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Master's Talk – North American Seminar

Give Your Whole Heart

Dear sisters and brothers, friends, associates on the spiritual path – some of you with me for the last forty years, companions on the troubled way, often, and also companions on much of the way which has been joyful, happy, progress-filled and full of enthusiasm always – I welcome you all to this formality of an annual general meeting here in India, in Manapakkam, in this lovely meditation hall, and I thank you all for gracing it with your presence.



I did not expect so many of you, to be frank. These are difficult times, economically, and I know many of you have made, perhaps all of you have made, great sacrifices in coming here. I appreciate that, and thank you. If I should take this as an indication of your interest in the spiritual journey that you have undertaken, then it is a big step forward, because in keeping with my master's teaching, it is the effort that matters. In Sahaj Marg we are judged by our effort, not by what we are able to achieve. Knowing that, in this very difficult path, achievement is given by Him, not sort of earned by us. It is our effort to which He responds. So, I pray to my Master that he will respond with a hearty bonus to all assembled here for this seminar of the North American abhyasis, both from Canada and the U.S., and I hope this large assembly only sort of foreshadows much larger assemblies in the coming years.

You all appreciate that I will possibly no longer be able to visit you all in your country. So, I could say, willy-nilly, "You have to come here." Not at all! But if you wish to see me, you have to come here. I think this is a situation where, if Mohammed will not go to the mountain, the mountain must go to Mohammed! I cannot envisage another situation in which this statement can be applied. So, this particular 'Mohammed' of yours seated before you is now practically derelict, to be used as a training ship. It is not yet decommissioned, but it is there. So, you all must support me in helping me to help you, to whatever extent I can.

Today is one such occasion when I can see all of you, though my eyesight is quite poor, as you could have seen when I signed this paper. And the only concern that I have is your growth to as high a level as possible in your lifetime and in my lifetime – and that is not the only thing. The other concern is growth of more and more in



Master's Talk at NAS (continued)

your countries, more and more persons, more and more – because this is something which is vital. I am not trying to proselytize. You are not carrying a message across the sands of time. We do not claim any exclusivity as you would have seen from the messages of the Master already published in three volumes of *Whispers*. But, to my knowledge, this is the only way which seems to be available openly, publicly, candidly and free of cost. I mean your people deserve to have it, and it behoves all of you to make it available to your people.

All this concern for what they call the 'meltdown', the financial crisis, et cetera, et cetera: houses selling for half their prices; houses in Dubai abandoned, keys left in the door; loans unpaid – this seems to cause much more concern than all that we carry inside us. If we could but see what we owe to nature, if we could but see what we owe to our compatriots of today and yesterday and yesteryears, we would be aghast. But, much more, if we could but see what we owe to ourselves, the damage that we have done to ourselves, by both doing and not doing.... There are things which we should have done which we never did, which have caused us harm. But there is

much more that we did which has caused us harm, which we should not have done. So, in our Vedic prayer we have a phrase which says, "Pardon me for all the things which I did which I should not have done, and pardon me even more for all those things which I should have done, but I did not do."

It is a very common experience that when we lose a dear one, for a few hours perhaps, or to be more generous for a few days, we torture ourselves with the thought that had we been a little kinder we could have done so much more. It happens in the case of everybody. I mean, if you are human, you feel it. Why cannot we, at least with the next person who deserves this kindness, show it – even freely offer it without reservation, without prejudice? It takes nothing. If you want to give a glass of water, well, it does cost you some effort, some cost, however minuscule it may be.

[go to: <https://www.sahajmarg.org/literature/online/speeches/talk-at-us-agm> to hear or read the rest of Master's talk]



Beloved Master Christine Prisland, Victoria, BC

On 3 February 1972, Babuji Maharaj granted me permission to work as a prefect when I was in Shajahanpur, a day that marked my path for the remainder of my life. This year, I was in Trichy with Master and celebrated my 40th prefect anniversary with him. That early morning in his room, with the mist rising from the fields, the air cool and fresh at Janaki Farm, Master spoke about the children of Sahaj Marg abhyasis. In particular, those children who have not yet become abhyasis. Master said that they will all come; that they may first get married and have children, do other things, but they will all come. Then he said not to force them. He spoke also about learning languages, and that when he was learning Russian, the most difficult part was the fact that they do not have a word for 'I am'. After trying to imagine speaking without saying 'I am...', I began to appreciate that the absence of it could promote a more collective approach to one another instead of focusing on the individual. And this approach, later on in February, was deeply reflected in the theme of the North American Seminar. One World, One Family – universal brotherhood. I feel blessed and grateful to have been able to participate in the work of my dear masters all these years... and the journey continues.





North American Seminar

One World, One Family – the seminar

Marsha Thompson, Noank, CT

At the invitation of our beloved Master, Parthasarathi, over 800 abhyasis from North America gathered to be with him at the Babuji Memorial Ashram from February 20-25. During these blessed days we came to glimpse the knowledge of One World, One Family in our hearts – the core of our being – as he created for us the environment in which we danced a cosmic dance in harmony with his music – the vibration of divine Love. The movements of this dance began on day one with a welcoming from our brother John Barlow and a talk by brother Kamlesh Patel.

On day two Master made a special effort to attend the US annual meeting to speak with us. That afternoon and the next two days were spent in Home Circles of family sharing, working out, creating concrete intentions for personal change bearing the potential for changing the universe – inner and outer.

Also on this day began a series of opportunities for first-time visitors to meet with our Master in his cottage. In fact, throughout this seminar many who responded to the pull in their hearts found their way to an in-person meeting with him.

For the next three mornings our brothers Kamlesh, P.R. Krishna and Rohit Patel shared their hearts' approach to the Master as they have followed their personal sadhana for many years. And during all these days we meditated, ate and danced together in this reunion of souls. Many abhyasis took guided tours of the ashram, becoming familiar with the more subtle elements of the environment. Some visited the Lalaji Omega School to learn of its offerings and approach to value-based spiritual education. Mostly we existed in grace and love. Some of our sisters and brothers have offered their experiences in the next few pages of this newsletter.

Soon a proceedings of this seminar, including all the talks and lots of photographs, will be published and offered to all with the prayer that it will enliven in our hearts the remembrance of His gift so that we may continue dancing in ever wider circles until the world is indeed One Family.

Leslie Childs, Dallas, TX

My first trip to India, February 2012, was all I had hoped for – and more. When the NAS (North American Seminar) was announced, I wanted to go to renew an experience I had in 2006 following a meditation led by P.R. Krishna in Dallas-Ft. Worth. It had resulted in a year of inner joy, an open heart and complete self-acceptance. I of course hoped to meet Master. I aligned my travel plans with a fellow abhyasi, planning a second week in Satkhoh.

In total, the journey was enlightening and rousing on many levels. NAS sessions had been set up for first-time abhyasis to meet Master, and as Master spoke to our group, I tried to perceive him beyond his words and charisma. I suppose we were all hinged on his every word and gesture. The visit was brief, but his joy was palpable as he received gifts. I left his cottage brimming with emotion and spirits flying high.

During the seminar and workshop that followed, I began receiving answers to questions within myself. With this change and growth I would have been content to return home after the NAS, but there was Satkhoh – not so easy for me. I have never comfortably taken refuge within myself, and so Satkhoh challenged me. It was a place of solemnity and contemplation, with more questions and hard answers. I came face to face with myself on matters of an open heart, love, love of myself, self-acceptance, and I was restless and rebellious by the time we headed home. I have much to process and much work to do. I am fortunate indeed.





North American Seminar (continued)

Duana Dickman, College Station, TX

Once I had decided to go to the North American Seminar in Chennai, I found that where there is a will, Master finds the way. I was about to embark on a remarkable journey, a profound experience. I was in the presence of Master throughout my stay at the ashram, whether he was in view or not. Through meditation, and with Master, most of my work was internal, opening and changing my heart.

While Master assisted my inner work, our outer work was also centered in our hearts through some wonderful speakers and through the One World, One Family small circles. Brother Kamlesh Patel especially reminded us to look forward to our union with Master in our morning meditation with love and joy. I now anticipate my morning meditations by praying each night, "Lord, please come to me; I would like to be one with you," as brother Kamlesh suggested. One World, One Family encouraged each of us to do our part in uniting all people everywhere. We do not advance alone; by helping others, we also help ourselves. One way to help is to reach out to others while in constant remembrance.

I was also able to attend the two-day Brotherhood Training Pilot Program and learned that we all are much more similar than different; that we can speak and listen fully from our hearts, rather than from our minds; and that speaking and listening fully from our hearts creates much deeper connections among us. While all this seems obvious, it is only possible through constant remembrance and a conscious decision to let go of judgments and the need to be right, and to listen always with our hearts. Master is a supreme example of this for us, which is why constant remembrance of Him reminds us to greet the world each day through our hearts.

Kay Cohen, Arlington, TX

En route to India for the NAS, I spoke to a young Indian man who shared his passion for mega races (from fifty to one hundred miles) that he runs barefoot. He spoke excitedly about the clarity and focus he experiences while running. He also told of the pain he endures for most of the race, and the sheer determination he has developed to overcome it. An American, he was venturing to Nepal to ultra glide. His eyes sparkled as he described the thrill of jumping off mountains and flying free, high above the earth. An older couple was anticipating a visit with a friend in Katmandu, Nepal. We travellers were all on journeys, but mine was of a different nature. My deepest adventures would be within.

For me, the following days fell into a rhythm of early meditation, yoga, satsanghs, meals shared with brothers and sisters, volunteer work in the kitchen, and afternoons focused on the conference theme, One World, One Family. There were heartfelt talks on the subject; and simplicity, honesty, and sincerity were echoed many times. With hearts open and a non-judgmental attitude, we were encouraged under Master's loving guidance to embrace our brothers and sisters, family and co-workers.

Although the travellers I encountered were not travelling directly with me, we are all travelling together as a family, on the journey of life. By the week's end, I felt a strong responsibility to help raise the level of human consciousness on Earth by contributing my part. This begins with my daily practice and learning how to live my life to be an inspiration to others. No matter who the traveller, every person is an abhyasi on his or her own path, interacting with and influencing life around them.



Maire Estar, Hamilton, MT

One World, One Family is quite a daunting concept, given the world's large population. To make it so my mind can comprehend it, I must break it down into a small fraction of the whole and focus on the minute piece of that pie that I call 'my life'.

In one of his talks, brother Kamlesh Patel said that the main reason people leave Sahaj Marg is because they are afraid of change. This is the one statement from the week that keeps coming back to me; it gives me a chance to look at the parts of my life that I have been afraid to change, especially my attitude towards those I perceive as 'different'. Instead of being loving and caring towards them, I can be judgmental and critical.

Yet Master has given me a chance to change this attitude. This past summer, I got new neighbors, a single mom and three teenagers, who were disruptive to my peaceful neighborhood. For the first four months, I simply wished they would move away. For the last four months, I've been praying for them and sending Master's love their way.

The other day, the woman saw me outside and came over to apologize for any noise they had been making. She told me she was back in college and that her kids were doing well in school. She said I inspired her, with my bicycling and jogging. She spoke from her heart and I hoped she could feel the love and prayers that had come from mine.

It's a strange thing, what a change of attitude has done in this corner of the world. One World, One Family can happen, but only if I am not afraid of change.





North American Seminar (continued)

Anjali Brannon, Beavercreek, OH

Being in Manapakkam for a week was like being in heaven on earth. My mind got so smooth and clear there – everything just unruffled, and I felt like this must be what it feels like to die. I knew there was another world going outside, but I had no concern with it. When I walked around the ashram, I felt like I was in the Garden of Eden among the lush trees, appreciating the cows that give milk for our ashram cooking.

This trip I tried to maintain my remembrance and connection with the inner Master more, and to avoid being caught up in the outer Master and the illusion of separation. And yet, I kept receiving gifts from him – like being near him when he spoke to us or gave us satsangh or attended the prefect meeting – there was no one between us. I just kept trying to follow my feelings, remembering as Babuji said that feeling is the language of God. Everything happened very naturally.

I had more time to myself than I have had in a long time. By 10:00 am on the first day I had already meditated three times – my personal meditation, 6:30 am satsangh and 9:00 am satsangh – which I cannot say happens by 10:00 am in my daily life! One of the best parts for me was not having to leave the ashram at all, as I slept under the meditation hall in the women's dormitories. Just being able to be in that richly charged spiritual atmosphere 24 hours a day for a week was like imbibing divine nectar – a true gift.



Sarjoo Patel, San Antonio, TX

On the evening of my first day at Babuji Memorial Ashram, I found myself in front of my Master. I was a bit saddened. His work and time had taken its toll. But during the first five minutes he was able to sneak a quick wink in my direction, which I felt immediately. Soon a smile found its way to my face.

Being in the ashram was comfortable. The landscapes were green and radiant, the sounds were calm and tranquil, and the people were cheerful and open. It was encouraging to see abhyasis from many parts of the world there. I interacted with many of my sisters and brothers, some I had known for a long time and some I had just met. With every encounter, I was met with such generosity that I experienced gratitude, for which I felt indebted.

I tried a few times to meet Master again, but I could feel his presence throughout the ashram. During my ten days with him it seemed he was working at all times, building on the previous day's progress. I felt I had reached a crescendo in a condition of joy, that my heart was flowing. These ten days with Master were a great gift for which I am grateful. But gifts should be given, so I now refocus my attention on serving Him.



Wayne Young, Newark, OH

Being present at the North American Seminar in Chennai was quite an honor and pleasure. I met some amazing sisters and brothers who will be friends for life. I also ran into others whom I had not seen in a few years.

A few of the highlights for me were meeting Master for the first time, brother Kamlesh Patel's talk on Wednesday morning, brother Rohit Patel's talk Thursday, and meeting hundreds of people all on the same path as me. The theme, One World, One Family, was especially fitting, as I met people whose origins spanned the globe, though we are interconnected through North America and Sahaj Marg. The seminar also allowed me to rededicate myself to Sahaj Marg with a better understanding.

The ashram was beautiful, the weather perfect, while the mosquitoes numerous served as a reminder of our acceptance of all things as they are. It was truly a gift from Master to meet him and so many others. Should the chance arise to attend at some later date I will leap at it.



North American Seminar (continued)

Swapnil Adulkar, Chicago, IL

The North American seminar was an opportunity to live with our beloved Master for a week. As always, the days just zoomed past. But he knows and he gives us the exact dosage which we can digest and take back home where we continue to blossom, although we may not see it. The seminar included vibrant talks and valuable group activities. The kids enjoyed the children's center and also running around the ashram, then fell asleep in no time at night. The abhyasis drowned in the ashram's bliss, Café Ruchi's goodies, the kitchen's awesome food and the ever-present mosquitoes. Although many abhyasis did not see Master in the cottage, he treated us on several occasions when he toured the ashram in his golf cart.

Our guru had invited us to be with him – that was an indescribable and overwhelming feeling. As brother Kamlesh mentioned in his speech, Revered Babuji was willing to work for us abhyasis till the end of his life, and so is our Master. We saw him work all day making prefects, attending many abhyasis in his cottage – why would he do all this if he did not love us like his children? He spoke to us, telling us to “love, love and love”. He also mentioned in conversations with new abhyasis that ‘US’ stands for the word ‘us’ and not United States; and he encouraged us to be simple.



Radheshyam Miryala, Galveston, TX

Our Divine Master blessed our family with two beautiful daughters; Deepika (age four) and Aishani (age one). As a father, I felt that the biggest responsibility I had to my children was to give them an opportunity to see our Master and receive his blessings. I prayed that this opportunity would come soon. When my wife and I made the decision to attend the North American Seminar, all the logistics came together and our resistance vanished.

The entire week of the North American Seminar was magical – an unforgettable opportunity for our family to be together under a blanket of his grace. In that week, we were all able to receive his darshan. He is the wonder behind all that is wonderful. He is the beauty in all that is beautiful. We are grateful for the experience.

Harlan Smith, Greenfield, MA

This was my second time to India, the first being in 1999 at the ashram's inauguration. I made a number of firm decisions about what I would and wouldn't do this time: no shopping, stay on the premises in a dorm, eat modestly whatever was the cafeteria fare, hope to see and be seen by Master but not try to force it, attend every satsangh and let my heart guide all other actions.

The intentional preparatory work through my practice helped increase my anticipation of being moved to a new state of being, no matter how subtle or minor the change; and an involuntary cleaning began a few days before I left and subsided only after being there a day. Then all was extremely quiet on the inside and the outer actions and activities flowed effortlessly, seamlessly, and by day three, I couldn't imagine absorbing more, but kept my decisions in focus. The results met and exceeded my expectations. As I prepared to leave, I made the decision to hold on “for dear life” to what I had been blessed with. I am now experiencing a more than minor change having been wrought within me, and trying to preserve it, but also letting it be seen and felt by others, with surprising results. To paraphrase Babuji's frequent comments: Who could ever ask for a better Master? It is all his work. I now feel this ever more deeply and hope to better serve our great Mission in whatever ways are given.

Youth Event at North American Seminar

Rathna K. Muralidharan, Washington, D.C.

During the North American Seminar, teenagers aged 13-18 gathered to participate in activities and discussions planned for them. On February 21, 2012, ten teenagers and four adult sponsors visited Lalaji Memorial Omega International School. They had lunch and then went on a tour of the school.

The teenagers and chaperones looked around the elementary and middle schools buildings, sat in a few classes and visited students. The visit then ended with a question-and-answer session with a ninth grade music class, giving both groups of teens the opportunity to interact, compare their schooling experiences and learn more about different educational techniques. All participating teenagers reported that they had a wonderful time and expressed a strong wish to return in the future for a longer time.

The North American Teen Committee will be teaming up with the North American Youth Committee to sponsor their next activity: the annual teen camp in Molena, Georgia, June 24-30, 2012. All teen and youth members, aged 13-25, are invited to attend, regardless of whether they have participated in past activities. It is our hope that interest in these youth groups grows, and that they inspire members to come and participate in more seminars and activities in the future.



North American Seminar (continued)

Children's Program Ranjani Balaji, Hyderabad, India

The preparation and planning started about two weeks prior to the NA gathering with Master in Chennai, when I was invited to coordinate the children's program. I sent a request for help to the Chennai children's coordinator who got a team of twenty volunteers ready to help facilitate the program. The auditorium under the new library given for the children's center was spacious and well ventilated. The program for the five days was built around the theme of the gathering, One World, One Family, focusing on peace, sensitivity, love, brotherhood, and one family.

The main attraction for the day was planned as a one-hour meeting in the morning and another one-hour meeting in the evening, which was supported by other activities for the children throughout the day, such as story time, painting and crafts. We had a cultural program for children on the 22nd during which children performed a wonderful mix of songs, dance and instrumental pieces for the audience. The children also performed a dance, *Transformation*, choreographed by sisters Petra and Penny, and the song *We are the World* on the 23rd for the main cultural program. About ninety children participated in the program activities. All were given a 2012 souvenir calendar with Master's photo made by the Chennai Center kids.

Reflections

"Canada is coming up" Kim Hansen, Toronto, ON

Babuji Maharaj said, "Canada is coming up," to brother Kamlesh in 1981, before he immigrated to the U.S. Thirty years later Kamlesh expressed happiness to see so many of us at the seminar in February. Talking about an ashram in Canada, Kamlesh said we have learned from experience that an ashram must be conveniently located for one and all – he said we therefore need multiple ashrams in Canada, given its vastness. He urged us, as Master has been doing for several years, to get going with raising funds for an ashram in Canada, and not to think of where it will be located. Kamlesh shared the idea of an abhyasi, saying that if 1,000 abhyasis each contributed \$20 per month, that would be \$20,000 per month and in a year we would have \$240,000 – had we started five years ago we would be in a position now to acquire a property! He said he is sure US abhyasis would also participate. He urged us to start now in earnest – and encouraged one and all to pitch in whatever we can, be it fifty dollars or five thousand dollars. As he said, "We need everyone's joyous participation. We call this as one family, let's prove it. ... Whatever you can, do it joyously, do it heartfully, and we'll have ashrams in no time in multiple locations in Canada." Your participation in this promising endeavour is welcome. If you are interested, please send an email to srcmcan@ica.net for more information.

Gathering

Salt Lake City Mahanthi Ramu, Hyderabad, India

After satsangh on Sunday January 29th, abhyasis of Salt Lake City gathered to share their views on "What Spirituality Means to Me" with a visiting prefect from Hyderabad and a team of abhyasis from other parts of the western US. Each abhyasi had prepared to share insights by reading topics of their choice from *My Master* and *The Role of the Master in Human Evolution*. Additionally this was an opportunity for guests to be introduced to Sahaj Marg, our Mission, method and Master.

Ashram News



Cranbury Ashram Constructions in Last Phase AMC Team, Cranbury Ashram

As we work through the winter months, the activities at the ashram are entering the final phase. The contractor for the exterior work has been making steady progress. The sewer and water pipeline work is complete. The parking lot's construction is in progress and landscaping will be taken up in spring.

The interior renovations are also coming along at a brisk pace. The construction of additional restrooms, handicap access, along with work on flooring and painting are all in progress. The new equipment for the ashram kitchen arrived last week.

Participating in this renovation of the ashram has been a gift for all the volunteer brothers and sisters. As this center of light comes together, we thank Master for this wonderful opportunity to build a home for humanity and a beacon for the local community.





Day of Caring in Dayton

Beavercreek Ashram Hosts Pancake Brunch

Pancakes, hash browns, lemon rice, upma and vada were served to over one hundred and twenty-five people at the Beavercreek Ashram on February 26 as part of the Dayton area Day of Caring. The Day of Caring is a non-profit venture that has sponsored annual pancake brunches for twenty-two years with all proceeds going to help the homeless and hungry in the community. Many churches and service organizations in a three-county area participate. We committed to this activity for the first time this year when the Beavercreek Ashram was chosen as a pilot center for a community development program.



The ashram's brunch raised \$1,040 for the cause. Participating in the brunch enabled the ashram to strengthen its ties to the local community in two ways: first, by joining with other local nonprofits to raise money for a good cause, and second, by becoming more visible and connected to our neighbors in the community. The Day of Caring event was publicized in the local newspapers and broadcast on the local TV channels. Vickie Giambone, Commissioner of Beavercreek, and City Council members Julie Vann, Brian Jarvis and Deborah Wallace stopped by to show their support and appreciation as they made their rounds of the various churches and organizations that were participating. Dr. Sibi, the president of the local Sikh community, also stopped by, as well as Beavercreek and Xenia School Commissioner, Mr. Morrison and some teachers from the local schools.

It was truly an international group that was touched by the ashram atmosphere. Master's Introduction to Sahaj Marg audio was played. Dr. Sibi commented that it is really peaceful in this hall. Sister Caroline Romano, who was visiting the ashram, introduced Master to those present and sang a beautiful song that she had written for him. The atmosphere was so beautiful, it was no different than our spiritual gatherings that we have with our Master.

Friends and family of abhyasis came, as well as people interested in meditation. About 80 Meditation pamphlets were given to new people, two of whom have already begun meditation. This was also a good opportunity for the family members of abhyasis, who do not practice Sahaj Marg, to see the ashram. Paula and Michelle Wang, young abhyasis, were able to bring their family, who felt safe that their children are with a good group of spiritual people.

Many abhyasis and members from the Indian community helped make the brunch a success. A few abhyasis gathered at Uma Mullapudi's house preparing vadas, and they were all happy, for it brought back memories of how they used to prepare for Master's visit to Dayton. It brought the feeling of all serving him with joy. Suman Mediratta and Uma Mullapudi took the lead in organizing the event. They would like to thank all the people who helped, especially our youth group (Mamata Venkat, Kiran Venkat, Sudi Mullapudi, Kiran Wani and Roshni Wani) and also our younger ones from Columbus, Cincinnati and Dayton (Isha Patel and Ruhani Patel) who joyfully cleaned tables and set up place mats. Thanks also go to the person who began this event twenty-two years ago and still leads it today: Janki Venkayya.





Training Programs

Communication and Cultivating a Garden of Hearts Pat and Irina Valente, Columbus, OH

Twenty-five Columbus abhyasis were recently blessed with the opportunity to host and attend this all-day workshop presented by Janmarie Connor, Christine Jones and Uma Mullapudi.

After morning satsangh we listened to a powerful reading relating to the goal and its attainment, which set the tone for the day. The first part of the program encouraged us to look inward, carefully observing our attitudes. The concept of adjustment was then artfully presented and an entirely new way to be aware of our inner condition was suggested.

The second part of the program centered on cultivating an environment of attraction, beginning with the self and extending outward. This part of the program had us look internally at our communications and how they affect our relationships.

Many of the participating abhyasis told us that it was one of the most powerful and effective Sahaj Marg workshops ever. The unique presentation method resulted in an especially clear understanding of the messages, thus enhancing our experience.

Now members of the Columbus Center are planning to use our new tools on a regular basis, with the goal of building a base where communication fosters mutual trust and respect that will create a spiritual community that attracts others.

Prefect Training, November 18-20, 2011, Santa Barbara Shitij Mehta, Santa Barbara, CA

The prefect training began with the 9 o'clock Universal Prayer followed by a period of silent adjustment to calm us and to remember our beloved Master. While rain quenched the ground outside each day, Master's grace quenched our inner beings. Drenched with his love, we trained ourselves bit-by-bit to understand the importance of being good abhyasis ourselves before working as prefects. This included expanding our awareness of the correct attitudes towards a whole spectrum of human weaknesses, our options in dealing with them, and most importantly, our resulting actions from those options. This was no magic potion to instantly make us saints; it was like unwinding, one thread at a time, till our samskaras fell loose.

The training progressed through a series of thought provoking questions, shared experiences and snippets of wisdom from Master on love, surrender, soul, heart, inner self, God, Master, spirituality, attitude, service and practice. The benefit was not just from what we learned in those two days, but the transformation we experienced through those words and adjustments, each to our own capacity. On a personal note, I strongly felt our Master's observation that spirituality is simple but not easy, and also that the prefect's work is like walking on a thin rope – you've really got to have balance!



Announcement

Invitation to A Picnic in the Park Chris Curran, New Jersey, NY

North New Jersey Center happily invites you to "A Picnic in the Park": a gathering for family, friends and neighbors, and not just abhyasis – bring everyone! We have met at this same park each summer for the past few years and everyone is still talking about how wonderful those experiences were.

Please join us, Saturday, June 23rd, 2012, 9:00 am - 8:00 pm, at Schooleys Mountain Park, East Springtown Road, Long Valley, NJ, and invite all your family and friends, especially those with children! Bring any outdoor toys and games. There are sports for the kids, young and old, include boating, hiking, volleyball and more. We ask for your RSVP by Sunday, June 17th, to help us prepare the lunch. You may alert your prefect, or contact Chris Curran at 908-930-3430 or srcm_north_jersey@yahoo.com.





Teen Corner

New Feature for Teens Shelly Gould Burgess, Ohio

Great things are happening for teens in SRCM North America. This "Teen Corner" is a new feature in *Echoes* to help create a sense of connectedness among the SRCM teen programming community, as we learn about and are inspired by each other's activities. Sister Shelly Gould Burgess, coordinator of the North American Teen Committee, will edit this feature. Parents and teens: please send reports (150 words or less) about teen activities in your center to Shelly at sgb9000@gmail.com. Photos are also welcome for possible inclusion. In addition, we will be adding teen programs to the Mission calendar. Please email sister Shelly when your center plans a teen activity.

Teen and youth programming in North America is accelerating! Two new committees have evolved to serve our teens and youth. The North American Teen Committee (NATC) facilitates programs for teens aged 13-18, and the North American Youth Committee (NAYC) provides programming for youth aged 18-29. Sister Shelly Gould Burgess serves as the coordinator for the NATC, and Sister Mamata Venkat serves as the point person for the NAYC. Abhyasis working with teens in their region or center can contact Shelly at the above address to connect and share best practices with each other. Youth interested in NAYC activities can contact Mamata at mamata.venkat@gmail.com. Both the NATC and the NAYC are connecting with similar groups worldwide.

Announcing Second Annual North American Teen/Youth Camp 2012

The Second Annual North American Teen/Youth Camp 2012 will be held at the Molena ashram, June 24-30. Teens and youth aged 13-25 are invited to explore spirituality and to learn about Sahaj Marg in an accepting environment. The theme of this year's camp is "Love." The camp will include opportunities for spiritual exploration along with games, activities and possible fun outings. Teens of abhyasi families and youth who are practicing Sahaj Marg are welcome to attend. It is requested that attendees commit to coming for the entire camp. Please note that this camp is not intended as a family gathering. Parents, younger children and all other abhyasis are requested to cooperate by allowing the teens and youth to enjoy the ashram exclusively during this short period. Those interested in supporting the teens and youth by volunteering for cooking and helping with other tasks may contact sister Shelly at sgb9000@gmail.com.

Serving Center

Volunteer Corner Becomes Serving Center Greg Karch, Richmond, IA

We are giving the volunteer section of *Echoes* a name change: it will now be called Serving Center, bringing expanded meaning to volunteering.

In future newsletters, the "Serving Center" will include articles and stories about volunteering and service. We encourage you to submit articles about your own experiences of service and the service you see extended by others. We will also be highlighting specific opportunities for service in the many spheres that service is possible: ashrams, local centers, other Mission work, and families.

Master is the highest exemplar of service, providing enormous service to his Master, to the Mission, and to each abhyasi. He creates for us a myriad of volunteer opportunities to work towards the goal by serving him, the Mission and ourselves, deepening our understanding of what service means. By offering ourselves in service, we also receive. Going both inward and outward, we serve our center and our center serves us. The exchanges that take place through giving and receiving open our hearts and create a greater capacity for love.





New and Relocated Prefects

Alberta

Calgary, Apurva Pithwa, apurvapithwa@gmail.com
 Fort McMurray, Sudhakar Arunachalam,
Sudhakar_Arunachalam@yahoo.com

British Columbia

Vancouver, Svetlana Zhikharev, svetlanazh@hotmail.com

California

Sunnyvale, Venkatesh Seetharam, vseetharam@gmail.com

Georgia

Roswell, RoseAnne Alam, rosie@urewinr.com

Manitoba

Winnipeg, Prashant Topiwala, P_topiwala@hotmail.com

Michigan

Ann Arbor, Chethan Reddy, cgreddy3160@gmail.com
 Novi, Ajoy Vadlapudi, ajoykv@gmail.com

Nevada

Las Vegas, Shanthi Reddy, Shanthi612@gmail.com

New Hampshire

Nashua, Narendra Sharma, 603-930-4294

Québec

Montréal, Mona Herro, monaherro@yahoo.com

Texas

Austin, Prashanth Srinivasan, PrashanthS2005@gmail.com

Utah

West Jordan, Prodeep Kumar Mahanthi,
prodeepm@yahoo.com



Echoes Article Submissions and Calendar Listings

We are pleased to announce that a representative from each of the seven regions of North America will be serving as an Echoes Correspondent, responsible for communicating with abhyasis of his or her region, to assemble reports and updates of activities, including: regional gatherings, training programs and community events. If you wish to submit an article or announcement to Echoes, please contact your Echoes Correspondent:

Northeast: Barbara Lockhart bjlockhart52@gmail.com

South and Mid-Atlantic:

Monika Sharma monika.srcm@yahoo.com

Mary-Lynn Masi: marylynnmasi@gmail.com

South Central:

(calendar info) Vallalar Sivakolundu: vallalar@gmail.com

(articles) Leslie Childs: lesliegchilds@aol.com

West: Abhishek Ajanappa: a_abhisheka@yahoo.com

Northwest:

Lou-Anne Bryant: louannebryant@gmail.com

Donna Whiterock: dandreychuk@yahoo.ca

Midwest and North Central:

William Biddle: William.biddle@sbcglobal.net

Echoes will also be responsible for updating the web calendar of events for North America. The calendar will no longer be published in Echoes; it will be on the website only. Each month your correspondents will collect listing information about all upcoming regional gatherings, training programs and UN events for posting on our website calendar.

Additionally each month the web calendar will be updated for the next three months. All abhyasis will receive an email containing the link to the calendar. If you have questions about this process, contact your correspondent listed above.

<http://www.sahajmarg.org/north-america>



New Publications in Molena

DVD	ENGLISH	<i>Life of Lalaji</i>
MP3	ENGLISH	"Character Formation" and "Here and Now"
DVD	ENGLISH	<i>Heaven</i>
DVD	ENGLISH	<i>Nomination of the Successor</i>
MP3	ENGLISH	<i>Heart Speak 2009</i>
DVD	ENGLISH	<i>Eternal Memories</i>

Please check out the link below to access a list of new publications now available at Molena bookstore.

<https://www.sahajmarg.us/onlinebookstore/catalog.do?category=0>

For feedback, suggestion or contribution, please email the Echoes team at echoesna@sahajmarg.org

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<http://www.sahajmarg.org/newsletters/north-america>

