. Anyone

interested in leading a short program that has been given in their local center will be welcomed as guests in my home for up to one week. Please contact betsycammack@gmail.com. (Betsy Cammack)

Seattle, Washington

The Seattle center celebrated Babuji Maharaj's 110th birthday with 30 abhyasis and 6 children present. It was a fine sunny day in Seattle! The morning meditation was deep and profound, followed by a message from Babuji from Complete Works of Ram Chandra.

After breakfast, parents got busy with their children and later all were asked to sit and contemplate or reflect. Mostly everyone picked up some Mission literature and was immersed in his / her own reflection. The atmosphere was very silent and reflected a glimpse of the Mission's retreat center experience. After lunch, two videos of Babuji were played and everybody was literally taken to Shahjahanpur. We were all immersed in Babuji's divine laugh and talk. It never ceases to amaze us, the simplicity and genuineness of his Being.

Some of us went for a walk and Sister Kamala remembered how our beloved Master went for a walk when he visited Seattle. This was followed by an hour long cultural program where abhyasis sang bhajans and ghazals in His remembrance and then evening satsangh. At the end of the day we all felt a very profound and joyful feeling of "Being with Him," which was our theme.

(Satya Nistala & Kamala Ayengar)

Tri -State Area

The tri-state area had its much awaited regional gathering April 4th and 5th. The theme of the two-day gathering was "Brotherhood." The venue chosen was a self-contained location in Edison, New Jersey, with ample parking. It was entirely dedicated to the gathering for the duration of our program. More than 180 abhyasis with about 40 kids attended the gathering with participation from all centers in the region. Abhyasis traveling long distances were lovingly accommodated in the homes of local abhyasis.

In addition to the program, we had a presentation to update all with the recent developments and progress made on the Cranbury Ashram project in New Jersey. Brother



John Barlow spoke on brotherhood, Master's vision for North America and the need for this ashram. Brother Krishna Linga shared the major milestones achieved in the progress of the Cranbury Ashram. With this step we are well



on the path to make our Master's vision a reality.

We also had a regional prefects meeting during the program. The atmosphere for the two days was very charged and we concluded the program on a strong note of brotherhood and love. There has been a lot of positive feedback from abhyasis that they benefited from the program and would like to participate in more regional gatherings.

(Murali Garijipati)

Jacksonville, Florida

The Jacksonville center hosted a Florida-wide regional gathering on March 14 and 15, attended by 60 abhyasis from West Palm Beach, Orlando, Tampa, Sarasota, Tallahassee and Jacksonville. The venue was the beautiful Camp Chowenwaw Park with riverside cabins and play areas for kids. The theme of the gathering was "Seek Within." We had two open sessions on Saturday, providing an opportunity to choose from different activities like walking buddies, watching videos, sharing thoughts or simply immersing ourselves in the vast rich nature around. Sunday satsangh was held at the University of North Florida auditorium and was followed by a video from the Hookah series. Everyone enjoyed a picture slide show of the gathering that left all with a heartfelt desire to meet again soon. The Jacksonville center is very grateful for the opportunity to host

the event and thankful to everyone who attended and made it a memorable gathering. (Lakshmi Surapaneni)

Galveston, Texas

By his grace, the Houston/Galveston center hosted a small gathering in Galveston, Texas, on March 21, 2009. The theme of the gathering was "Brotherhood." We had a total of 90 abhyasis, friends, and family from Galveston, Houston, College Station, Beaumont, and Corpus Christi. The Galveston center is relatively new and small, so it was a very nice feeling to have so many abhyasis congregated in this new center. The morning program consisted of satsangh, followed by a discussion on the importance of brotherhood in spirituality. We then had lunch and started the afternoon program, which involved a picnic on



the beach. The discussion revolved around the theme of brotherhood, tolerance, and love.

The theme of brotherhood was prevalent throughout the day as all our brothers and sisters worked together in a beautiful and cohesive manner to make arrangements for the gathering, preparing food, organizing travel, clean up, etc. The enthusiasm with which all brothers and sisters volunteered was amazing to watch. After the morning program, we organized a caravan of cars to drive to the picnic. As this was a perfect day – sunny and 70 degrees – as well as "spring break," the traffic was particularly heavy. A drive that should have taken 15 minutes, took about 1 hour. This unexpected heavy traffic jam provided an excellent opportunity for all to practice 'Tolerance'.

New and Relocated Prefects in North America

Please join us in welcoming the following new and relocated prefects:

Santhosh Srinivasan
Gayathri Santhosh
Vijayan Rambhatla
Anis Baig
Zohra Baig
Jeanne Nanitelamio
Michel Mouyelo-Katoula

Columbus, IN
Columbus, IN
Hingham, MA
Detroit, MI
Detroit, MI
Washington, D.C
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sant68@gmail.com
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azrbaig@yahoo.com
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Mmk2302@gmail.com

Children's Corner

The Mission Prayer and Children by Paul Romano



Anna, Will and Faith Romano praying the Mission Prayer in 2004

After my wife delivered our children and I was handed each baby, the first thing I did was whisper the Mission Prayer into our baby's ears. I had no idea what the effect would be but it felt like the right thing to do. To me it was a way of telling our child that they were a part of Master's family and that they were safe and sound.

My family has found that saying the Mission Prayer together and sitting quietly for five minutes afterwards is an essential building block for our children's future abhyas. Not only that, this daily practice also brings out many hidden benefits for children and parents alike in terms of building family harmony. For the past six years, our family of eight has been doing the prayer together twice a day, in the morning and right before the children go to bed.

We notice on days that we don't manage to do the prayer together for some reason that often disharmony permeates the family environment. There is a nagging feeling that we have forgotten something essential to our wellbeing, as if we have skipped breakfast or some-

thing. There are times we remedy the situation by immediately sitting down and doing the prayer even if morning has passed. We then usually find that the condition of the day will change and harmony is restored.

One of the first confirmations of the benefits of doing the prayer as a family came about a year after we started this practice. One of our daughters who was five at the time announced to us that she no longer wanted to do the prayer. I think that her reason was that it was boring or something. My wife and I decided that forcing her to do it would have bad results so we let her go to bed while the rest of us continued to pray. About three or four days passed. She then reported that she had been having nightmares for a number of nights. I asked her if she thought that the nightmares had started the night she first stopped doing the prayer. She replied that they had. We asked her if she felt that not doing the prayer at bedtime might have been the cause of this sudden burst of nightmares and she immediately thought that was the case. She decided to say the prayer with us again that night and the nightmares stopped. She hasn't missed the prayer since and she is now a young adult. Sometimes we take the benefits for granted but I can say that since starting this practice our children go to bed before 9pm and sleep through the night without getting up until 6 or 7am the next day. They seldom if ever report having disturbing dreams or restless sleep and wake up every day refreshed and ready to go. We feel this has everything to do with saying the Mission Prayer every night.

By doing the prayer, we adults invite Master into our hearts and into our day. When our children do the prayer, they also invite Master to be with them through their days and their childhoods.

Learn and Grow by Suraj Sehgal

We did a "Learn and Grow" presentation for the youth of Molena where all children aged 8 to 18 were invited. A presentation was held in Master's Lounge for about an hour. We conducted the "Learn and Grow" presentation because we have found that many kids who come to the ashram with their parents do not have much knowledge of Sahaj Marg (except for the prayer or what they have been preached about by their parents at different times). Sahaj Marg could help them to be a better person in their lives with a comprehensive understanding, for example, by knowing **why** (explained in the simplest of terms) they go to the ashram or do the Prayer. Our goal was to instill a deeper connection with Sahaj Marg.



Molena children "Learn and Grow"

Through an interactive presentation, we let kids give their thoughts on a topic such as the purpose of life, and then we gave them a "Sahaj Marg point-of-view." In conclusion, the youth learned much about Sahaj Marg and also learned this practice applies to them and helps them in life. To see the entire presentation please click on www.srcmmolena.org.

Calendar of Events: June, July, August 2009

June 6	Austin/San Antonio, TX	Extended Sunday Program	mamtapuriz000@yahoo.com
June 7	Indianapolis, IN	Extended Sunday Program	bob@connorpainting.com
June 13	Olean, NY	Gathering	duberajesh1@yahoo.com
June 13-14	Sunderland Ashram	Regional Gathering	colleensackheim@yahoo.com
June 13-14	St. Louis, MO	Regional Gathering	william.biddle@sbcglobal.net
June 14	Dayton Ashram	Day Long Gathering	beavercreek@srcm.org
June 14	St. Louis, MO	Day Long Gathering	william.biddle@sbcglobal.net
June 14	Overland Park, Kansas	Day Long Gathering	girishkulkizoo8@gmail.com
June 14	Bloomington, IL	Day Long Gathering	shankarsundaram@yahoo.com
June 14	Little Rock, Arkansas	Day Long Gathering	Badri.Mani@c-a-m.com
June 14	Los Angeles, CA	Extended Sunday Program	srcmla@gmail.com
June 15	Warrenville Meditation Center, Chicago, IL	Day Long Gathering	raga_ragavendran@yahoo.com
June 16	Indianapolis, IN	Open House (Nora Library)	jaqadish@yahoo.com
June 20	Austin, TX	Open House (Unity Church)	gghantasala@yahoo.com
June 20	Plano, TX	Open House	vijay77@yahoo.com
June 21,	New York, NY	Day Long Gathering	sampath.k.srinivasan@gmail.com
June 21	Irving, TX	Picnic	shilpibihari@yahoo.com
June 26-28	Fort Langley, BC (near Vancouver)	Pacific NW Camping Weekend	cprisland@shaw.ca , penny.hutchinson@wwu.edu
June 27	Schooleys Mountain Park, Long Valley, NJ	A Picnic in the Park: Family and Friends	Chris@TheUniverseMusic.net
July 4	U of Texas, Dallas	3-week course	yugandhar.boyapally@gmail.com
July 5	Toronto Centre	SRCM Canada Annual General Meeting	srcmcan@ica.net
July 11	Austin, TX	Abhyasi Workshop	sriramjay@gmail.com
July 11	Los Angeles, CA	Workshop / Open House	srcmla@gmail.com
July 12	Dayton Ashram	Day Long Gathering	beavercreek@srcm.org
July 12	St. Louis, MO	Day Long Gathering	william.biddle@sbcglobal.net
July 12	Overland Park, Kansas	Day Long Gathering	girishkulkizoo8@gmail.com
July 12	Bloomington, IL	Day Long Gathering	shankarsundaram@yahoo.com
July 12	Little Rock, Arkansas	Day Long Gathering	Badri.Mani@c-a-m.com
July 19	Warrenville Meditation Center, Chicago, IL	Day Long Gathering	raga_ragavendran@yahoo.com
July 23-24	Sunderland Ashram	Master's Birthday Celebrations	colleensackheim@yahoo.com

Calendar of Events: *continued*

July 23-24	Los Angeles, CA	Master's Birthday Celebrations	srcmla@gmail.com
July 23-26	Molena Ashram	Master's Birthday Celebrations	molena@srcm.org
July 24-25	Austin, TX	Master's Birthday Celebrations	premkishore.shivakumar@gmail.com
July 24-25	Molena Ashram	Labor Day Weekend Gathering	molena@srcm.org
August 2	Indianapolis, IN	Extended Sunday Program	bob@connorpainting.com
August 8	Molena Ashram	Prefect Workshop	molena@srcm.org
August 9	Dayton Ashram	Day Long Gathering	beavercreek@srcm.org
August 9	St. Louis, MO	Day Long Gathering	william.biddle@sbcglobal.net
August 9	Overland Park, Kansas	Day Long Gathering	girishkulkizoo8@gmail.com
August 9	Bloomington, IL	Day Long Gathering	shankarsundaram@yahoo.com
August 9	Little Rock, Arkansas	Day Long Gathering	Badri.Mani@c-a-m.com
August 9	Los Angeles, CA	Extended Sunday Program	srcmla@gmail.com
August 16	New York, NY	Day Long Gathering	sampath.k.srinivasan@gmail.com
August 16	Warrenville Meditation Center (Chicago, IL)	Day Long Gathering	raga_ragavendran@yahoo.com

Call for Newsletter Items

The goal of *Echoes of North America* is to foster love and connections between and among abhyasis and the Master in North America. We need your contributions! Please send **short (200-300 words)** articles and photographs on your gatherings, trips with Master, and visits to ashrams or retreat centers. Also, heart-felt experience/understanding of the Mission, method and Master are appreciated. While we cannot use everything that is sent to us, we will do our best possible to make sure the entire North America region is well-represented in the newsletter. Articles should contain basic facts (e.g., date, number of attendees, location) and focus on the human interest element (the interactions and experiences of participants).

For inclusion in the September newsletter, please send submissions by August 15, 2009 to: EchoesNA@sahajmarg.org

Calendar submissions for gatherings and similar events for the September newsletter should be for the months of September, October and November *only* and should follow the format as seen above.

Editors: Kimm X Jayne and Janmarie Connor

Master's news: Hema Whitlam and Lakshmi Aravind

Contact: EchoesNA@sahajmarg.org

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