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Special Issue: North American Seminar 2013

This *Special Issue of Echoes of North America* is offered in gratitude to our beloved Master for the opportunity to gather with him in the home he has made for us where we lived together for one blessed week in August.

With love,
Abhyasis of North America





North American Seminar 2013

August 12-17, Babuji Memorial Ashram *Change What We Can... Ourselves.*

Kirstin Santos, Atlanta, GA

On July 5, abhyasis throughout North America received the following forwarded email from our beloved Master, and preparations for the upcoming North American Seminar scheduled to begin on August 12 intensified on all levels.

Dear John [Barlow]

Chennai, Friday, 5 July 2013, 9:50:05 AM

I would be delighted to be with you all throughout the seminar, but unfortunately my health will not permit that. If I am well enough to do so, I shall inaugurate your seminar and sit with you all for some time.

Personally I would like to hear dear Rob Klinger to speak on the Whispers as also about diary writing, if he can confine himself to say half an hour for each.

For other morning speakers, I would suggest brothers Kamlesh Patel, P. R. Krishna, Sanskrit Kannan, Vinod Mishra and sister Elizabeth Denley.

As for the theme for the Seminar, to my mind, "Prejudice is the greatest obstacle to spiritual growth". You may consider this.

Blessings to all.

*Affectionately,
Parthasarathi*

Master's suggested theme, "Prejudice is the greatest obstacle to spiritual growth", took root in our hearts immediately. The talk Master gave on July 22nd, Guru Purnima day further emphasized the sobering reality and seriousness, as well as the joy, of the work that we were being called to do.

On August 12, the opening day of the seminar, our beloved Master came to the meditation hall prior to 9:00 a.m. to inaugurate our seminar – just as he



said he would do – "if I am well enough". A mixture of emotion and deep feeling pervaded the hall as we caught our first glimpse of him and witnessed the tremendous personal effort he was making to come to the hall, despite discomfort and weakness. As he garlanded the portraits of Revered Lalaji and Babuji Maharaj, reverence, love and inspiration flooded our hearts.

At 10:00 a.m. brother John Barlow opened the General Body Meeting with gratitude to all the organizers of the seminar and a hearty welcome to all participants. So many preparations had been made for each of us to participate and be taken care of while at the ashram. Brother Santosh Khanjee followed by introducing the functionaries of the Mission in North America and by giving an update of Mission donations and allocations for ongoing ashram projects.

The daily schedule for the week followed an open format with satsanghs at 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., with selected speakers addressing the theme after morning satsangh. Afternoons were left open for us to absorb, read Mission literature, write in our diaries and reflect deeply on what we were experiencing — being altogether at home with our Beloved Master. In the evenings, following 5:00 p.m. satsangh, the gates

*Change What We Can... Ourselves (continued)*

of Master's cottage were open, and we were invited to sit outside the cottage and be with him. Master came out most evenings for some time, sat with us, spoke with us, received children and responded to questions. The gift of just being with him has always been and remains beyond description.



Every speaker whom Master selected to talk on the theme brought helpful insights, suggestions and useful provocations for us to work with. Following are some points from their talks.

The second day speaker was P.R. Krishna, Master's son, who spoke two times during that day, after morning and evening satsangh. In the first part of his talk, he offered a simple definition of 'prejudice' as "making a conclusion with insufficient evidence", suggesting that the starting point of prejudice is narcissism – that everything is seen from the 'I'. If we ask why we do that, it is because of insecurity. We have fear to confront who we are; we have fear to be judged by our family, our friends and our society. With time, prejudice builds and this habit becomes first nature. Prejudice brings out the worst in us. It puts us in contact with our basest instincts and makes us look lower and lower. It draws negativity to us, causing us to withdraw more and more, until we are utterly alone.

Krishna continued by asking, "So, why are we looking at this?" It is because Sahaj Marg is a forward, upward-looking system. We change ourselves from the inside out. We have to continually ask, "Am I what I ought to be?" Using himself as an example, he stated that physical proximity to the Master guarantees nothing; it only gives one an opportunity to see how Master lives his life. All the time, what Master sees is the divine light that He lit and is praying to his Master, "God give him the wisdom to see it in himself." So, let us do that which we can do – change ourselves!



Brother Krishna conducted the 5:00 p.m. satsangh after which he continued his talk at Master's request. Master had asked him why he had ended his morning talk abruptly, and had reminded him that the purpose of the seminar was to say what needed to be said. So Krishna delved into the prejudice that has crept into the Mission organization over the years, causing deviation from the only responsibility the Mission has as an organization, which is to show love and tolerance. Wherever there are two prefects in a centre, trouble begins; with functionaries, the same thing happens.

Somewhere along the way, we have applied worldly values and rules to a spiritual organization. The need is to constantly look at ourselves and see if we are allowing worldly values to enter into our work. The

Change What We Can... Ourselves (continued)

optimum is that we remain unseen, invisible. All of us are here for one purpose – to evolve. If we do our work with humility, love and tolerance, the organization will be invisible. This is a place where what matters is attitude. As Master says, “When people serve me, I want people to work with purity of heart.”

On day three, the anniversary of revered Lalaji's mahasamadhi, brother Kamlesh conducted morning satsangh and spoke afterwards, expanding the idea of purity of heart. Just the evening before, he had watched the movie *To Kill a Mockingbird*, so he began his talk with some thoughts related to that movie, referring to it as a sad story, a parody, a tragedy, illustrating prejudice, injustice, loss of innocence, and courage. Considering the meaning of the title, he referred to the mockingbird as that little bird in our heart that keeps chirping away, “Do this; don't do this.”

In yogic philosophy, *viveka* (discernment; the power of finely distinguishing) is given great importance. This capacity to discriminate between right and wrong comes from openness, purity. What is this openness? It is a positive attitude, a freshness of mind.

“Discriminative capacity is that by which one tries to understand the current that connects Master and the devotee. This is the crux of the matter. This constitutes the definition of the most refined form of discrimination. Everything else is subordinate to this.”

Babuji's unedited autobiography, 18 August 1944

Master can provide the circumstance; he can remove samskaras; he gives spiritual conditions. We must do our part. When we think we have ‘made it’, we commit spiritual suicide. It's all about how we use ourselves. There must be humility, purity. Our efforts must include some level of discipline. Here is where discrimination, *viveka*, comes into play. An abhyasi who is in osmosis with deepest awareness cannot afford to distort his awareness of the inner condition.

Prejudice is the seed of injustice; it's like putting a massive stone over the heart. It has two types: positive and negative. Positive prejudice is when we put a person on a pedestal without any basis; negative prejudice is when we put a person down without any basis.

“Prejudice is the name of weakness of the heart”.

Babuji, *CWRC*, vol.3, p.185



What we have to cultivate is deep awareness of the condition of the heart and recognize desire when it comes into play. Desires unfulfilled lead to restlessness and inner turbulence, which unchecked lead to anger, then fear and then the inability to discriminate or discern. Brother Kamlesh offered some great antidotes to prejudice. Here are a few:

- Cultivate love and prayer in the heart.
- Imagine peace pervading everywhere.
- Abandon all tendencies based on rationality.
- Resist impulses of the critical mind.
- Work on ourselves all the time for more and more refinement.
- Remain serene and open.

*Change What We Can... Ourselves (continued)*

And finally, do anything to make Master happy. This is a promise, because when we try to make him happy, it is our efforts that make him happy.

At 6:30 a.m. on the morning of August 15, a brief flag-raising ceremony was conducted in front of the meditation hall, to honor India's Independence Day. It was presided over by brother Kamlesh, and nearly 50 abhyasis stood by holding brightly colored umbrellas to shield themselves from the pouring rain.

Brothers Vinod Mishra, Rob Klinger and Wendell Smith all spoke after morning satsangh. Brother Vinod began his talk with an acknowledgment of the opportunity that he recognized in being a selected speaker. "This talk is an opportunity to think deeply, prepare and become aware of the prejudices I still carry." He spoke about the stages in our spiritual journey where our prejudices often show up.

Spiritual life begins in the true sense when we find a capable Master. The first danger is the danger of evaluating the Master from exterior qualification, that is: how he appears, what he wears, and so forth. Where do these prejudices come from? They form largely through the influence of our respective religions, families and social conditioning. When we begin our spiritual practice, we often have difficulty making time, and we look for experiences. If we have no experiences, this can be another danger point of judging. Or, if we have good experiences, we might feel satisfied and become lax in our practice.

Another danger point comes when we are exposed to Mission literature or when we hear talks. We can be disillusioned by what we hear or read. If we understand Master's teaching, we must accept that everything that happens to us is what we have created. We go beyond all experiences with love. We help ourselves by cultivating love for the Master and by attempting to integrate ourselves within our local center. If we experience disagreement with a fellow abhyasi, we can have the attitude, "It is possible for both of us to



be right. Let us go forward to the goal together."

At Master's request, brother Rob Klinger spoke about the *Whispers* messages and diary writing. He used himself as an example of Babuji's reference to today's skeptics about the messages and how they are received: "... today's skeptics would become fervent tomorrow." Rob traced out his own path of skepticism, told us about the "bunk" letter he wrote to Master, stating his strong opinion about the messages, and then gave an account of his dramatic attitude shift. It occurred when he was attempting to assist a fellow abhyasi who was approaching death. He was thinking deeply about how to help this abhyasi, when a volume of *Whispers* literally toppled off the shelf and opened in front of him to a page containing the perfect words of comfort and guidance!

Rob's entire history as an abhyasi, including this account, is recorded in his 43 diaries. He emphasized why Master has asked us to keep a diary with Master's quote, "If spirituality teaches us anything, it is the ultimate lesson that we are but observers... And the whole idea of observing and reporting and maintaining a diary is merely for this: That we learn to separate the observer from the field of observation (which is also myself)."

*Change What We Can... Ourselves (continued)*

Another poignant story he told highlighting the value of diary writing was of his 'first encounter' with Master way back in 1972. Rob was already journaling before becoming an abhyasi. Both Rob and our Master, P. Rajagopalachari, had noted their experiences on June 1, 1972, in their diaries. Chariji was secretary of the Mission at the time and accompanying Babuji Maharaj on his first visit to the US. On that day, Chariji made notes in his diary about a public meeting that took place in the Cleveland Public Library at 7:00 p.m., where he spoke for "nearly thirty minutes on yoga as an instrument of realization. This was followed by a twenty minutes meditation..." Rob had noted in his diary on the same day, at the same time, the details of his own visit to the Cleveland Public Library, where he was searching in the room next to Babuji and Chariji for a book related to spirituality! Only many years later was he able to recognize this connection, after he started Sahaj Marg practice and read *In His Footsteps*, Volume 2.

Through repeated reading and reflection on the *Whispers* volumes, brother Rob has extracted many practical tools and guidelines for coping with very human issues, day-to-day problems, as well as how to read the *Whispers* messages. He shared many of these tools by playing several selected message tracks from the audio CD, *Whispers*, and citing others. Here are a few examples:

"Be happy abhyasis, joyful and enthusiastic – become love, be love" (Track #9)

How to read *Whispers*: Volume 3, page 53

We have a Master, a method and a Mission. Take responsibility: Volume 1, pages 64, 117

Don't dawdle: Volume 1, page 222

Leave no soul behind. (Track #93)

For any who may not yet have had an opportunity to hear or read a Whisper and experience the 'love vibration' that permeates the messages, Rob used well the perfect time and place to introduce *Whispers from the Brighter World*.



The final speaker of the day was Wendell Smith, who took on the challenges of talking about the money that will be needed to complete the first Canadian ashram and conducting an auction of a single copy of "Being with the Master" – a compilation of poems, drawings, letters and comments from the children of North America. Master had signed this one copy and responded with a beautiful message:

All of you are seedlings! Love waters you and that is how you grow and grow. When you are my age, you must remember how much you have received, and how much you must give back to Nature, as well as to the humans who raised you, educated you and helped you on the way to your destination!

Love to all of you."

Parthasarathi

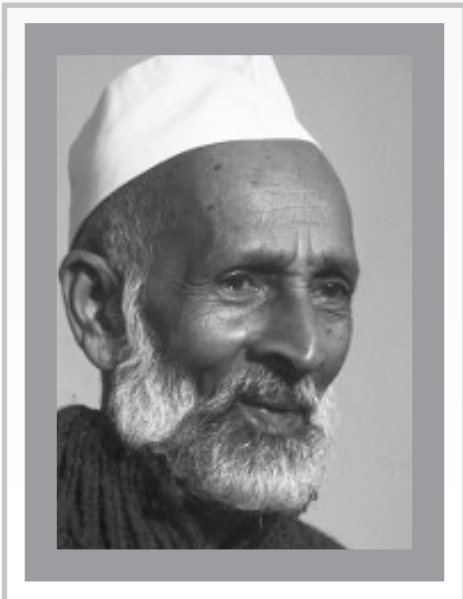
11/8/2013



Change What We Can... Ourselves (continued)

In the past, Master himself has conducted auctions when a 'master facilitator' was needed to open hearts and hands to build the facilities that are required to support spiritual growth for large numbers. Our Mission organization does not fund raise or tithe its membership. Everything that is done happens entirely through voluntary donations. These opportunities to contribute bring us together at the material plane of existence and allow us to respond from our hearts, with whatever means we have available, to build together the facilities that support us all.

The final two talks of the five-day program were given by brother K.S. Balasubramanian, affectionately known in our Mission as 'Sanskrit' Kannan and sister Elizabeth Denley, on the morning of August 16, following satsangh. Brother Kannan put Babuji's statement about prejudice in historical perspective when he informed us that nowhere in the Vedas is prejudice mentioned. In fact, there is no word in Sanskrit literature that means 'prejudice'. Indian philosophy names six enemies of spiritual growth, which include desire, anger and greed. Most schools of Indian philosophy consider ignorance to be the main obstacle. Buddha named 'desire' as the main obstacle. Babuji is unique in identifying 'prejudice' as the main obstacle to spiritual growth.



What is the faculty of judgment? And, how does knowledge come? It is through *buddhi* or intellect. Our sense organs give information of that which is outside us, and this information is received by mind, which is superior to the sense organs. Buddhi, or intellect, ascertains or judges what is received. Buddhi is closer to soul, so it is purer than mind. The function of buddhi is most important because it is to ascertain and judge.

The four internal organs and their functions are:

1. Manas - mind
Function is to doubt
2. Buddhi - intellect
Function is to ascertain, judge
3. Ahankar - ego
Function is "I know that this is..."
4. Chitta - consciousness
Function is "I have seen this before..."

The limited can never judge the unlimited. The finite can never judge the infinite. Unless we can 'be it', we cannot know the reality of a person or a thing. How to know a person?

- Put your heart into that which you want to know. Accept a person *in toto*.
- One should see everything as equal. See Him in everything/everyone. See everything/everyone in Him

When we look with prejudice, it is, "I want to see a thing/person as I want it to be, not *as it is*."

Truth is to talk of a thing/person *as it is*. When we see things, and we see things as they are, it is reality. Only when we see through the heart can we see the real person.

We should accept and love our Master both at the spiritual level and at the human level. When a person loves the Master, he is lost in the vast ocean.

*Change What We Can... Ourselves (continued)*

Therefore, judgment of anything or anyone is not possible. In nature, there is no discrimination – only giving. The Master goes on giving whether we deserve or not. What we seek in Him, we will receive. What to seek? Him and Him alone. If we practice this continuously, there will be no room for prejudice.

Brother Kannan's talk ended with this humorous and pointed reminder from Master:

"Half a saint...ain't"

Sister Elizabeth Denley began her talk by sharing her experience of moving to the United States from Australia in 1981 for research work. She brought with her a great deal of prejudice about the US, much of which was factually based on the culture of materialism that prevails in the US. Gradually, she started dismantling these prejudices as she encountered beautiful people and things in her new environment. This time provided a field to see the necessity to change – to dismantle her own creation. She gave a striking example of how, as we learn more about even our physical, mundane world, we are often compelled to release the way we think about things. (The world is not flat.) A recent DNA study in Australia revealed that the aboriginal culture arose from a migration from India 4000 –5000 years ago!

Then, asking the question, "How does prejudice arise?", Elizabeth explored the idea of prejudice arising out of deep-rooted survival behavior – that our evolution as creatures required seeing what was different from ourselves as a threat to our survival. When we enter the spiritual field, these deep-rooted imprints or samskaras, which we still carry, have to be removed. This may be why we resist change. Spirituality dismantles prejudice associated with the lower survival-oriented self.

Reinforcing what brother Kannan had just spoken about, Elizabeth quoted Lalaji: "The soul of the human being will be clean in proportion to the discrimination he possesses."



Without a clean mind, without a clean heart, discrimination (*viveka*) is not possible. When our hearts are not clear, discriminative judgment is risky. We need to be careful when we experience disillusionment, which is the revealing of reality. We have to be unemotional when this is going on. This is our spiritual evolution; everything must be pulled out.

Here are hints she offered for developing *viveka* capacity:

- Observance of the inner; note in the diary
- Cleaning; must be regular, continuous
- Prayer; create a state of vacuity (Maxim 2)
- Mould living; recognize on the one hand there is unity, on the other hand there is diversity (Maxim 9)

In Master's New Year speech, given on January 1, 2013, we hear:

We must have eyes like those of a child, innocent, looking at everything every time with a new understanding, with a new vision, adoring the Creator who is able to play so many scenarios with His sunsets and with His sunrises, each different from the other.

... Every human life is a unique human life, if you but seek to probe and understand what makes it unique -

*Change What We Can... Ourselves (continued)*

not to show differences, but to show the uniqueness of each and every human life.

...If you are not able to do this, you must pray that you are bestowed this understanding, and then only will you pass through life seeing the uniqueness of everything, the beauty of everything, the transparency of everything.

The movement we make in our spiritual process is toward zero point, away from partiality (+) and prejudice (-), toward fusion with the Divine presence. Elizabeth ended her talk by reading the following message from *Whispers from the Brighter World*, volume 2, page 618:

Wednesday, September 13, 2000 - 10:00 a.m.

“The attainment of the goal requires efforts. Going inside oneself, deeper and deeper in an intense way full of love, bears its fruits. The process must be two fold: interiorization (fusion with the divine presence) and openness to the world. It entails being attentive to one’s fellow man—whether close or far from you—considering that all beings on this Earth are brothers. You cannot neglect this aspect, at the risk of curbing your own evolution. A solitary process, only focused on oneself, slows down the process. You do not advance alone; the beings that surround you are to be considered in every sense of the word. By helping your brother, you will help yourself in the best way possible. The Masters of the past insisted on this aspect without being truly followed; this concept is essential. You should review your way of doing things, take a close look at yourself with rigor and try to draw from it the beneficial conclusions that will foster your progress. It’s all connected; love develops in you, but it must manifest itself around you, generously. Think of it.”

- Babuji

Every speaker offered valuable, useful insights,

perspectives and reminders – all supporting the inner work which each of us focused on throughout the week in the presence of our divine Master. Going forward, we have all we need to work with in our daily efforts to continue our journey toward our goal.

“Maintain the condition,” rings with new meaning. May each of us remove the greatest obstacle to our spiritual growth by cultivating a deep awareness of what our Master has given of himself, not allowing anything to distort that awareness, and do what we must do, do what we can do – change ourselves.





North American Seminar, August 2013





More Events and Recollections

Petra Schweitzer, Washington, DC

An atmosphere of love pervaded as we lived together for our time with our Master, during our seminar in Chennai. Here are a few recollections from that special week.

Brother Kamlesh emphasized the importance of reading the Mission literature, and therefore proposed that we spend our afternoons reading the works of our Masters. He explained the importance of having a background in the writings of our great Masters.

The program of the gathering offered training for teenagers interested in discussing Sahaj Marg, the role of spirituality, how it related to them as youth and the role the Master plays in their lives.

Brother Victor Kannan introduced the program of U-Connect (University connect) to teachers and students to share his experience of introducing Sahaj Marg into the curriculum of universities in India. Brother Krishna Linga invited abhyasis who work in higher education to become active, so that Sahaj Marg can be available to generations of future leaders and citizens.

During the gathering, the Mission held the second international webinar recognizing the United Nations International Youth Day with the theme, Universal Prayer – Love as Fuel for Change.

After most evening satsanghs, Master's gate opened for all abhyasis. By the grace of our beloved Master, we were able to be with him as a family. Master gave a lot of attention to the children, answering each individual question. When Master was asked how he is doing, he answered, "Not so well, but no complaints." Words cannot describe the feeling of being present with him. Moments with him were often filled with silence. I am reminded that this silence is the language of God.





Youth Q&A with Kamleshbhai

Trevor Weltman, Ann Arbor, MI

On Tuesday night, August 13, of the North American Seminar, Kamleshbhai met with the North American youth where, after asking those above the age of twenty-five to leave, he fielded questions from the group. Such questions included, “How to find time to meditate while busy with school?” and, “Master says meditate, but people wait all day at the gate. Which should I do?” For me, it was striking to see how similar the questions proffered by this group were to those I heard not only in the prefect seminar of the previous day, but also at other new abhyasi sessions I have facilitated over the past few years. Thus, my takeaway from this meeting was two-fold.

First, we’re all newcomers in Sahaj Marg, youngsters in the Mission. Therefore we need to realize that the issues young people have are the same as those that tenured abhyasis are going through: how to secure more inner closeness with the Master; how to push through when thoughts assail meditation; the travails and distractions of flying on both wings, and so forth. Similarly, tenured abhyasis need to develop more humility regarding their own lack of knowing, and – just as newcomers are recommended to do – invest more time in reading Mission literature to keep their practice and understanding fresh.

Second, Kamleshbhai gave a splendid analogy for the joy we must cultivate when doing our practice (one that he repeated later to the whole assembly). He said that we needn’t use our will power to enjoy a bowl of ice cream. When it is put before us, we just eat it! Similarly, if we are joyful about doing sadhana, then we needn’t use our will power to get out of bed in the morning, or ensure we do our cleaning; if there’s joy, we’ll just do it! I thought this was beautiful and can already feel its profound effect on my practice.

All in all it was a wonderful session, one that I benefited from immensely. Seldom am I one of the eldest in a room in Sahaj Marg! Thanks to Master and Kamleshbhai for such a blessed opportunity.





Teen Training at the North American Gathering 2013

Petra Schweitzer, Washington, DC

In recent years, the Molena Ashram offered a summer teen camp that allows teens and youth, some of whom are practicing abhyasis, to explore spirituality in an informative environment free of expectations and full of support.

For the North American Seminar, Barbara J. Levin and Joan Drewes co-facilitated a teen training from August 12–16, 2013. The curriculum focused on the theme, The Role of the Master, with the goal of exploring the topic through inspirational exercises and discussions. The objectives for the participants included: 1) experience a safe, accepting environment, free from expectations; 2) better understand their personal beliefs and feelings regarding spirituality; 3) better understand Sahaj Marg and the role of the Master and 4) make connections with each other, have fun and destroy boredom!

In total, nine young abhyasis, ages 12–16, participated in the seminar, some of them only for one or two days. There was a core group of about six teens, each one vitally interested in Sahaj Marg. They came from various parts of North America, including Fremont, CA, Beaverbrook, OH, Richmond, VA, and Toronto, ON. Sister B.J. compared the arrival of the participants with Abraham Lincoln's education: they came 'by littles,' first one teen and then two. Those two teens left and returned with a few of their friends, and so the group was under way. By the end of the week, there had been a total of nine group members, although some came for only one session, and not all of them came at the same time.

From day one, the atmosphere was charged with Master's love and the individual aspiration to comprehend the role of the Master in one's life and to share heartfelt introspections. In a way, the direction of the program corresponded with one's own spiritual development: from the external to the internal expe-

rience. For example, multiple posters on each wall of the room displayed four categories: Movie Station, Favorites Station, Hero Station and Secret Station. Walking from wall to wall, the participants answered questions that were outlined under each category, such as, "Define your life as a movie title," or "What is your favorite website, book, sport?" Each person's answer, depending on 'desired' individual tendencies, drew attention to their personal preferences based on external circumstances.

Through a series of useful exercises, physical movement of walking away from the walls of the room to form an inner circle echoed the progress of the spiritual seminar. It was obvious that each one of the teens had been thinking very deliberately and soulfully, and for a long time, about everything that matters: the meaning and goal of life, what it means to be on a spiritual path, how to follow one's path with purpose and correctness and how to establish a proper relationship with the Master. Their questions were brimming with intelligence. "How can I meditate on divine light when I am not supposed to see it or feel it?" "How can I say the prayer in such a way that it propels me into a deeper spiritual condition?" "What is transmission?" "How can I be a good disciple?"

It was very touching to see the group members' involvement in the spiritual program, and the profound ways in which they interacted with each other. Conversing with such mature individuals seems to be very easy, natural, pleasant and exciting. As sister B.J. pointed out, "I felt that each person was one to watch as the future unfurls."

Free in spirit and independent thinking, the teens had the idea of inviting Kamlesh Uncle to visit the group.



Teen Training at the North American Gathering 2013 *(continued)*

What better person, they reasoned, to elucidate the role of the Master!

Dear Kamlesh Uncle,

In the Teen Program, which meets every day from 2-3 at the admin building, we have been discussing Sahaj Marg and how it relates to us as individuals.

We were wondering if, at your convenience, you would be able to take some time to talk to us about the role of Master in our lives, as that is our topic for the day. We would really appreciate it and we understand that you're very busy.

With Love,

The Teen Program participants

Manapakkam, Thursday, August 15, 2013

4:58:58 PM

Dear Shikha,

All that is to be said is already laid out in the open by our Master in his book Role of the Master in Human Evolution.

Each member can take up one chapter a week before you meet, so that in the subsequent meeting you all can discuss with some background. You can adopt a similar approach if you like towards the other books of our Mission. Please think over. If you still insist, I will do my best.

Most affectionately,

Kamlesh

After reading brother Kamlesh's reply, several of the teens then purchased the book to take home. They decided that they could read the book and discuss it among themselves via Skype.

Abhyasi Reflections from the North American Seminar

Sylvie Jensen, Vancouver Centre

From my perspective, the North American seminar felt like one large sitting. The first few days it felt like we were going through our own cleaning as we were encouraged to look at ourselves and at our own prejudices. So there was a period of discomfort and agitations at first, but then it all settled down and we started to feel the transmission and the love of Master pouring into us until the end of the gathering. It was truly a blessing for all of us to be there and to receive all His love for us. The journey was amazing and I left feeling renewed, at peace and full of love in my heart. Thank you Master.

Lou-Anne Bryant, Vancouver Centre

For me the heart of the seminar was our Master's incredible gift to us, the gift of being. Each time I saw him he was pure spirit embodied in unfailing willpower. Often it seemed each breath he took required effort and yet he kept thanking us for being there, graciously accepting our gifts, turning our sweets into prasad and attending our need to be near him. When his words came out as a whisper, he rallied his strength and said them again in a stronger voice. Throughout it all, our ego, our distractions, our need for attention, he worked on us; we could feel it, we can still feel the shifts and we will feel them for months and years to come. May we have the wisdom to nurture his work, absorb it into our hearts. Let his effort not be wasted.



Abhyasi Reflections from the North American Seminar *(continued)*

Judith Polston, Langley, B.C. Canada

The prefect seminar and the North American Seminar were wonderfully reflective. The talks by brother Kamlesh and others brought deeper meaning to the prefect work, as well as our own spiritual condition. Master's presence physically may have been limited, but this allowed for a deeper connection with him in our hearts. The atmosphere was drenched with His essence and reminded me of the days with Babuji in Shajahanpur. The upcoming Canadian Ashram was the talk of the town; and Canadians are very appreciative of the supportive efforts by Master, Kamleshbhai and all the abhyasis present, to bring the dream to fruition.

Kirstin Santos, Atlanta, GA

One personal experience I would like to share occurred on the evening of August 11th, the night before the seminar started. We were called to Master's cottage shortly before 6:00 p.m., and with that first opportunity there was a bit of the usual "stampede" getting in through the gate. As the week progressed, it seemed that there was more serenity and awareness of the needs of each other. By the time I was able to find a seat that first evening, I had to sit behind those who were able to stand, so I was not able to hear either the questions that were posed to Master or his responses, though I could hear how notably weak his voice was, with an occasional crack or break in tone. He spoke with frequent pauses, and the tone to my ears was like that of an aged elder, attempting to impart some final words to his young family. Though I strained to hear his words, the only ones that I could make out were his last words, which I recall as, "Children, brothers and sisters, thank you for your time."



His words penetrated to the core of my being, infused with utter humility and tenderness, and resounding with an echo of eternity.

Another observation I have is that as I was listening to brother Kannan's talk on prejudice, which is not written about in sacred Indian texts, a quote that I put in my diary two years ago came into my consciousness, and something clicked. Though it was not part of his talk, I share it here:

Until the mind, intellect and consciousness are purified, ego is not purified, and its Sattvik (virtuous) power does not surface."

Lalaji, CWRC (Lalaji Maharaj), vol. 2, p. 238

