

SMSF Newsletter is a quarterly newsletter that will provide updates, announcements and notifications on SMSF activities and events.

In words of our Rev. Master,
"This publication will essentially focus on the spiritual needs of human beings, how they are being or trying to be fulfilled by the Sahaj Marg philosophy and practice ..."

Archives of these newsletters will be available on SMSF website
<http://www.sahajmarg.org/welcome/newsletter/index.html>

For suggestions on the newsletter, contact
Smsf.newsletter@sahajmarg.org

Featured in this issue

CREST: We feature the Seminar on Character Formation at CREST, Kharagpur and Sadhana Programs at CREST, Bangalore

Retreat Centre: We include a report on activities of Pune Retreat Centre.

SPURS: We feature messages from nature at SPURS retreat ranch.

Health: We cover the medical centre activities organized by Free Medical Centre at Chennai.



(above) Rev. Master with participants of a CREST training program at Kharagpur

Seminar on Character Formation at CREST Kharagpur

I was fortunate and blessed enough to participate in the first ever Seminar on Character Formation organised by SMSF, at CREST (Kharagpur) from January 26-30, 2010. The attempt is to share the immense and profound experience that I have been subjected to, at CREST (Kharagpur).

Gratitude:

It all started in October 2008 when Rev. Master issued a letter in Sahaj Sandesh expressing anguish over the state of affairs regarding the Character Formation in abhyasis and stated that He has set his heart in this direction and within a year CREST (Kharagpur) was the result. And now here is the first batch of His visible work coming into effect in the form of this seminar.

Character Formation according to Sahaj Marg should happen in our respective families and the need of Character especially in the case of abhyasis is to

manifest the Divine work that is happening within us by the great Master. Now Master has begun to work to make it happen within the family of Sahaj Marg that which could not happen in our respective families.

I take this opportunity to express my deep heart-felt gratitude to our Beloved Master for this and I shall be committed to myself to work incessantly in this direction to come up to His expectations and be a part of His immense Work that He is doing for Humanity.

The Preparation:

About ten days before the program was to begin, all the participants were sent an email asking them to go through The Ten Maxims, Talks on Character Formation that were recently released that include Character is Pure Love (Chennai, November 23, 2008), Awaken Now (Hyderabad, October 12, 2008).

Participants were also asked to maintain

CREST Centres are resident schools where abhyasis in batches of 50-100 undergo intensive training for one month. The first CREST Centre is located in Bangalore. The second CREST Centre is located in Kharagpur near Kolkata.

Interested Abhyasis / Prefects may propose a subject and deliver a lecture at CREST training seminars in Bangalore. Application forms can be downloaded from <http://www.sahajmarg.org/welcome/crest/CREST-FacultyApplication.doc> and emailed to crest.faculty@sahajmarg.org.

(right) Participants of the Seminar on Character Formation at CREST, Kharagpur.

the diary every day and make a note of each of the following points on a separate page of a notebook before attending the seminar:

- a. aspects of character that they would like to improve;
- b. qualities that they would like to inculcate
- c. traits that they would like to remove that are a hindrance to spiritual growth
- d. commitments to take back with them

The Facility:

The CREST facility created by our

Format of the Program:

To give an overview of the format of the program: It comprised of Presentations with the help of PowerPoint (Seven presentations in total); Work-out sessions - the exercises or group discussions that revealed our status our character traits and qualities; Spending quality time reading in Library that had a rich collection of books ONLY related to Character Formation, most of them were personally bought by Rev. Master when He was on tours; and the ONE HEART session that attempted to facilitate to get connected from within to all brothers and sisters at least in the group.



Beloved Master for his children towards their Character formation is a luxurious facility five major blocks of buildings with wide spaces of greenery in between and all around. The blocks include: The Library and administrative building; Dormitory block that could accommodate around 60 participants with all the modern comforts including a bed each for every participant; A serene Meditation hall in the backdrop clear blue sky with state-of-the-art Classrooms under the Meditation Hall; Spacious Dining Hall block and a wonderful Master's Cottage, just beside the Meditation Hall.

Topics Covered:

The participants were enlightened about the need of Character Formation specially for abhyasis; the attitudes to be adopted; the importance of Communication in Work of the Mission and how it is related to Character; about Morality and responsibility; how the physical health depends on mental health which depends on moral health; about the need for humility; the fundamentals of Character and its practical applications; and Ethics and Excellence.

The Experience:

The participants got an exposure to some of the serious practitioners of the System of Sahaj Marg who during the course of their presentation revealed how they have applied the teachings in their own personal lives and how they are following the great Master. These brothers and sisters shared their association with Sahaj Marg with such conviction and faith that (they were perhaps some of the live examples that our Beloved Master has produced) it has inspired and enthused every participant to at least, seriously attempt for the rest of their lives what is expected out of them by the Beloved Master.

One of the respected brothers instilled courage by his conviction got by his commitment and experience that ***fear can be got rid of only by facing it.*** Another respected brother demonstrated to us how reverentially that one should read the book "Whispers from the Brighter World". And how *Prasad* should be taken and that nothing should be taken for at least half-hour for it to allow it to assimilate in the system and thus ensuring that it does not go out of the system.

Another affectionate brother showed the participants where they stand by enlightening them about our morality status and the need to aspire to the highest morality that people like Rev. Master and other saints have, that is called as *transmorality*. One of the sister presenters handled a presentation on "Humility" quoting different instances from the lives of Masters where they displayed humility and the need for this to be adopted especially for the seekers of spirituality. Another brother explained the need of Excellence in our work and that it should be ethical.

While the work-out sessions and the ONE HEART sessions in the evening helped the participants to connect among themselves, the formal presentation sessions helped to enhance and deepen the understanding of the need of Character and to apply in real life.

The overall impact of the program perhaps can be summarised as follows:

- Enthused to commit more intensely to our Character building
- For the first time vividly and effortlessly felt the Presence of Master when He was not physically available.
- The program taught us to refine our attitudes of internalising Master and getting connected to the soul within.
- The program also taught us to feel the connection with other brothers and sisters perhaps to be slowly extended to everything around.
- Instilled the enthusiasm and courage to practise morality at all costs.
- The fervor and attitude with which we have to read the book "Whispers from the Brighter world"

Thanks to CREST (Kharagpur) Team:

We are grateful to Bro. Chinu Sreenivasan, Sis. Lalita Sreenivasan, the first couple of CREST (Kharagpur) who have taken great efforts to organise the program and tried to mingle with all the participants. We are also grateful to Sis. Lis and Br. Alberto who coordinated the proceedings with great care and love. We also thank the Ashram Manager for travel arrangements.

The participants were provided with excellent hospitality by the Director and his team. Thanks to the affectionate Kitchen and Dining Team who gave us simple and nourishing food and appropriate tea-breaks not allowing our attention on these things that we are prone to. We are grateful to the very cooperative and tolerant house-keeping and maintenance team who provided us more comforts than we deserved.

The participants returned to their respective centres with a bag of commitments as it was suggested that they made to themselves for the rest of their lives, fully enthused and inspired perhaps to come back after six months.

Source: Br. N V Krishna Rao, a participant

Sadhana Programs at CREST Bangalore

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.



(above) A Sadhana programme event at CREST, Bangalore

On the occasion of the 50th Sadhana Program for Abhyasis there was a get-together organized at CREST, Bangalore.

All facilitators, volunteers and staff members participated in the get-together which was a joyful occasion. The get-together coincided with the Valedictory function which is held on the completion day of the Sadhana Program.

Br. J R Doreswamy Iyer was the special invitee on the occasion. He presided over the Valedictory function and gave away certificates to the participants of the Sadhana Program. There were 55 participants in the Sadhana Program.

During the entire program presence of Rev. Master was strongly felt.

The Director presented a short report on the Sadhana Programs at CREST, Bangalore. About 2500 abhyasis have participated in the Sadhana Programs at CREST in the last 3.5 years.

There have been 7 Sadhana Programs for Youth since it started in September, 2008.

All key facilitators spoke on their experiences in conducting classroom sessions and discussions.

Some of them shared their thoughts on

the need of training for abhyasis.

The delegates of the 50th Sadhana Program for Abhyasis presented a short skit. A group of sister delegates rendered devotional songs.

The Assistant Director gave the thanksgiving talk.

The schedule of Sadhana Programs for Abhyasis till July, 2010 is as below.

- Sadhana Program for Abhyasis - 53
20th Apr. - 25th Apr.
- Sadhana Program for Abhyasis - 54
25th May - 30th May.
- Sadhana Program for Abhyasis - 55
8th June - 13th June.
- Sadhana Program for Abhyasis - 56
22nd June - 27th June.
- Sadhana Program for Abhyasis - 57
6th July - 11th July.

The schedule of Sadhana Programs for Youth till Sept, 2010 is as below.

- Sadhana Program for Youth - 8
11th May - 16th May.
- Sadhana Program for Youth - 9
14th Sept. - 19th Sept.

Source: Br. Parthasarathy Patel

Activities of Pune Retreat Centre

Applying for Retreats

Abhyasis who wish to apply for retreats either at the **Malampuzha** or **Panshet** centres may find more information about these facilities and the retreat program at:

<http://www.sahajmarg.org/welcome/retreat/index.html>

Abhyasis who wish to enroll for retreat programs may now apply online at the following URL:

<http://www.sahajmarg.org/sm/IndiaRetreatCentersApplication.do>

Please note that all applications must be verified from your local prefect, which will be facilitated through the application process.



(above) A view of the dormitory



(above) Dining cum lecture hall



(above) Participants for 2nd STP at Retreat Centre (Pune)

The SMSF Spiritual Retreat Centre Pune, was able to host 31 Abhyasis (including two French), during the quarter, despite its closure in March 2010 due to construction of additional facilities.

As always, Rev Master's presence was all pervasive and those in Retreat waxed eloquent of their spiritual experiences.

By our Master's grace the following additional facilities have been added:-

- Dining cum lecture hall
- Two dormitories for 30 abhyasis each with attached toilets
- Common toilet block, for ladies & gents
- Additional kitchen in Master's Cottage
- Two Staff quarters
- Conversion of children's corner into three guest rooms

Excerpts of what abhyasis said of their experience in the Retreat Centre.

"It is a place from where everybody can catch the flight to the destination"

"The atmosphere is superb. As soon as you close your eyes, meditation starts. The peace and quiet gives you a lot of opportunity for introspection and finding yourself anew. I am grateful for the opportunity given to me to be here. I hope to visit again. I pray that I am allowed here again next year."

"As and when entering the Retreat Centre, my heart felt so joyous and for which I (my soul) has been longing. Whoever comes here the purpose will be fulfilled by Great master's grace. I want to come again and again to dip in this 'Manasarovar' and become clean and refreshed in mind and body and to introspect".

"I have never seen such a beautiful place in my life before."

"We have heard of the Retreat, but actual jubilation is experienced when we come and stay here".

Source: Br. (Gen) Dovedy



(above) A session of 2nd STP at Retreat Centre (Pune)

2nd STP at Retreat Centre (Pune)

With Master's blessings the 2nd STP was held at Retreat Centre (Pune). A total of 49 participants, 10 coordinators and volunteers were under His divine umbrella. The purpose was to make the participants the 'torch bearers' of our mission and to spread the right message in the right spirit. It was well laid with effective speakers to speak on different topics which emphasized more on 'brotherhood'.

Every morning there was one speech followed by 'whispers'. In the afternoon, they had small group activities which again had varied topics. The purpose of these activities was to explain the basic practice as prescribed by Master, to go deeper into the practice, the attitude adopted, to break prejudices, sharing of ideas and to build self confidence to talk in public.

The cleaning process had a fixed time and golden hour of silence was followed

by many abhyasis. Most of them reported that they gained a lot during this particular hour. Discipline was maintained where other activities were concerned such as daily practice, morning satsang, diary writing, lunch / dinner, tea breaks, DVD / VCD show, universal prayer and bed time prayer.

There were different 'take away' from the program where an individual was concerned. The 9 days influence was seen during the closing session where Br. Alberto thanked everyone and ended his talk with whispers. Everyone felt the strong transmission and slipped into deep meditation. The silence which followed said that the program had done its work. Wishes were expressed to maintain the condition and to be in touch with Master through constant remembrance.

Source: Sakshi K. Harshey

Messages from Nature at SPURS



(above) Verbena add islands of lavender color in the greening fields.
(below) Lemon-colored blossoms of the evening primrose dot the landscape like small lights at dusk.



(Above) The red-bud bush by the front porch and scarlet-leaved shrubs by the parking shed glow against the clear blue sky of a spring morning.



(Above) Blue and white Grecian windflowers sway in the back yard breezes.

You may yourself wish to spend a few days in this very special place in 2010. Should you have questions about coming to SPURS, please do not hesitate to call us at +1-512-301-2104.

The information on SPURS is available on the web at: <http://www.sahajmarg.org/spurs>. Abhyasis may submit the participation requests online. Once the requests are processed, abhyasis will receive a confirmation along with a welcome package that contains detailed information on the program and the facility. Please e-mail austin@sahajmarg.org for any questions or information.

Spring has finally come to SPURS Ranch Retreat Center in south central Texas after a colder than normal winter. Welcome rains have encouraged an abundant display of flowering plant life.

Sisters and brothers who come to SPURS often comment on the beauty of this place and how in their quiet condition nature seems to teach them. "The environment here is very special and in tune with nature," was the comment of an abhyasi recently here. This abhyasi went on to observe that "We disturb nature with our noise and this is a reminder about how we should be with nature."

Often it appears that nature helps the brothers and sisters here to experience the importance of silence. Perhaps they see that the things of nature simply present themselves without fanfare,

without the "noise" of ego, and without the anxiousness and concerns so typical of us humans. We are reminded how Jesus told his disciples to "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow," how they "neither toil nor spin" and yet, he says, "even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The flowers of nature may suggest how we should allow ourselves to simply *be*.

We invite all sisters and brothers to come, when the heart calls, to experience the beauty and silence of a retreat at SPURS, to give one's precious time to the practice and to seek inner renewal.

Source: Tom Stoner, Resident Prefect
SPURS Ranch Retreat Center

Free Medical Centres (FMC) at Manapakkam, Satkhol, Jaipur and Allahabad have been undertaking many activities towards imparting medical services to the needy. Medical Camps are regularly held in Madurai and many other centres.

Sahaj Marg Physicians Group (SMPG)

SMPG is an initiative involving physicians, medical students, residents, nurses and others in the medical community to offer medical services to the needy through SMSF Medical Centers. As part of this initiative, a database of names of the physicians from all branches of medicine has been completed. A group email address has been set up - smpg@sahajmarg.info.

Source and SMPG Contact is Murthy Gokula (rgokula@hotmail.com or murthyg@msu.edu).

Medical Centre News

Free Medical Centre at Manapakkam has served a total of 11,932 patients for the quarter January to March 2010. Spirometry camps were conducted (courtesy Lupin Laboratories) and 34 patients benefited. FMC has served 210 number of casualties during the quarter January - April 2010. Following are the details of the medical activities conducted by Free Medical Centre, Manapakkam in this period.

Department	Patients	Panel of Doctors
General medicine	9711	Dr. U. Ravindran, Dr. R. Sulochana Dr. K. Sudheshna, Dr. E. Ellanchelian Dr. G. Jaya Prashanthi
Cardiology	55	Dr V. Vanaja
Dentistry	461	Dr. Swati N. Bhagat Dr. Jagadish Kumar
Dermatology	109	Dr. M. Jayaraman
Gastro-enterology	31	Dr. Manimaran
Gynaecology	141	Dr. Jayanthi Mohan Dr. B. Thirupurasundari
Homeopathy	1136	Dr. S. Balaji Jayasanker Dr. S. K. Ram Subramaniam Dr. Sudha Jagadish Dr. R.Asha Dr. N. Padma Suganya
Ophthalmology	124	Dr. Harshitha Bakshi
Orthopaedics	2	Dr. S. Sivaiah
Paediatrics	65	Dr. B.I. Sasirekha Dr. M. Umakanthan Dr. Natwar Sharma
Physiotherapy	11	Br. N. Siva Subramaniyan
Psychiatry	35	Dr. A.P. Mythili
Pulmonology	52	Dr. G. Raja Amarnath
Urology	8	Dr. Sanjay Sharma
General Surgery	15	Dr. E. Suja
Neuro	16	Dr. N. Padmini

Staff	Staff	Volunteers
Dr. G.Jaya Prasanthi (Doctor) S. Meenakshi (Pharmacist) M. Kamakshi (House-keeping) P. Gomathi (Receptionist)	A. Radhamani, R. Chitra, B. Krupa Shree, K. Sathya, S. Soundarya, R. Karthika (Nurses)	M. Jayanthi, A. Radhakrishnan P. Senthilkumar

Source: Br. Dr. Ravindran Ulaganathan