



Echoes of North America

Shri Ram Chandra Mission

Volume 2 Issue 1

September 2009

Master's news

Simplify your Life

Master's Address: U.S. General Body Meeting , 22nd July 2009, Tiruppur, India

May I say to all of you in all sincerity that I hate to have to welcome you again and again because I would like you all to be here permanently with me. That can be taken in two senses: the mundane physical sense; and in the sense that I really wish to im-



Tiruppur campus bathed by the night sky and Master's grace

press upon you — the spiritual sense. Bodies can part, but souls should not part. Babuji once said to somebody who wanted to touch his feet, he said, "If you want to touch my feet, you should do it only once. And that first time you bend, your soul remains there, only your body gets up and moves on."

We have had enough spoken about, enough information dissemination, publications, DVDs, all this sort of thing you know. But going back to this phrase, 'You have eyes but you see not,' I would add: 'You read, perhaps, but understand not. You understand, perhaps, but you assimilate not. You assimilate, perhaps, but practice it not.' I don't find enough emphasis given on the spiritual purposes of the Mission, and the soul's purpose, which is the spiritual purpose of an abhyasi when he or she enrolls to start this practice. And this is a general comment applicable all over the world, more importantly here in India.

We hesitate to tell the new abhyasi, prospective abhyasi, what is expected of him or her. I don't see this being done. Because in the last two, three years I have had drop-outs practically from everywhere in the world coming back, implying, if not specifically alleging, that had they been told what was expected of them when they started, they would not have left. In effect, we don't give a foundation to the house that we are trying to build. Again from the Bible, "Build not thy house on a foundation of sand." Because unless you tell them in the beginning, and later pop up the Ten Maxims and meditation times and retreats and what not, they feel cheated. They say, "Why didn't you tell me all this first?" Precondition: Are you willing to do this? If not, stay away. I would say it unhesitatingly: stay away.

Only three days back I received a letter from a lady abhyasi who a year ago visited Manapakkam, stayed a month, and quit — quit the Mission. She said that the atmosphere was too heavy. So that made me, you know, sort of look up at the sky just to clear my head. Then she elaborated and said there was too much discipline, too much 'do this,' too much 'don't do that.' Of course, predictably it was a Westerner. Indians accept, but don't perform. At least from inside they have no resistance, you see. But the others start off by rejecting everything that has to do with discipline. There is this utter lack of sensitivity to discipline, total lack of understanding of what discipline means, and the gross misunderstanding that discipline is anti-individual freedom. *Anti*-individual freedom, to put it in American. This should be elaborated upon. This should be explained.

We should tell prospective abhyasis very insistently, if necessary even in writing, this is what discipline is for; this is what it *will* do to you if you accept it and practice it and regulate your life according to what it requires. But we don't, you know; and I have this unfortunate feeling that we lose abhyasis after a few months, after a few years, even after twenty years, because it suddenly dawns on them that they were created free, and Sahaj Marg is interfering with that freedom. So this is something that all of you should correct, give more thought, you know, bestow more thought upon it. Talk about it, not only to fresh ones but periodically to

existing abhyasis in your, whatever you call it, get -togethers, meetings, instead of just using every seminar as a hail-fellow-well-met opportunity.

There is too much of, shall we say, pampering in this Mission. I remember Babuji's comment — I wanted to propose a bus, that the Mission should buy one and bring abhyasis from the station in Shahjahanpur to the ashram. Babuji said, "It's a very good idea and it shows your concern for abhyasis, but I don't want too much comfort." Why on earth can we not walk six kilometres from Shahjahanpur railway station to our ashram in Shahjahanpur, when you are prepared to go into jungles, sleep in tents where only your head is in-

side the tent, wash in a cupful of water? Why on earth, you know, if that is a holiday which is acceptable? Why go on white-water expeditions, endangering your life? No discipline, no comfort, you are prepared to be wet twenty-four hours of the day, perhaps longer. Why do you go moose hunting and bear hunting in the wilds of Canada and where else, I don't know?

You have — you know, this white culture, this Occidental culture, gives you this as a sort of escape. I hope you would realize this. Take my comments seriously. These are escapes from a life of what the French would call *ennui* (boredom), too much money, too much comfort, too much good food. And you suddenly need to burst out of these undisciplined bondages into which you have stifled yourself, pummelled your life into, and break free. That is freedom.



Every time you want to do bungee jumping and risk your life, every time you want to go into the wilds, you are only manifesting the inner urge of the soul for a true freedom as opposed to this spurious, stupid freedom that civilization has given you all: hot water in the bathroom; seven-inch, eight-inch, twelve-inch mattresses; air conditioned comfort. And if you don't mind a little (I won't say it's obscene because it's an everyday requirement) perfumed multi-ply toilet paper. In a civilization where your bathrooms, or restrooms as you call them euphemistically, are more important than your drawing rooms.

I mean, what are we to think of such a civilization, such a modernization, such a comfort-seeking environment where the bottom end of your alimentary system is more important than the top end? You put in filth through the top end, and worship at the other end. I mean, this is my comment. I mean, I don't pull punches, as William Waycott at least should know, having given him my address long ago when he tried to twist my tail about the first pair of jeans I ever wore. [Laughter]

I want you all to think carefully on what I am saying, instead of just saying, "Aw, this brown-skinned Indian who has never had a day's comfort in his life!" I find peace, I find comfort, I find luxury, I find everything — within myself. You don't find it at all

Inside this issue:

Master's news	1 - 2
Feature Story	2
Regional In Charge & Coordinators Corner	3-5
Children's Corner	5
SPURS Retreat	6
Ashram & Center News	7-9
Calendar	9
Prefect News	10

because the more you have, the more you need. I have seen abhyasis in the U.S. on my numerous visits, you know, tucking cushions under their bottoms, one under this thigh, one under this thigh, then one from behind and still wiggling around until they find the right position, like a dog which circles around before it finds a comfortable place to sleep in. Have you watched a dog, those of you who keep dogs? I mean, what is this, you know, that you find bugs everywhere, you find dirt everywhere except in McDonald's (and I don't know where else), where you *assume* that because there are laws of the nation applicable to food processing in public places, *ergo* they are cleaner than anything you get in the East?

I have made a suggestion that you should all, *all*, every single one of you — don't think you are already at the bottom end, there's nothing more to give up. No! Every one of you should reduce your level of comfort. If you have a twelve-inch mattress, throw it away and buy a six-inch mat-tress. If you are used to bathing in a hot shower, reduce the tempera-ture, bring it as near to the cold as you can. Tolerate. Toughen yourself. Make your body something that Nature gave you to be proud of, and not something that cosmetics and proper alimentation and sanitation make you proud of. I owe my body to what Nature gave me, not to what civili-zation gave me. Civilization has beaten me, progressively, day after day, month after month, year after year. And thanks to whatever Western influence I have permitted myself to be affected by, it has taken me some years of absence from the U.S. to recover my sanity, my centre, and to be now what I was, what I must be, what I will always be — a hu-man being as Nature made me.

I hope you understand what I am saying. It is absolutely essential to the spiritual life — not to sit on a bed of nails and stand under the noon-day sun for forty-four hours, or to go without food; it's not at all necessary. It is, as Babuji said, "Be in tune with Nature." You cannot be in tune with Nature if you take a week's holiday up in the Adirondacks. That is only escape from the reality which you think is real, to the wildness which is the reality of life. Please be sure of this. Please try to accept without thinking that every time you go for, let us say, a swim in the ocean, you escape; you escape from that three-foot by three-foot shower stall so common in your country. Fitted — everything fitted. Multi-showers. I have been in showers in Europe where you have three from the top and from the sides, and it is supposed to massage. We don't want to use our muscles but we want to use the water shower for massage! Where you are expected to use five litres, you use two hundred and fifty litres and come out feel-ing emasculated, enervated.

I try not to be harsh and I hope I am not harsh. And if I am harsh I can only take refuge under the truth that truth is always harsh. Truth is always unwelcome. And truth is untruth because we try to sugar-coat it and present it in acceptable form. It's not my intention to sully the truth, to nullify the truth by making it appear as if it is not the truth, and making you practice it. In biblical terms, I would say, brothers and sisters, I don't know how you feel but my days are numbered. And in keeping with the old tradi-tion that I shall pass this way but once, anything worth saying that I have to say, any kindness that I have which I can show, any good that I can do, let me do it now, for un-till our *souls* are here together we may not meet again. I am not dramatizing; I am only trying to pour the seriousness in my heart into your endeavours which are expensive, which cost you so much to come here, which cost you so much trouble.

Feature Story
By Betsy Barlow

We arrived in Tiruppur in time for the US Annual Meeting (along with about 150 other North Americans), held on July 22, just before the start of the celebration at the Dia-mond Jubilee Park. After the formalities of the meeting, Master took the microphone and spoke about how in the West, we are so much immersed in materialism that we can't possibly know the extent of it, from our perspective. He suggested we toughen up by reducing our level of comfort in the West on every level.

Continuing on this idea at the prefect meeting later that day, he said, that is why our practice is so important, and serves as a daily renewal process to be used until we reach a certain level of velocity and are able to escape the gravitational pull of obstructions. Each and every day is a new opportunity. He asked us, do we stay steady, or are we swayed by emotion? Are we (prefects) practicing everyday as we should, systemati-cally, day by day as prescribed?

As thousands began to gather for our Master's birth celebration, the grounds, by the hour, seemed to transform and come alive. By July 24th, there were nearly 40,000 abhyasis present, all assembled and sitting quietly in the meditation hall by 6:00 AM for satsangh. It was absolutely amazing and wonderful. Master himself arrived each day by 6:10 AM, and began satsangh by 6:15 AM. At least two of these satsanghs lasted an hour and fifteen minutes!

Every major gathering I've ever attended seems to have a theme, or some particular emphasis that Master is especially keen on conveying to us. By the time Master read the *Whispers message on July 24th, I was becoming increasingly clear of the need to collect myself, so to speak, in my resolve to attend to those things that really matter, and to quit fueling, with my attention, those things that do not add value to my life. Babuji spoke in the Whispers message about not looking back, except in order to gain

I know you suffer more than I suffer when I am in the West. For me it is a question of how to sleep on a mattress into which I sink and where, when I want to turn, I feel I am like one of these whales trying to turn in the ocean. Whereas your problem is how to adjust your bones on these floors that we provide for you here, marble or other-wise. Your suffering is more, I assure you, when you come here than my suffering when I go to your countries. I don't want you to suffer. Get used to it. You who make such wonderful things for, what do you call it, camp life and forestry and... I admire those belts, you know, which William Waycott type people who remain slim after seventy-five years of existence — those belts from which dangle so many beautiful, enticing tools. I don't know if they are ever used! But I am... you know, I am always a bit sensitive about the fact that the middle bulge that I have will not permit such a belt, much less with so many instruments hanging around it! I would love to display it. To what purpose?



When I hear of people who have twenty-seven credit cards, on all of which they are overdrawn, and they use one to pay off the other, I shudder to think what sort of freedom has your freedom put you into. Are you free to spend money when you borrow from one bank to pay off another bank, and then pay off from this bank to pay off that? I remember my boss, you know, way back thirty, forty years back, he told the story of a man who borrowed on a Saturday from a good friend, saying, "I'll repay you next week." So that fellow gave to him, and he paid the fellow who he had to pay money to. Next week he had to pay his good friend so he went back to this fellow and said, "You know, I just paid off your loan but can you give it to me for another week?" And he paid this fel-low. This went on for about twenty weeks, then realization dawned on him. He real-ized, "Where do I come into this? I will tell them, 'You pay him one Saturday, he pays him the next Saturday.' Very simple."

So this is what is happening. Real freedom comes when you have and don't spend. Real freedom comes when you have all the facilities of modern life and you sleep on the floor or a futon. How much does a futon cost in the USA? I don't know. Hundred dollars? Eighty dollars? I suggest all of you buy one, put it next to your wonderful king -size beds, queen-size beds, four posters, what have you, and sleep on that one day a week, one night a week, make it two nights a week. Soon you will sell your bed, earn some money, and you will pull yourself out of your debt. I'm not joking. You can laugh but it is not really a matter for laughing. Try it.

The only way to make money is to reduce your needs, to reduce your expenditure. If year after year I can reduce my expenditure from hundred to ninety to eighty dollars, why on earth do I need more money? Don't I get more freedom when I am free of the shackles and bondages of my employment, my employers, the law? Earn more, pay more taxes, have auditors, lawyers.

Simplify your life. Be simple and in tune with Nature. I urge you to, if you like, ask me questions later. Not today, but after you have sort of criticized me, chastised me, called me names in your minds. And then you come to some sort of a realization that after all that old Indian, what he said *does* mean something to me. Let me go and get it clarified. Thank you.

inspiration to better build the future. He said, "Time is pressing... the inconceivable is in the offing." He said that, "All the great Beings turn their attention to man's eleva-tion," and that we "must forge ahead in this pivotal period when everything can change course from one moment to the next." For me, this last sentence resonates deeply ... This is a "pivotal period," and what we do now, today, "can change course from one moment to the next." Master related the need for deeper understanding, more dedication in our practice, in our faith, and better utilization of the time avail-able to us. He recalled asking Babuji, What is wisdom? Babuji said, Live as if you are going die the next moment. If we do that, we will put our soul into every moment of our existence. This is the time, more than ever before, to be steady and advance with love. Not just for ourselves, but through prayer and our own action, for all humanity.

There is so much suffering in the world today, and our practice is an instrument that has been given to us as an effective means to develop and open ourselves to our full potential. It also highlights why Babuji has recently communicated through a Whis-pers message, the universal significance of the 9 PM universal prayer. Master also said that Bhandaras should awaken us to the situation of the illusory world. I think it helps us be clearer in our hearts and minds about what our real purpose is. What I have noticed as I take the gift of this celebration home with me is that my mind and heart are speaking the same language more than ever before.

Shortly we will have another chance to participate in and feel the effects of attending a large gathering here in North America. During our stay in India, Master approved a North American gathering for the weekend of October 9-12th in Molena, Georgia, at our Ashram there. Over the years Master made many trips to the US which always included stops at the Molena ashram. He has charged it with pranahuti as he has many of the ashrams worldwide. I see this as a chance to meditate on and to put in practice all he has given us, and to embrace and be part the change he envisions.

*Whispers from the Brighter World, July 19, 2009

Invitation
Oct 9-12, 2009

Sahaj Marg - Its Universality

NORTH AMERICAN SEMINAR



You are cordially invited to **participate, renew & rejoice** in the North American Seminar to be held at the Molena Ashram

Venue : Molena Ashram, 5611 Georgia Hwy 109, Molena GA 30258 ■ **Registration** : <https://www.srcm.org/registration>

"Sahaj Marg says this is a universal method. It is universally applicable. We must shed, throw away, cast-off everything that differentiates one person from another." Chariji

It is with great pleasure that we invite all our brothers and sisters to come together and participate in the Seminar to be held in Molena Ashram from October 9th to 12th. With Rev. Master's guidance in organizing the North American Seminar at Molena Ashram, we have a great opportunity to come together as One Family. To learn more and to register for the seminar visit: <https://www.srcm.org/registration/index.jsp>. We encourage everyone to register as soon as possible.

Regional Coordinators Corner

John Barlow, R.C., East Region

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I had the good fortune to be able to visit India during our Master's birthday celebrations. As you know Master gave a number of talks during the celebrations, including the Whispers message from Babuji on the 24th. In this message Babuji presented some very important ideas regarding the Mission that affect us today. Here's an example: We are at a transition point "especially in this pivotal period when everything can change course from one moment to the next. Time is pressing. 'The inconceivable' is in the offing, [you should] focus your efforts accordingly... Your minds, caught up in the upheaval of 'modernism', don't see the main thing anymore... Divest yourselves of useless things... serve your Master as best you can and love him above all."

Master also restated this at the US Annual General Meeting, where he said that it is very difficult to see one's attachment to materialism when we are in the middle of it. How do we stay attuned to the "real" when we are living in the midst of a strong materialistic culture that is difficult to avoid being attracted by? I think it's like watching a movie, then forgetting you're watching and believing it's your real existence.

What do we need to do now to prepare for the future? Babuji has defined wisdom as living as if we may not be here tomorrow. In the West our answer to this prospect might be to take all our financial savings and plan a trip, to travel the world so as to at least see what's out there. Or, we could stay as focused on our abhyas as much as possible (each and every day) so when the time comes we have made as much progress as possible thus ensuring that what happens next, happens with spiritual awareness and understanding. In the perfect meeting, Master spoke about going back to the beginning in our abhyas, to use ourselves to observe and patiently understand our practice and that by observing our own hearts, we become more capable of observing others.

Our Master is working constantly for the transformation of this world and he has given us a special tool in the SPURS (retreat center) to help us remember who we are and why we are here. Many have taken advantage of it and have reported wonderful results. In India this past week he also approved the expansion of the Molena Ashram, to begin as soon as the final quotes are available and **he approved of having a North American gathering on the weekend of October 19-12 in Molena**. I hope you will put this date on your calendar and plan to attend if at all possible. We have limited opportunities to get together as a large group but he has now given us one. We invited Master to come to this gathering, and are waiting for word as to whether he, or Brother P.R. Krishna, RIC North America, will be able to attend. We will communicate this as soon as something is confirmed.

We have so much to be thankful for and I am very happy that our Master has agreed to the above plans. More info will be forthcoming shortly regarding the Oct. 9 - 12 gathering. I very much look forward to seeing everyone at our Ashram in Molena, Georgia, in October. Best wishes to all.

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 upcoming or recent gatherings, trips with Master, and visits to ashrams or retreat centers. Photos should be submitted separately, not embedded in articles and without labels or embellishment. 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 December newsletter, please send submissions by November 15, 2009 to: EchoesNA@sahajmarg.org

Calendar submissions for gatherings and similar events for the December newsletter should be for the months of December, January and February *only* and should follow the format as seen in the calendar section of this newsletter.

Diana Waycott, R.C., West Region

Whispers from the Brighter World has brought to light aspects of our spiritual practice that heretofore were hidden to us. One of these aspects is the concept of an *égrécore*. This term is defined in *Whispers from the Brighter World*, Vol. 1:

An égrécore is a kind of group mind which is created when people consciously come together for a common purpose. Therefore it has the characteristic of having an effectiveness greater than the mere sum of its individual members. It can also refer to the psychic and astral entity of a group.

Prior to the release of this book, we all certainly felt the benefit of being together at gatherings of abhyasis. Now, as I read Babuji's message (below), I feel that he is telling us more about the extent or the reality, on a spiritual level that such a group can have. Personally, I am encouraged that such a bond does exist between us and furthermore that its effectiveness extends beyond the mere physical limits that we can only perceive as humans.

Therefore when we come together, we not only strengthen ourselves, we strengthen others (in our group and outside) and we strengthen our spiritual path in the context of the world, letting God's love radiate out. This October's gathering at our Molena Ashram is our next opportunity to strengthen this.

A specific force emanates from these days, which man cannot assess. As any participants, he benefits from it, but this fact goes well beyond by developing our Mission égrécore. These days, which bring our brothers closer through the same surge of heart, have an incomparable positive impact.
(*Whispers from the Brighter World*, Vol. 1, April 29, 2003)

Raga Ragavendran, R.C., Midwest Region

There are many tools Master provides to enable us to keep in touch with our inner self. Divinity is inside us. Daily meditation itself is a tool. In every day meditation, we try to take a peek at the divinity inside us. Sometimes due to the nature of our mind's activities, we do not succeed in that endeavor. However, we try harder. We try to read the Sahaj Marg literature, listen to Master's talks, talk to other abhyasis and we try to recreate his presence in our daily life.

The SPURS retreat center is another tool for our use where the environment itself encourages us to dive within. Gatherings are also a tool for us where the atmosphere fosters brotherhood and the opportunity to spend time with others who share the same goal in life.

Some of us were able to take the journey to India this July to attend Master's birthday celebration. Many of us could not due to many reasons. In lieu of travelling many thousand miles away, Master has given permission to have a National gathering in Atlanta this year. When we had the Cleveland gathering last year, there was a momentum created in all of us. One of the main reasons for the gathering is to energize ourselves, to retrace our path to our goal. Many times, we wander off. We get pulled off into different directions in our life. Gatherings provide us an opportunity to realign ourselves with the pursuit of our real goal.

In *Whispers*, we have read so many times about the "bhandaras" mentioned by Babuji and of how the attendees of these spiritual gatherings have benefited enormously. Master mentioned in Tiruppur the importance of "sruti" knowledge (knowledge received from above) as the highest form of knowledge. He also said that the two volumes of *Whispers* already released and the two additional volumes which will be released are to be considered as the four "Vedas" of Sahaj Marg.

Many of us remember those days when went to Atlanta almost three times a year. I was blessed with an opportunity to go to the ashram site with Master, even before the building came up. There is always a reason why Master recommends a place for an ashram. A spiritual Guru is called "Trikala Gnani" (who knows, the past, the present and the future). And in Tiruppur this July, Master suggested that all of us in North America consider the Molena ashram as the central venue for gatherings. In South India, Master has selected Tiruppur as the venue for the large gatherings; in North India, Lucknow is the venue. Likewise, Molena is the venue chosen for North America.

At the upcoming national gathering, October 19 - 12, there will be a prefect workshop, a presentation about the United Nations days and how they are celebrated in the Sahaj Marg community, the regular morning satsanghs, talks and Master's videos. The gathering falls on a Canadian holiday weekend and costs relatively less to travel to compared with India. I would sincerely request that all abhyasis make an attempt to come and join us in Atlanta for this gathering. The benefit of attending a gathering is, like Sahaj Marg, imperceptible.



N. American abhyasis in the Tiruppur canteen

Balaji Narayanan, R.C., South Region

4 Ms - My Master, My Method, My Mission, My Molena

I started my practice in July 1994. I was fascinated by the practice's simplicity right from the start. I did not feel anything but I was determined to give it a fair try since I really liked the high ideals of Rev. Master. My prefect told me that beloved Master was visiting Molena in August for 10 days and requested that I participate for at least one day. I reluctantly agreed to a one day visit since I was about to defend my thesis in a couple of weeks.

We arrived in Molena in the morning and Rev. Master was due to arrive in the afternoon. There were about 500-600 abhyasis present. It was not the most comfortable place but it had the bare essentials. Since I was planning to stay for only one night, I didn't worry much about it.

Beloved Master arrived that afternoon. I was a bit disappointed with his normal appearance but the experience from that point on was far from normal. Immediately, I was transported to a different realm which cannot be explained by words. Every sitting was wonderful and that feeling continued throughout the day and night. I ended up staying the entire week.

Molena is a very special place where a lot of us have found our inner selves. Earlier this year, I stayed with my family with three kids in Molena for a week. It was the best vacation that my kids ever had. More importantly, I had a most profound and reflective time. This place is a gift for all abhyasis—particularly for North America—from Beloved Master. He has been to Molena during every one of his visits to USA.

The national gathering in October is one such occasion for all of us to take advantage. It is important that we make every effort to participate in this unique occasion and immerse ourselves in the atmosphere (in Molena) that our Rev. Master has created for us.

Message from the US Administration Team
Submitted by Bill Waycott, Vice President

The US Administration Team (Bill Waycott – Vice President, Naren Kini – National Secretary, Bani Surapu – National Treasurer, and Kimm X Jayne and Urmil Shah – Joint Secretaries) was created by our Revered Master in January of this year. We are to work in tandem with the Regional Coordinators (John Barlow, Kim Hansen, Balaji Narayanan, Raga Ragavendran, and Diana Waycott) for North America to support the work of our Master and to insure a smooth and well-coordinated management of SRCM in this country. Since January the team has been working to address the many issues which come before the Mission. Recently, sister Janet Yates, secretary for SRCM-Canada, has joined the team to further strengthen our bond with the Canadian Admin. team.

The following focus areas were established early on (listed in alphabetical order) and since that time, priorities have been established. Work on the currently more active projects is described in more detail below.

- Ashram maintenance
- Ashram expansion
- Ashram utilization
- Ashram search and acquisition
- Bookstore
- Children and Youth
- Finances
- Fund raising
- Legal
- Meditation centers
- Publications promotions
- United Nations



Meditating at Malampuzha Spiritual Retreat Center, Kerala, after the celebrations

Ashram maintenance: We are in regular contact with each of the Ashram Management Committees (AMCs) associated with each of the ashrams. Usual discussions with the AMCs revolve around repairs to the sites and their respective costs to the Mission. Recent concerns have focused on plumbing problems, a leaky roof, a hot water boiler retrofit, etc.

Ashram expansion: As many of you already know, there has been a flurry of enthusiasm in support of new growth for the four ashram properties currently held by the Mission.

•**New Jersey:** In April of this year, Master gave the green light to move forward with the completion of this project. Funds have been released for the acquisition and site improvement of the Cranbury property located about 50 miles (80 km) southwest of Manhattan. Currently, we are waiting for the review of the site plan by the local township, something which we expect to be completed and approved by late September or early October, 2009. Assuming the site plan is approved, the acquisition of the site will be completed and development construction will commence. Volunteers meet at the site each weekend to work on site improvement and all are welcome to participate. For more

information please contact brothers Krishna Linga (609) 638- 5380 or Murali Garikipati (609) 516-8216.

•**Molena:** In July of this year, Master gave the green light to move forward with the expansion of the ashram, located about 50 miles (80 km) south of Atlanta. Funds have been released for the construction of the south wing of the dormitory/dining hall complex. Plans are being reviewed at this time and once the design has been established and the cost analysis completed, construction will begin. For more information please contact brother Rohit Patel (704) 649-9442.

•**Sunderland:** This ashram, located in the Pioneer Valley in western Massachusetts, is a popular location for abhyasis from northeastern USA and southeastern Canada to gather. In recent gatherings this year (which occur many times throughout the year), the building has been filled to capacity, prompting local abhyasis to investigate the possibility of an acquisition of adjacent office space to expand the facility. An exploratory committee has been established to investigate this possibility. For more information please contact brother Rick Pivrotto (413) 559-1974.

•**Dayton:** This facility can adequately accommodate all the abhyasis who attend during regional gatherings throughout the year and there are no plans for expansion at this time. For more information please contact brother Vijay Chitkara (937) 434-8694.

Children and Youth: Earlier this year a "Child and Youth Mission Life" committee was formed to compile, organize, and coordinate activities for the younger participants in the Mission. Tracie Pape tracieo@sbcglobal.net chairs the group. The committee members and their respective focus areas are:

Tracie Pape -- youth (tweens and teens) activities (compilation & organization)
Ranjani Iyer -- small children activities (compilation & organization)
Meg Hartley -- activities for gatherings and seminars (compilation & organization)
Leslie Romano -- home-based activities

We can expect to see a change in our approach to kids in Sahaj Marg in the coming years. Please visit the Kids' Center during the Molena gathering in October and find out what's going on. Volunteers please contact Tracie at the email above.

Fund raising: A national fund raising initiative called the National Ashram Fund, is being formulated and will be circulated to all abhyasis in September of this year. The purpose of this fund is to continue to raise money for ashram maintenance, ashram expansions and new ashram acquisitions.

Meditation centers: There are currently five full-time meditation centers leased to the Mission in North America: Chicago, Toronto, Vancouver, Nelson, BC and a newly acquired center in Cleveland, Ohio. The Mission in North America is in search of new meditation centers to be located in cities with larger satsanghs. These new centers should be centrally located and all expenses incurred for supporting the centers need to be covered by the local center abhyasis. If you have information about a possible location of a center for lease, please contact national secretary Naren Kini (925) 899-0995. The Cleveland center will hold a regional gathering from 11 to 13 September 2009 to showcase their new facility. For more information please contact brothers Brian Jones (440) 724-7882 or Christopher Christian (216) 741-1538.

United Nations: The Shri Ram Chandra Mission has been designated as an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) by the United Nations. This designation gives SRCM international status as a community that supports the humanitarian efforts of the UN and promotes its efforts to eliminate world hunger, make basic healthcare available to all, and achieve world peace. As done in the past, Mission activities will be conjoined with specific UN days to increase world consciousness. A schedule of future activities will be circulated shortly.

Please stay in touch: If there is something you feel should be brought to the attention of the Admin team, please send me an e-mail at: bill.waycott@seminis.com.

Children's Corner: North American Committee for Children and Youth Update

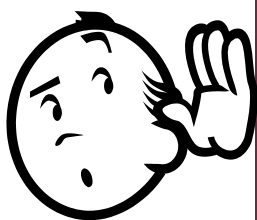
Submitted by Tracie Pape, Chair, North American Committee for Children and Youth

The North American Committee for Children and Youth has been formed to develop and implement creative, dynamic and engaging programs, activities, materials and infrastructure for children and youth that instill his light and joy, reveal their Self, and prepare children and youth for a lifetime of abhyas. We are comprised of abhyasis from throughout the country and each member is focusing on a specific area. Meg Hartley from Oregon is responsible for activities for large groups and gatherings meg.hartley@gmail.com, Leslie Romano from Virginia is working on home based activities lionsgateschool@gmail.com, Ranjani Balaji from Texas is organizing activities for young children home.ranjani@yahoo.com and Tracie Pape from Illinois is creating a program for pre-adolescents and teenagers tracieo@sabdcglobal.net. Please feel free to contact any of the members if you have any ideas or would like to volunteer.

We feel it is very important to have our children feel welcome and included at satsangh and gatherings. We are in the process of gathering and compiling activities to upload onto the Mission website so that all volunteers will have access to inspiring activities for children and youth. Volunteering with children is an incredible opportunity to learn and grow and we welcome any suggestions or ideas to help the program be inclusive, educational and fun. We look forward to working together and creating an atmosphere to help our future generation feel a part of this important movement of love and spiritual growth. We are in the process of planning activities for the National Gathering in Atlanta and are looking for volunteers. Please contact Tracie Pape at tracieo@sbcglobal.net if you would like to help.



Children Celebrating Master's Birth Anniversary in Tiruppur and in the United States



Is there an Echo in your Mailbox?

Not getting your Sahaj Marg news in a timely manner? You can now subscribe online to have the **Echoes of North America** quarterly newsletter delivered directly to your inbox. Go to <http://www.sahajmarg.org/newsletters/north-america> to register and to read past editions.

While you're at it, take a few moments to familiarize yourself with the many sources of news and information available on the new and improved Sahaj Marg website: <http://www.sahajmarg.org>. Some work is still in progress but it's nearly complete and serves as a wonderful resource for abhyasis and for anyone wishing to learn more about Sahaj Marg meditation.

And don't forget to start your day with a **Daily Reflection**. Register online to receive a reflection a day at <http://www.sahajmarg.org/daily-reflections>.

SPURS Retreat Ranch, Austin, Texas, Summer 2009
"Here Master is everywhere!" by Tom Stoner, Resident Prefect, SPURS

It's early August at SPURS and the ranch's many sage bushes are laden with blossoms. Their heady scent draws hundreds of bees whose excited work fills the air with a steady hum. It brings to mind lines from an old song: "The sage in bloom is like perfume, deep in the heart of Texas."

Our Master has likened the Divine Presence to the fragrance of a flower. The pervading scent of the sage flowers seems to parallel the experience that so many abhyasis have had at SPURS. As one brother recently put it, "Here Master is everywhere—there is nothing but Him." Another brother made a similar observation: "Everything around me is resounding with Master's transmission—inside and out." One abhyasi expressed the mystery of this Presence: "What is it here that keeps us connected all the time with Master? I don't know." A sister felt Master's Presence in yet another way. In tears she said, "Every second here you feel he's giving so much!"

More abhyasis are being drawn to SPURS to go within the Heart and spend a few days in intensive practice in this special atmosphere Master provides. The time away from the busy outer world often yields very practical discoveries such as one sister recently made: "I've been addicted to the news—which probably gets in the way of meditation. But in my time here at SPURS I've found out that I can get along without TV and newspapers." If you feel drawn to spend some days in retreat but have questions, please call us at (512)301-2104 or check out the web site at <http://www.sahajmarg.org/smwww/retreat-center-overview>



My Second SPURS Retreat
by Sriram Jayasundar, Austin TX

My idea of a second retreat at SPURS started with thinking: "My family is in India and I have nothing better to do over the long weekend, so why not retreat at Spurs!" I went into the retreat with no expectations of profound experiences because I remembered Babuji asking in Whispers, "Are you meditating for experiences or for Being?" My dorm roommate was an elderly brother from India. It seemed that he could need help with the electronic appliances in the kitchen. My first thought was to "accept" that this elderly brother was my roommate and it was now my responsibility to help him. (The brother, however, did not ask for my help.)

On day one, I found myself preparing lunch with this brother and we decided to make lunch for all the other brothers retreating. We prepared rice, some of which was left over to the next day. I also found myself asking if the elderly brother had had coffee, offering him something to eat, etc. The next day, not wanting to waste food, I decided to make-do with the leftovers. The same elderly brother enquired about lunch again and asked if the leftovers would be sufficient for all the brothers. All thanks to Beloved Master who has bestowed me with enough awareness to realize that I was entering the distracting territory of preparing "communal meals" everyday.

I decided that that was not why I had come to SPURS and so told him that he could prepare food for others if he wanted but that I was going to eat the leftover food. That day and the next left me feeling remorseful. Thoughts like, was I being rude, disrespectful, etc., started going through my head. I also wondered if I was being anti-social with my stoic silence, avoiding other brothers' eyes, etc. It was then that I decided to request a sitting from brother Tom. After that the rest of my retreat passed in "uneventful silence."

The final day arrived and the other brothers enquired about my impending departure. Lo and behold, I was filled with so much love even in exchanging a single sentence with the other brothers. It was then that the revelation came to me that, "silence in HIS Presence, can take us to the Goal in no time."

I remember leaving Spurs with the thought: "If I am worth the salt I eat, if I have any gratitude towards That Old Man who is expending every ounce of HIS life energy to serve us, if I have any regard for the brothers and sisters, prefects and their families who spend so much time and effort for us, then I will make sure to achieve the Goal in this very life."

And herein lies the crux of the miracle called Sahaj Marg: that in serving this Magnificent Personality, we don't feel bad about serving our so-called "lesser" brethren. Thanks to my brother retreatants who enabled me to have the experiences I did!



An Opportunity to go Deeper
by Simrit Dhaliwal, Austin TX

I was just beginning my three day retreat at SPURS and Brother Tom was near the end of my orientation when he mentioned, "Consider this as an opportunity." I smiled as that was the one feeling I kept having in the days preceding my retreat – an opportunity not only in the spiritual sense of being at SPURS, but one that also felt equally important because I was going to leave my twenty-month old daughter for three days and come here. So, I saw my time here as one that could not be wasted in any way. I came with a feeling that I have to find some thing. What? I did not know, but I knew only meditation would give me an answer!

I found out quite early in the retreat that contemplation did not come easily to me. When I was not meditating, I was just having simple thoughts but nothing deep or profound. So I meditated as much as I could. One of the things I felt at SPURS is the easiness with which I got into deep meditation, whether I sat in the meditation hall, the sanctuary, or in the living room. It felt like it was the natural thing to do. However, it was surprising how tired I felt by the end of the day! I also observed how quickly thoughts I had regarding changing particular character traits were implemented into action. It happened on more than one occasion.

Lastly, I saw what it means to have a 'flash of illumination' during meditation - it came so naturally, and so simply too! I realized that there are no secrets in what each abhyasi should aspire to become - all has been said over and over again, and in different ways by our Masters. I always thought that I was listening to what was said, but now I know that knowing and understanding are two entirely different things. Now I feel, at that moment, that particular knowledge or teaching I possessed in the brain was replaced by real understanding of the same teaching from my Heart. I felt that it came really from within and I have no fear of forgetting what I felt. In a sense, from that point onwards, meditation has even more meaning, even greater purpose for me. So I have come back more determined - for my Master has shown me that it is possible, and now I hold on to that truth as I live my life outside of SPURS.

The retreat may have been only for three days, but I feel that the experience of the retreat still continues. Also, I find that I am truly contemplating in the days after the retreat. One of the changes I feel is that my attachment to the physical form of the Master has reduced, while my dependence on my inner Master has been strengthened. On the material level, my dependence on the idea that my daughter cannot do without me has been removed - she did just fine without me around! So, at least in that sense the retreat was liberating!

The idea that I should go for a retreat came only after I read an article by Brother Tom in which he mentioned the number of sister retreatants last year. While I always assumed that sisters would find it harder to retreat due to family responsibilities, I was surprised to find that sisters outnumbered brothers last year. I am glad that I had the 'opportunity' to read the article and make use of the beautiful gift our Master has given us.

Message and Vision

"...souls yearning for rest from glamour of this world. From the insistence on money-making, from the demands of power structures - lay all that behind us, and go there and relax, bring our souls to pristine purity and meditate, introspect, do some writing if you wish to do so..."

Inaugural Address at CREST (Centre for Research, Education, Sadhana & Training), 9th August 2006, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Ashram and Center Report

Molena Ashram, Molena, Georgia

The recent guideline from Rev. Master to change the satsangh timing to 7:30AM has resulted in a very positive experience for the abhyasis who go to the ashram. It is motivating many abhyasis to go to the ashram on Saturday night itself and stay overnight with the effect that the ashram is getting more utilized and abhyasis are having a more fulfilling ashram experience.



Rev. Master's Birthday celebrations, July 23 – July 25, 2009
by Teresa Valentine

Two hundred abhyasis and children attended the celebration of Rev. Master's 83rd birthday at the Molena Ashram. The theme of the program, prepared by abhyasis of the Charlotte, NC, Center, was ***Towards the Goal***. The program focused on transformation and how we can participate in and accelerate both our inner and outer transformation to achieve the Goal of our practice.

On Friday, the 24th, the morning program, *Master-An Era of Opportunity and Hope*, focused on the Master as the Goal. The following sessions presented the journey to the goal as a process of inner transformation, and gave ideas on how we can facilitate that change. Two main ideas of the day were *Purposeful*, *Devoted Practice* and *Cooperation*. As Master said, we should put our heart into what we do – from morning meditation with a heart full of love and devotion, to doing all our practice and our work whole-heartedly.

Each section of the program was followed by a period of guided self-reflection and writing in the program booklet the program team had printed, bound and distributed to everyone. Once each day, from tea time until the 6:00PM evening satsangh, we all observed a period of voluntary silence. All who wished to spend the time in quiet reflection could wear a sticker saying "Observing Silence" so others would understand. Whether or not abhyasis chose silence during those times, the effect was felt by all. The afternoons were beautifully peaceful, with natural sounds of work, quiet conversation and children playing. One could feel the abundant grace in the whole environment.

Friday evening brought a special treat as all the children presented a puppet show based on the Sahaj Marg story, "The Spark Collector." The "curtain call" was as enjoyable as the performance, as all the children, and their puppets, were introduced. The children seemed pleased and proud of the puppets they had made themselves during the practice sessions all that day.

On Saturday, the program focused on outer transformation, with the main ideas of *Character Formation* and, again, *Cooperation*. Rev. Master speaks of developing an "integrated character," in which the inner and outer are the same, so that a human being is the same person regardless of the circumstances being faced. This can be accomplished if the outer self evolves equally with the inner self through the development of a character based on "right morals and proper behavior," which Rev. Babuji called "the basis of yoga." We can cooperate with character formation by realizing that, having been created by the ego, not by samskaras, our character is not changed merely through the cleaning

practice, but requires our effort. We should apply ourselves to emulating the character of one we seek to be like – the Master.

On Saturday afternoon there was an outdoor games period for both adults and children, brightening an already joyful atmosphere with fun and laughter.

Master has said that when we leave a bhandara, we should

take it with us. After Sunday morning goodbyes, the spiritual atmosphere of this gathering expanded to many parts of the country as abhyasis returned home, looking forward to being together again at the National gathering in October.



Ashram Term Residency Program

The Molena Ashram Term Residency Program is open to abhyasis who wish to dedicate 2 weeks to 3 months to staying at the ashram and devoting themselves to both spiritual growth and active participation in ashram work and activities. For more information about the Term Residency Program, please visit our ashram website at <http://www.srcmmolena.org/molena/termresidency/index.jsp>.

The Kingdom of Trees

by Barbara Levin

I want to talk about how I gradually came to love the Molena Ashram after moving to its vicinity about one year ago. When I first moved to Athens, GA, I looked forward to visiting the Molena ashram, just as I had always looked forward to attending gatherings at the ashram in Sunderland, MA, when I lived in Cambridge, MA. I found that I felt quite intimidated by the sheer scope of things in Molena, however. When I went to my first satsangh, everybody was wonderfully welcoming, but only a few people knew me, and, of those, only a very few knew me well. In addition, the space is large, the rooms are many, and there were items of equipment, like the industrial dishwasher, that were quite unfamiliar.



Peter Romano gave me the job of compiling a booklet that would familiarize newcomers with the ashram, and, I started slowly to bite off whatever pieces of that project I might be able to chew. As I gathered information for the various topics – like safety at the ashram, the kitchen, and laundry – I not only learned more about how the ashram functions but also got to know some of the individuals who are responsible for making things work there. I am amazed at their dedication, and I try to follow in their footsteps. Little by little, I started taking on small volunteer jobs, and one day I bit the bullet and asked a sister abhyasi to teach me how to run the industrial dishwasher. That job was actually a lot easier than I had expected it to be.

At Master's birthday celebration this year in Molena, I felt so happy to be in the company of my brothers and sisters and just to be at the ashram. I realized that I had come to love the place. It now feels like home to me. I have nicknamed it "The Kingdom of Trees" because I marvel at all the natural growth there and feel that Master marvels at it, too.



Hobart - Molena's industrial dishwasher

Sunderland Ashram, Sunderland, Massachusetts

by Colleen Sackheim

Plans are underway to paint the Sunderland Ashram at the end of August. Abhyasis with painting experience have volunteered to paint the library and meditation hall. We are all looking forward to working together in his love. Brothers and Sisters from Plainsboro and Northern New Jersey centers are co-hosting the September 12-13, 2009, regional gathering at the Sunderland Ashram. The theme of the gathering is Willingness. Please visit the Mission website for details: <http://www.sahajmarg.org/smww/calendar-of-events>.

Cleveland Center, Cleveland, Ohio

by Shelly Gould Burgess

It is said that Master's plan is always, always, always better than the way we think things should be. Our search for our Cleveland meditation center was like that. In the fall of 2008, under the directive of Master, we began to look for that special place that would take us out of rented halls and auditoriums and put us into a purified atmosphere in a space all our own. We soon found one place...and some of us really, really wanted it(!)...and then it fell through. Soon we found another place, and even more of us really, really wanted it(!)...and then it fell through, too. Then in the early spring we found what seemed the perfect place, and it felt like Master delivered a gift into our laps for the taking. Then the real learning began.

First we had to move beyond dropping small bills in the wooden collection box and, instead, make commitments to the brothers and sisters of our center by putting together enough savings to cover six month's rent in advance. Many of us even took the leap of arranging direct deposit donations for the first time. Next we made our offer to the building owner and waited with excitement and optimism. Then we waited some more...and more...and then we realized that the process was taking a really, really long time. For some reason, the owners of the building took weeks to respond to each question, issue, and proposal. Weeks! Hmmm...In my experience as an abhyasi, I've had innumerable instances in which everything felt right about a situation...and then the situation didn't "pan out." While I know that I'm not supposed to ask "why," it's hard not to wonder sometimes. This was such an instance.

I'd even had an experience of the atmosphere being almost unbearably holy in our proposed meditation center...so when it took one, two, and then three months to work out the lease details, I couldn't understand the discrepancy with what I sensed spiritually and what was happening materially. In June I mentioned this to one of our preceptors, Brother Brian Jones, as we neared month number three of waiting. He said something remarkable that gave me an "aha moment," which was that Master had wanted us to have six month's rent saved before signing a lease. During that long period when we couldn't understand what was taking the owners so long to respond to us, our direct deposits and larger "wooden box" donations were slowly building...to the point that we finally did have six months rent saved! It wasn't until we reached that point that the building owners, who knew nothing of our savings or Master's request, began responding to us. Wow! And so it is with great happiness that I may say that today, July 5th, 2009, the members of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission in Cleveland held our first satsangh in our new Cleveland Meditation Center. There are tears of gratitude and joy as I type this.

The Cleveland Center began in 1972, hand-in-hand with Stonington, Massachusetts, as the first centers in the United States, formed by Babuji Maharaj himself during his 1972 U.S. tour. Presiding over our satsangh this morning was Brother Brian Jones, who for a long time was the only abhyasi in Cleveland. After satsangh, Brian shared some words about our center's history as well as some beautiful thoughts about discipline and simplicity. Afterward we had a light brunch and took a very happy group photo in front of what is now a converted church, built in 1964, in the charming, old, family-friendly neighborhood of Old Brooklyn in Cleveland. We then set about to discuss how to organize ourselves so as to come together as a center to make the best use of our beautiful new gift from Master, our meditation center.



Detail of Cleveland Center stained glass window



The **Cleveland Center abhyasis** (above) are happy to invite everyone from the surrounding centers to the inauguration of the new meditation center. **Please join us September 11-13th for a regional celebration and gathering.** The Cleveland meditation center is located at 1025 West Schaaf Road, Cleveland, OH 44109. Register online at: <http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dDZlOU1qd3VvSjZobXZGZWNTdopoOFE6MA> or contact iluvsascha@gmail.com for more information.

Iowa Center, Iowa City, Iowa by Kit Austin

The state of Iowa is sparsely populated compared to many other states in the US, and the current number of abhyasis here is small and spread out over some distance. However, with Master's grace, we have been experiencing a slow but steady growth in our numbers. A handful of us have been gathering regularly for Sunday morning satsangh in Iowa City, and we have had the additional fun of making road trips to extended days and other gatherings in Illinois, Missouri and Kansas. We have also been served by a dedicated string of prefects from St. Louis, MO, Bloomington, IL, Kansas City, KS, and most recently from the Chicago area, all of whom have made the long drive to Iowa City or Des Moines to give us much-needed sittings.

The most recent gathering was at the home of Br. Tarun and Sr. Sucheta Dhall in Des Moines, where we received sittings from Sr. Tracie Pape of Chicago. It was really wonderful to get together as a group, not only to receive the sittings, but to grow closer as we shared our experiences in Sahaj Marg, to laugh together and to share a delicious meal. One brother, who has recently arrived here from India, remarked that he felt very lucky to have found a group so soon. There was also a strong sense of Master's work before the sittings took place. To use an agricultural metaphor that arises readily enough in Iowa, it was as though the fields were being cultivated for the planting.

Spiritual gathering at Schooleys Mountain Park, NJ, June 27th, 2009 by Chris Curran

We realized that our gathering really started a few weeks earlier. After every Sunday satsangh, our abhyasis had fun planning for the upcoming event. We shared the joy of teamwork. Every moment, we realized that the joy is in the journey, in the NOW.

On the day of the gathering, there was a sense of calmness in the air that morning, while the abhyasis from all different towns arrived one by one with families and friends. There was an undercurrent of mutual love and appreciation, a higher power that connected all. Everyone knew in their hearts that they were there for a purpose.

As I was settling down for the morning satsangh, I looked up to see a bird's nest right in the center of the shed. The mommy and daddy birds were busy flying back and forth feeding their hungry babies, unmindful of all the activities below them.



Yoga for young and old

The rest of the day was filled with activities. Sister Sue taught everyone "Korean Yoga." Lunch was served with the same spirit of love and teamwork. A wonderful hiking trip was organized. With each other's help, we could all hike some of the steepest and most difficult terrains.



Yum! Corn on the cob

The afternoon sun was glowing in the blue sky and smiling on the large expanse of green grass. The whole park was filled with laughter and chatter. We had fun grilling corn, playing team games like musical chairs, chess and tug-of-war. The day ended serenely with evening satsangh.

As I drove back home, in the back of my mind, I continued to contemplate the powerful message that was distributed on a yellow card that morning.

"Turn within. All Knowledge, all powers, everything is within. Your destiny is within, your future is within, the Ultimate is within."

St. Louis Center, St. Louis, Missouri by Tracie Pape

I had the privilege of attending the Regional Gathering in St. Louis, Missouri, the weekend of June 13-14, 2009. It was the first weekend after my children had finished school and they were taking a trip to visit their grandfather with my husband. For a moment, I thought I could stay home alone and have the peace and quiet of the house to myself. As soon as I closed my eyes to reflect on the question, I knew the quiet I was seeking was waiting for me at the gathering. There were four of us in the mini van as we drove from Evanston, IL, to St. Louis, MO. We enjoyed each other's company and felt that the gathering began as we drove together in the van.

As soon as we entered the space I felt peaceful and knew that this was the quiet I was seeking. The gathering was located on a river with acres of open space next to the meditation hall. We could sit and reflect, take walks and visit in nature during the day. This was the first gathering held in St. Louis and all of the details of the gathering were handled with care. The children's activities had a nature theme and the children painted pots, planted seeds and made artwork based on this theme.

The theme of the weekend was "The Real Goal" and the readings focused on the third maxim: "Fix your Goal which should be complete oneness with God. Rest not till the ideal is achieved." We are given the opportunity during these gathering to help us stay focused and move closer to The Real Goal.



St. Louis, MO & Evanston, IL abhyasis

New Jersey (Cranbury) Ashram Project Update:
by Krishna Linga and Murali Garikipati

At Rev. Master's birthday celebrations in Tiruppur, India, there was a wonderful opportunity to present the status of the NJ ashram project. Enthused by Master's guidance, the team is now working on completing all of the tasks to ready the center to welcome Master for the inauguration in late winter.

Teams of volunteers are spending weekends working on cleaning and repair of the property. The sessions typically start on Friday nights with meditation and end on a Sunday afternoon. Needless to mention, these days are filled with enthusiasm, teamwork and anticipation. An update of the activities carried out to date includes:

- The team has engaged legal and architectural services to prepare for various approvals from the local and state government agencies.
- The engineer completed the site improvement plan drawings and submitted them to Monroe Township. The attorney is working with the Township to schedule a hearing. We expect this process to complete in Sept/Oct 2009. The plan is to start the property improvements after the site plan approval.
- We completed the swimming pool demolition as per the plan.
- A wide range funding initiative has been put into place that includes corporate donor programs, individual donations from abhyasis, etc. The response to the program has been very generous and encouraging.

The Cranbury ashram property is easily accessible and sits on 2.7 acres. It is nestled in picturesque Middlesex county, Monroe township. The ashram will accommodate 150 people and there will be parking for more than 50 cars after the site improvements. It comes equipped with a fully functional kitchen.

There are two smaller quarters on the facility. One of these is being used as a storage place and the other is to be the "caretaker cottage."

For further details on fund raising and volunteering activities, please feel free to reach out to Murali Garikapati mgarik@gmail.com or Krishna Linga



Cranbury Ashram sits on 2.7 acres

Calendar of Events: September, October, November, 2009

September 5 - 7	Molena Ashram	Labor Day Gathering	molena@srcm.org
September 4 - 7	San Luis Obispo, CA	Camping weekend & prefect workshop	Bill.Waycott@seminis.com
September 6	Indianapolis, IN	Extended day gathering	bob@connorpainting.com
September 11 - 13	Cleveland Meditation Center, Cleveland, OH	Regional Gathering	iluvsascha@gmail.com
September 11-13	Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake Canada, Vancouver Island	Regional gathering & prefect seminar	tom_whitlam@hotmail.com
September 12-13, 2009	Sunderland Ashram	Regional Gathering	colleensackheim@yahoo.com
September 13, 2009	Beavercreek Ashram, Dayton, OH	Day Long Gathering	beavercreek@srcm.org
September 20, 2009	Warrenville Meditation Center, Warrenville, IL	Day long gathering	ragavr@gmail.com
September 27, 2009	Connecticut Centers (Simsbury/Avon) area	Day Long Gathering	vtantri@comcast.net
October 10-12, 2009	Molena Ashram, Molena, GA	National Gathering	molena.ashram@gmail.com
October 18, 2009	Warrenville Meditation Center, Warrenville, IL	Day Long Gathering	ragavr@gmail.com
November 1, 2009	Indianapolis, IN	Extended day gathering	bob@connorpainting.com
November 8, 2009	Beavercreek Ashram, Dayton, OH	Day Long Gathering	beavercreek@srcm.org
November 15, 2009	Warrenville Meditation Center, Warrenville, IL	Day Long Gathering	ragavr@gmail.com

MASTER’S REQUEST FOR PRAYER BEFORE EATING

Molena Ashram, August 2003

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. There is no Christian nectar and Hindu nectar and Muslim nectar and Buddhist nectar. 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.

New or Relocated Prefects in North America

Donna Warndahl	Corpus Christie, TX	dwarndahl@me.com
Adrienne Philo	Kihei, Maui, HI	adriennelphilo@yahoo.com
Yuliya Gryazina	San Francisco, CA	yuliya_gryazina@yahoo.com
Nadia Gurkova	Toronto, Canada	snow-maiden@inbox.ru
Ilanthirayan (Elan) Manivannan	Indianapolis, IN	elu143@gmail.com
Kaukub Yusuf	Chicago, IL	krazvi@hotmail.com
Oliver Zarate	Providence, RI	oliver.zarate@duke.edu

When I am happy, the universe looks happy, the trees appear to be blooming, the flowers are wonderful, the swans are gliding by on water. When you suffer, the whole world looks dark, gloomy, miserable. So believe me, in a most intimate, most hundred percent personal sense, for me the universe is what I create.

Heart Speak 2004, vol. 2, p. 22 – Rev. Chariji



Editors: Kimm X Jayne and Janmarie Connor

Contact: EchoesNA@sahajmarg.org

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