



# Echoes of North America

Shri Ram Chandra Mission

Issue 1

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## Master's news

### Celebrating Master's 81st Birth Anniversary in Lucknow, UP, India

Compiled by Hema Whitlam and Lakshmi Chandramohan

Master arrived in Kolkatta on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July from Chennai. He stayed two days at Brother Ajay Bhat-ter's home before moving

*There were fre-quent downpours before and during the Bhandara and all the abhyasis were smiling and walking in the mud like spiritual lotus flowers!*

to the ashram for Guru-purnima, a very auspicious day meant to be spent with your guru. About 1000 abhyasis were present at the ashram. We were all welcomed at Brother Ajay's house during the day. Mas-ter left for Lucknow on the evening of 20<sup>th</sup> July.

Abhyasis came to Lucknow from all over the world. There was a special train from Chennai, only for abhyasis, which was eight hours late arriving. There were frequent downpours before and during the Bhandara and all the ab- hyasis were smiling and

walking in the mud like spiritual lotus flowers! There were leaky roofs, mosquitoes, heat and every- thing else under the clouds (not sun). Forty-two thou- sand abhyasis from all over the world basked in HIS presence. A wonderful at- mosphere prevailed, as al- ways. Volunteers were working everywhere over the 100 acres of land of the Lucknow ashram.

try. The meditation hall was full of abhyasis coming sometimes two hours early for meditation in order to get a good seat. Announce- ments were going on all the time over the loud speak- ers. One of which said, "Brother so and so, from such and such center, please come and meet your wife at the announcement counter, who did not see you for the last three days!"



Bhajans (spiritual songs), cultural programs and 28 marriages occurred over the three day gathering. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July there was a talk by a representative of the United Nations praising the Mission's activities and describing what the UN does to promote unity and development. Following this Master gave a short talk on how Sahaj Marg pro- motes unity and world brotherhood in a different way. On the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> a sister from Paki- stan gave a talk on the Mis- sion's growth in that coun-

Master looked good and was cheerful. There was a military bag- pipe march- ing band which played "Happy

Birthday" on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> before the 9 a.m. satsangh, which Mas- ter started early at 8:45 a.m. Books, CDs of Master's talks and Master's Choice (a music CD of Master's fa- vorites) were released in different languages along with part two of He, the Hookah and I, titled Hubble Bubble.

Never to shy away from work, Master continued on after the Lucknow celebra- tions, visiting abhyasis in Shahjahanpur, Rudrapur,

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Naukuchiyatal and then on to Satkhol in the Himalayas. After a short stay, Master con- tinued his journey, spending time again in Rudrapur, then Moradabad before arriving in Meerut on the 30<sup>th</sup>, where he inaugurated an ashram. Mas- ter continued on to Delhi and stayed for 3 days before re- turning to Chennai on Mon- day evening August 4.





## Happenings in North America

### Celebrating Master's Birth Anniversary Celebrations in The US and Canada

On July 23, 24 and 25, abhyasis gathered in the US and Canada to celebrate Master's 81st birth Anniversary. Below is a sampling of festivities at various centers in North America and a feature on the Molena ashram celebrations and expansion project.

#### Dayton Ashram, Dayton, Ohio:

One-hundred and sixty abhyasis and children gathered under sunny skies and enjoyed simple, unstructured time with one another in remembrance of Him. A spontaneous children's program topped the event with its simplicity, purity, and of course comedy—its unknowing miniature performers reflecting those qualities in Him that we love and aspire to. While holding her mother's reassuring hand, 9-year-old Parvathi Kosuri sang a classical Hindustani song, "O Master, I come seeking your refuge. You are the only one that can take us across the ocean of life. I am your humble servant." (contributed by Janmarie Connor)



#### Voorhees, New Jersey:

Abhyasis in Voorhees, New Jersey, attended Master's birth anniversary celebration with devotion and love. The event began with evening satsangh on July 23<sup>rd</sup> and resumed on July 24<sup>th</sup> with morning satsangh. That evening, all abhyasis watched the "Sea of Love" video followed by dinner provided by the center. After evening satsangh, an informal talk on the life and teachings of Babuji Maharaj and Rev. Chariji was given, followed by discussion. The focus of the discussion was on achieving a "balanced existence" amidst a daily busy life style. Nature provided a golden glowing atmosphere as a gentle rain fell throughout the festivities. (contributed by Jasweer Khanuja)

#### Vancouver & Fraser Valley, BC:

A life-size hand-made birthday card was created by Fraser Valley abhyasis on July 23<sup>rd</sup> at a special evening satsangh in Fort Langley.



It was then transported to the Vancouver center for the all-day celebration of His birthday on July 24<sup>th</sup>. Over 45 abhyasis joined in the festivities! The photos along with our affectionate best wishes were forwarded to Master on July 25<sup>th</sup>, and he sent a reply via brother Krishna the next morning: *"Thanks for the wonderful photos and affectionate greetings."* (contributed by Christine Prisland & Lou-Anne Bryant)

#### Sunderland Ashram, Sunderland, Massachusetts:

"Together, Forever" was the theme of Master's birthday gathering at Sunderland Ashram, July 23–25, hosted by the South West Connecticut Center and supported through a generous outpouring of help from all. Weather offered its own flood of blessings, transforming original picnic plans at the nearby scenic mountain park into an enjoyable indoor lunch. Afternoon celebrations were spent in relaxed, good spirits with Master's teachings through a DVD-recorded "informal conversation" on "Holiness." The afternoon wound down with children's entertainment and an evening diversion of a melodious "Happy Birthday" for our beloved Revered Master, accompanied by keyboard, violin, guitars, children's recorders, and grateful voices. The atmosphere felt full with blessing and stillness after the Universal Prayer and everyone quietly worked together for cleanup and departure. (contributed by Colleen Sackheim)

#### St. Joseph, Michigan:

Beloved Master's birthday was celebrated with a day-long gathering in St. Joseph, Michigan. The day began with a morning meditation at 8 a.m. and ended with an evening satsangh. The day was interspersed with videos of Master's travels and speeches. About 25–30 abhyasis and children, including people from the nearby centers of Chicago (IL), Holland (MI), and South Bend (IN) participated. The atmosphere was light, absorbing, and joy filled.



St. Joseph is a relatively new and burgeoning center. One could feel His love permeate and envelop each and every one of us, fueling this young center to march towards HIM. (contributed by Viji Balasubramanian)



## Feature: Molena Ashram Celebrations and Expansion Project

### Molena Ashram, Molena, Georgia:

About 150 abhyasis from various states gathered at the Molena Ashram to celebrate Rev. Master's 81<sup>st</sup> birthday July 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>. Several sisters arrived a week before the celebration to spend some vacation time with their children at the ashram and help with preparations. The sense of being a family, spending a happy and rejuvenating time together, continued throughout the gathering.

### *Lessons in discipline, growth and work*



The program for the celebration was simple and offered maximum time for living and working together while immersed in the occasion's divine atmosphere. The theme of the gathering was "Discipline and Growth," and selected readings after satsangh over the four days guided contemplation on the levels and meanings of these principles. What also prevailed throughout the gathering was an unstated theme of Love, compassion and regard for one another, a theme that taught us about helping out, pitching in and looking after each other. Morning and afternoon periods on Friday and Saturday were reserved for collaborative tasks for those who wished to volunteer. Groups of abhyasis worked on various ashram projects: weeding the gardens and grounds, cleaning a large storage area, organizing the laundry area, washing windows, etc. Most abhyasis who have spent time at Molena develop a personal connection with this sacred place and a love for its unique quality. This gathering gave us an opportunity to work together and contribute something to its care.

### *Focus on brotherhood*

On Thursday afternoon, local prefects gathered to discuss the best use of the ashram in the future and ways to best serve the abhyasis of Atlanta. The meeting was very productive. That same evening, abhyasis and prefects met to discuss how to foster a sense of community amidst our busy lives. A common experience among abhyasis was a feeling that more personal connections are needed—that we need to become more concerned and aware of other's situations and offer support and help. Master said, "Love all Whom He Loves." We all felt it was time to refocus on that and translate it into real actions by reaching out to one another as a spiritual family of loving and caring sisters and brothers. In a regional prefect meeting the next day, various centers shared ideas on how they fostered that sense of community in their centers.

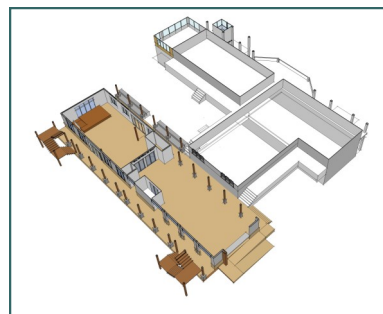


There seemed little doubt in the children's minds about being a community. As in all ashrams, they had fun meeting their friends and enjoying the freedom of the mountain knowing they were with their very large family. Brother Peter Romano set up an inflatable water slide and pool for children on Friday, which they thoroughly enjoyed. (contributed by Teresa Valentine)

## *Molena Ashram Expansion Project*

(Compiled by the Expansion Committee)

The Molena Ashram will be going through major changes over the next year. As the national headquarters of the U.S. Mission, the ashram is preparing for greater levels of use by abhyasis throughout the country. The Molena expansion construction committee met at the ashram during the week of August 15<sup>th</sup> to finalize the construction drawings, perform a site survey, and review the funds required for the construction. Brother Rohit Patel, whom Master has appointed to lead the expansion work, reported that Phase I construction work would start by October and be completed by April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009, all ready for Master's anticipated visit to North America next year.



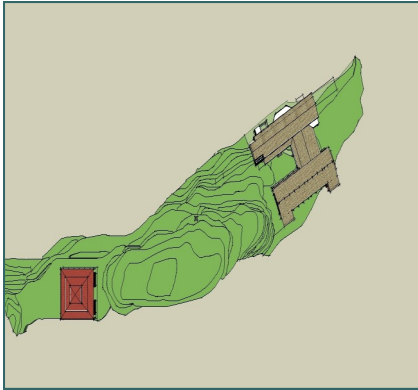
*1st level new south wing*

Phase I construction consists of the addition of a second wing to the main building, which will include a two-story meditation hall measuring over 3,000 square feet (expandable to around 5,000 square feet), an extension to the dining area, and additional dormitories and bathrooms. Master's new "cottage" will occupy the present caretaker's suite on the third floor of the existing wing, commanding a view of the new meditation hall, the courtyard and ashram grounds, and layers of rolling hills receding into the northern horizon.





In turn, like a beacon of light, His ashram home has been designed to be visible from almost all points of the campus. Also in this phase of construction, the existing facilities will undergo some renovation to modernize them up to the level of the new construction. Phase II construction will include a large meditation hall for regional and national gatherings to be constructed on the site where, in the past, the meditation tent has stood.



*Overall Site Plan*



*Exterior view meditation hall*



*Interior view meditation hall*

During this coming period of growth, the ashram will benefit from the participation of as many abhyasis as can spend some time on site. Many North American abhyasis have fond memories of visits to the Molena Ashram and the times they have spent there in Rev. Master's presence, during the several seminars He has conducted there over the years. We request brothers and sisters to come forward in helping to realize His dream of completing this expansion. ***We need participation at all levels, including financial contributions.*** Please contact the committee members at [molenaexpansion@gmail.com](mailto:molenaexpansion@gmail.com) if you would like to offer your assistance in projects and tasks during the construction phase. We are looking for help in the areas of landscaping, painting, and deck building. **Financial contributions for this project may be sent to the treasurer of the Mission, Br. V. Kannan, at 364 Wynfield Estates Dr., Roswell, GA, 30075, or be made online at the following address:**

<https://www.srcm.org/onlinebookstore//subscriptionForm.do?reset=true&country=US>

### *New Ashram Caretaker*

Br. Peter Romano has returned to Molena to serve for a second time as ashram caretaker, assisting Sr. Bette Marshal, who continues in her role as caretaker (see picture at right). The grounds and facilities maintenance has benefited greatly from their consistent and loving efforts in His Remembrance.



### *Molena Dining Hall Renovation Includes Special Photo*

A memorable feature of the Cleveland National gathering in the Spring of 2008 was the large group photo of abhyasis taken by Brother P.R. Krishna. The process of assembling the group in the grandstand of the Cuyahoga County fairground was a feat in and of itself. The effort yielded a beautiful 200mb photo measuring 3 feet tall by 16 feet 4 inches long. The photo will be prominently displayed in the dining hall of the Molena Ashram once renovations are completed. Brother Krishna has noted that the North American Mission can arrange for smaller replicas of the photo for abhyasis if there is an interest. Please send an e-mail noting your interest to [EchoesNA@sahajmarg.org](mailto:EchoesNA@sahajmarg.org).





## Region In Charge & Regional Coordinators Corner

### Letter from John Barlow to all North American abhyasis

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I believe that to most of us the "Shri Ram Chandra Mission" represents a means and a place to further our spiritual growth and development. It incorporates really quite a wonderful practice and if done with interest and sincerity can lead one to the highest levels of spiritual understanding. On our own we are limited as to what we might reasonably expect to accomplish in spirituality especially when it comes to molding the tendency of the mind in a spiritual direction. This is one of the salient features of Sahaj Marg that we have a wonderful practice and a spiritual guide often referred to as our Master.

Our guide and Master made a number of changes to the administrative and spiritual structure of the North American Mission this past spring. First he appointed P.R. Krishna as the "Region in Charge" of North America (Canada & U.S.). I believe he did this out of his love for us to give us as much help as possible. Brother Krishna has dedicated himself and his time to be available to answer questions, to visit centers, to review ashram and meditation center proposals and to keep Master informed in every way possible as to how the Mission and its members are growing in this part of the world. We are indeed fortunate to have his assistance and guidance.

Second, Master issued a directive that separates North America into five regions, each with an appointed "Regional Coordinator" (RC). The five RC's and their respective regions are as follows:

**John Barlow - Region I: East** - West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Maine Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland and Washington, D.C.

**Diana Waycott - Region II: West** - Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, Utah and Hawaii.

**Raga Ragavendran - Region III: Midwest** - North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Kentucky.

**Balaji Narayan - Region IV: South** - Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina.

**Kim Hansen - Region V:** Canada and Alaska

The RC's will rotate as lead coordinator for North America. I will serve as the lead coordinator until December 2009, to be followed by Diana Waycott for the year 2010. The responsibility of the RC is to assist the prefects in their work and to provide leadership and guidance, in a loving and selfless way. RC's are also expected to assist in the spiritual work in their region and for North America. The truth is that the "success" of the Mission is always the success of the aspirants. As we grow the Mission grows. I hope and pray that we can grow together within this new structure.

Most Sincerely,

John Barlow

### *Keeping Prefect Contact Details Current*

Are you a prefect? Has your contact information changed? All prefects are requested to either call Brother Naren Kini at 1-925-648-7417, or, go to <https://www.srcm.org/ssl/changeaddr.jsp> whenever there is a change in their email, phone number, or address. Once on the website, please click "Yes" to the "Are you a prefect?" question and enter the new information. Click on the "submit" button and an email will be sent to Br Naren Kini who will compile the changes and send them on to Br Tom Whitlam on a quarterly basis, who will then update the world wide prefect list that is maintained by Rev. Master.

*[The Master] ... comes to love us ... to teach us how to love so that, in our turn, we may teach others how to love. And then some day it is possible that the whole world is full of love, which is what we are looking for.*

Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari

[Heart To Heart, Vol. II, 114]



## Special reports

### **Journey to our Master** by Linda Rahal and Nadine Feighan

As our Master graced us with holding the event for Babuji's Birth Anniversary Celebration here in Cleveland, we were gearing up for the event, making plans, getting the details together; Master would be physically present at the gathering. Plans kept shifting, as we all know and eventually, we learned that Master would not be present in the physical and would be going to the gathering in Russia. In conversations with other abhyasis shortly after we'd heard, we decided to make a card and gift for Master to send to him and the gathering in Russia.

As the peace cranes were a central figure at the gathering. We would eventually incorporate that figure into the card, creating a rendition of a canna lily with peace cranes. Along with the card we sent a message to Master and our gift, a mobile of peace cranes. The plan was to send them along with someone going to Russia. However this turned out not to be the case. The card and the gift were returned to us in Cleveland at the gathering. *How would we get them to him now?* A plan slowly began to hatch and the idea of traveling to Denmark, where Master was due to be in May, began to emerge. We could take the gift to Master ourselves!

Travel arrangements changed many times but eventually with e-tickets in hand, we made our way to the airport. We were on our way to Denmark and our Master. Upon arriving in Denmark and making our way to the Ashram, and with a little help from one of our Danish sisters we had met here in Cleveland, a bee line was made to Master's cottage where fortunately Krishna was just emerging from the door. "Krishna," we said, "we're happy to see you," as we had been with him not too long before at the Cleveland gathering. He said, "I know you don't want to see me." "Yes, yes," we said. We all were laughing. Then, "Let us get straight to the point. We need to see Master. We have a gift for him from Cleveland."



land." Krishna said, "Come after supper."

Once in the cottage, Master called us right over upon seeing us. We told him about the Cleveland gathering and gave him the card and the gift. He held the crane mobile up and said, "Garlands," looking at it all around. He then handed it to the person sitting next to him. He looked at the card and touched the flower on the front saying, "They're getting more and more creative." He opened it and read the inside to himself, then out loud, "From Cleveland to Russia with love." Everyone

laughed a little, delighted. Then he unfolded the paper contained in the card, a page which had been signed by abhyasis from the Cleveland Center and read it to himself. He looked up, touched his heart and said, "I'm so moved." Bringing this gift to our Master, it was like we had brought the Cleveland gathering to him. A journey that began with Master traveling to us in Cleveland wrapped around itself and brought us to him.

*The mobile now hangs in Master's cottage in Vrads Sande Ashram in Denmark.*



### **The Flow of Life** by Chris Curran

The flow of life always carries the human being to the best possible place. In May of this year, the flow of life brought me to leave my job with my family business without having another job in mind. That may seem scary or abnormal to you, but I assure you that I felt perfectly confident and safe while the changes occurred. So, after I cleared out my desk and gave back the company car, what did I do? I allowed the flow of life to carry me to the best place I know. I bought a one-way ticket to go and be with Master! I didn't know how long my trip would be or where the flow would take me. And how wonderful was my wife to fully support me going alone on such an adventure!

I met up with Master in Dubai in the beginning of June, and within days I was encouraged to travel with Master for the next 7 weeks until his birthday celebrations on July 23-25 in Lucknow! I immediately agreed. I hadn't expected to be away from home for that long, but now this was a real adventure. I was open for anything. This trip with Master brought me to several places in India including Bangalore, Chennai, Calcutta and finally to Lucknow.

What a joy to spend time in these places of true spiritual atmosphere: the CREST facility in Bangalore, the Babuji Memorial Ashram in Chennai, and the Babuji Memorial Ashram in Calcutta. The spiritual atmosphere of each of these places is special beyond words. I also enjoyed spending time with many of my brothers and sisters who were visiting from various countries around the world.

Besides the physical and mental experiences of travelling with Master, I underwent many internal changes too, and of course this was the whole reason for going. I guess these could be called subtle or spiritual changes. By the time my trip came to an end (or should I say, by the time my next adventure was beginning), I knew that I was a changed man,





much more loving and confident, to say the least. Of course, it's difficult to convey feelings and intuitions, but I wish to share this: I'm absolutely certain that each abhyasi can benefit immensely by dedicating some time to go and be with Master. You can easily devote one week of your life to your inner Self. Be happy to have the opportunity! My goodness, may we all realize this opportunity, and let the flow carry us there!



*The flow of life always carries the human being to the best possible place.*

## My retreat at SPURS ranch by Preethi Anand

In 6 years of marriage this was the first time I had traveled on my own. Though I was sure Rev. Master would guide me I was a little worried about my connecting flight and the shuttle service to the retreat center. I boarded the flight and to my surprise, the persons sitting beside me mentioned I didn't even have to get off as this airplane was the same as for my connecting flight. I was so thankful that my Master had taken care of this worry of mine so lovingly.

Then came my next worry—the shuttle service. Unbelievably, the passenger sitting in front of me kept telling his friends out loud that he was traveling by Super Shuttle. I kept my fingers crossed, followed him, and he took me straight to the shuttle service counter where they put me on the correct shuttle. On that shuttle there was just me, no other passengers. That was where my retreat with my Self and me started.



I arrived at the retreat center and Sister Mary Lou took me into my dorm room and told me Brother Tom would be right along. I asked her, "Can I change?" I was referring to my clothes of course but she just smiled and said, "if you want to." And that's exactly what happened in the five days of my retreat. I realized I could change my self to my Self if I wanted to. Right from the start the retreat center felt like Home.

I did my cleaning and went to my very first meditation in the Sanctuary at the center. It was such an intoxicating feeling. Babuji's words kept coming to my mind, "One who dives deep gets the pearl." I more or less tried to keep up with the suggested schedule. First we were to wake up the Self at 5:30 am. This Self wake-up has become a natural part of my routine at home and I am so thankful for it.

It was suggested that we talk only when necessary and that we remain on the premises the entire time so that we could feel and utilize the unique and special atmosphere of the center. I have never in my entire life felt at ease not conversing with anyone. But here, it was so natural. I contemplated my sur-

## He, The Hookah And I - Set 2: The Hubble Bubble

After the release of the special publication *He, The Hookah And I* last year, Rev. Master has now recorded a second set of DVDs as a continuation in this series of extraordinary messages. *He, the Hookah & I (Set2) The Hubble Bubble*, was released during Master's 81st birth anniversary celebrations in Lucknow. North American's have the opportunity to order this 5 DVD set online by credit card. This item can be found at [www.srcm.org](http://www.srcm.org), under the **Subscriptions and Donations** link. Or, simply copy/paste the following into your browser:

[www.srcm.org/onlinebookstore/subscriptionForm.do?reset=true&country=US](http://www.srcm.org/onlinebookstore/subscriptionForm.do?reset=true&country=US)

*"So I urge all of our abhyasis to respond to the call of the wild, the wilderness that is awaiting us, where there is nothing—nothing to look for, nothing to cherish, nothing to aspire for, nothing to achieve, nothing to lose most of all."*

*From Master's Talk on June 19th, 2008 introducing the DVD set "He, the Hookah & I—Set 2: The Hubble Bubble"*



roundings while sitting on the porch. I was so excited to see a deer grazing and in the coming days I also encountered jackrabbits, fawns, wild turkeys and a variety of birds. There was an inexplicable contentment and happiness within me and my eyes kept welling with tears. Everything around me was so charged and filled with life. Added to this was the most important thing—"Silence." I just wanted to carry the silence and the wonder, the state of no worries and happiness, into the rest of my world.

It was also suggested that we not read any literature for the first three days. Since there was not much talking and reading as is normally done when we go to ashrams or gatherings, I realized I was meditating more and was experiencing something which I normally didn't, my Self. I was so fascinated by what I was feeling that I found myself not reading any literature during my entire stay.

I had to confront a lot of my negative thoughts and deeds to which I normally don't pay much attention. I learned to think of them as Master's and watch them disappear. When something good happened I also learned to treat that experience as Master's as well. Constant Remembrance was so spontaneous and natural in everything I did. Babuji's words, "Say what you mean and mean what you say," started to make sense to me.

The retreat was concluded by an interview with Brother Tom and Sister Mary Lou. It was such a nice feeling to open up with them and tell them what I felt during the retreat. I wish every abhyasi whose heart prompts them to visit the retreat center would do so. As Rev. Master says, "the taste of the pudding is in the eating." I reached the airport and this time I didn't worry about my flight or ride or anything else for that matter. I spent my time in flight meditating and found there is a special place within me, my Self, that I am all the time.

## Twenty-five Abhyasis Retreat at SPURS in the Second Quarter of 2008

by Tom Stoner, Resident Prefect/Caretaker, SPURS Retreat Ranch

In the second quarter of 2008 (April through June), 25 sisters and brothers found their way to SPURS Retreat Ranch in Austin, Texas, to imbibe its special atmosphere, to give greater time to their practice and to dive deep within their hearts to experience the Inner Master. Their stays lasted anywhere from 3-15 days. Sisters came during April and June and brothers in May, in accordance with the plan for men and women to attend in alternate months.



When abhyasis are removed from their usual worldly duties and immersed in stillness, they find their time here at SPURS to be a unique and often profound experience. Though Sahaj Marg practice calls for us to "fly with two wings"—that is, to evolve spiritually while remaining as householders in the world—our Master has recently provided retreat centers where abhyasis may withdraw from the world for 3-30 days to deepen their spiritual growth. He emphasizes that it must be a total retreat from worldly responsibilities:

*...if you come here [to retreat], whether it is for 3 or 30 days, and you are thinking of your family, of the marriage of your cousin, sister in Mamded, of your grandfather suffering from cancer in a Bombay hospital perhaps, it is no use. That is no retreat and you might as well remain where you are. A retreat means a total withdrawal from the world. The physical retreats from the world, and the spiritual body retreats into the heart.*

[Heartspeak 2006, 138-39]

Abhyasis are no doubt given help in pulling away from their worldly lives soon after arriving at SPURS. One sister told us at the close of her three-day retreat: "My practice is more effective here. Everywhere I sit, I close my eyes and meditate. I forgot my home. I didn't remember. I didn't remember even my family!" Another sister expressed a similar wonder at her "forgetfulness" of family concerns, saying: "I want to remember this state that I got here. By nature, I am agitated. Now I am not going to worry about things at home—family, etc."

The quietness at SPURS and abhyasis' willingness to remain alert to their condition seem to foster special insights for those retreating. Being away from family and her office job brought this awakening to one sister at the outset of her retreat:

"Out in the world I have things to do all the time and I try to remember Him when I'm doing nothing. But here there is 'doing nothing' all the time. Then it came to me that I'm not here to 'do nothing'—I'm here to remember Him!"

In order to cultivate this inner alertness and also to retain the condition one is given, it is suggested that abhyasis who are retreating avoid unnecessary talking. In this regard, we share the following





observation by an abhyasi who was one of three brothers retreating for several days: "It is interesting to observe the bonds that develop with other retreatants without the assistance of talking. In the world, we think we must entertain each other. Here, without talking, I felt that there was *real* brotherhood among us."

Many abhyasis feel the presence of Master at SPURS. A sister said: "I didn't truly appreciate how special it would be here—the feeling of being with Him, that here it is just He and I. Some have commented on the feeling of "Oneness" that is present. A brother noted "When I sat in my last meditation in the sanctuary, I was not there—'Oneness' was all around. This Oneness is readily present and experienced in the sanctuary." The "sanctuary" is a special small room for meditation that Master asked to create at SPURS. It is to be occupied by no more than two abhyasis at a time.

Leaving SPURS and going back into the world is usually not without a certain sadness for abhyasis. A sister expressed what many have felt: "I don't have any words to say what this has been like for me. It's beyond words—so far beyond what I could have hoped. I don't want to leave." But return to the world we must and Master gives the assuring words that, "When we come out, we come out like babies fresh born, innocence re-established and, most essential, *wonder* established." [*HeartSpeak* 2006, 139]

If the heart calls you to come to SPURS for a retreat, we hope that you will find that you can heed the call. If there is no "call" right now, there may be a time in the future when it may seem to be the right fit for you, and that will be very good!

For more information on SPURS, go to the website at: [www.sahajmarg.org/spurs](http://www.sahajmarg.org/spurs).

### Call for Newsletter Items

The goal of *Echoes of North America* is to foster love and connections between and among abhyasis and the Master in North America. As such, we need your contributions!

Please send **short (200-300 words) articles** and photographs on your gatherings, trips with Master, and visits to ashrams or retreat centers. While we cannot use everything that is sent to us, we will do our best possible to make sure the entire North America region is well-represented in the newsletter. Articles should contain basic facts (e.g., date, number of attendees, location) and focus on the human interest element (the interactions and experiences of participants).

To be included in the December newsletter, please send submissions by November 1, 2008 to:

[EchoesNA@sahajmarg.org](mailto:EchoesNA@sahajmarg.org)

Calendar submissions for December should include gatherings and similar events for the months of December, January and February *only* and should follow format as seen on page 10 of this newsletter.





## Calendar of Events

### September 2008

5-7	Vancouver Island, B.C.	Camp Pringle Regional Gathering	<a href="mailto:srcmcan@ica.net">srcmcan@ica.net</a>
7	Molena Ashram	Extended Sunday	<a href="mailto:tmvalentine@bellsouth.net">tmvalentine@bellsouth.net</a>
13-14	Sunderland Ashram	Regional Gathering	<a href="mailto:colleensackheim@yahoo.com">colleensackheim@yahoo.com</a>
13-14	Charlotte, NC	Regional Gathering	<a href="mailto:balaji@email.com">balaji@email.com</a>
14	Beavercreek Ashram	Extended Sunday	<a href="mailto:som.soni@zoomtown.com">som.soni@zoomtown.com</a>
21	Columbus, OH	Day Long Gathering	<a href="mailto:sahai.2@osu.edu">sahai.2@osu.edu</a>
21	Bowling Green, KY	Day Long Gathering	<a href="mailto:shrimaster@yahoo.com">shrimaster@yahoo.com</a>
21	Indianapolis, IN	United Nations International Day of Peace	<a href="mailto:bob@connorpainting.com">bob@connorpainting.com</a>
21	Toronto/centers across Canada	United Nations International Day of Peace	<a href="mailto:srcmcan@ica.net">srcmcan@ica.net</a>

### October 2008

3-5	Farmerville, LA	Lake D'Arbonne Regional Gathering	<a href="mailto:balaji@email.com">balaji@email.com</a>
5	Molena Ashram	Extended Sunday	<a href="mailto:tmvalentine@bellsouth.net">tmvalentine@bellsouth.net</a>
11-12	Toronto, Canada	Regional Gathering	<a href="mailto:srcmcan@ica.net">srcmcan@ica.net</a>
19	Columbus, OH	Day Long Gathering	<a href="mailto:sahai.2@osu.edu">sahai.2@osu.edu</a>
19	Bowling Green, KY	Day Long Gathering	<a href="mailto:shrimaster@yahoo.com">shrimaster@yahoo.com</a>
19	Sacramento, CA	Day Long Gathering	<a href="mailto:neelamghuliani@gmail.com">neelamghuliani@gmail.com</a>
21	Beavercreek Ashram	Extended Sunday	<a href="mailto:som.soni@zoomtown.com">som.soni@zoomtown.com</a>

### November 2008

2	Molena Ashram	Extended Sunday	<a href="mailto:tmvalentine@bellsouth.net">tmvalentine@bellsouth.net</a>
2	Indianapolis, IN	Extended Sunday	<a href="mailto:bob@connorpainting.com">bob@connorpainting.com</a>
8-9	Sunderland Ashram	Regional Gathering	<a href="mailto:colleensackheim@yahoo.com">colleensackheim@yahoo.com</a>
12	Los Angeles, CA /Orange County	Regional Gathering	<a href="mailto:prasad.singamsetty@sun.com">prasad.singamsetty@sun.com</a>
14-16	Portland, OR	Camp Adams Gathering	<a href="mailto:csessions@gmail.com">cssessions@gmail.com</a>
16	Sacramento, CA	Day Long Gathering	<a href="mailto:neelamghuliani@gmail.com">neelamghuliani@gmail.com</a>
19	Bowling Green, KY	Day Long Gathering	<a href="mailto:shrimaster@yahoo.com">shrimaster@yahoo.com</a>
23	Columbus, OH	Day Long Gathering	<a href="mailto:sahai.2@osu.edu">sahai.2@osu.edu</a>
28	Beavercreek Ashram	Extended Sunday	<a href="mailto:som.soni@zoomtown.com">som.soni@zoomtown.com</a>

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Master's news: Hema Whitlam and Lakshmi Chandramohan

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