



Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Pranams.

It was a joyful occasion for all of us to meet many abhyasis at our Echoes India Stall during Beloved Master's 83rd birthday celebrations at Tiruppur.

We are happy that more than 350 abhyasis subscribed for the Echoes India Newsletter in various languages.

We also had a meeting of the Echoes India coordinators and volunteers which helped us focus on issues related to coordination and distribution of the newsletter.

The present issue covers reports from across the country on the All India Essay Writing Event held on Aug 12th in commemoration of United Nations International Youth Day.

Zonal news such as the Prefect Meeting at Indore (M.P.), commencement of mission's activities at Chittanoor (A.P), inauguration of meditation hall at Ramgarh (Jharkhand), open house and abhyasi training programmes at various zones have been covered in this issue.

We hope all our readers enjoy reading and follow what Master has always said - 'Read and enjoy' and 'Do and feel'.

Warm Regards

Editorial Team

Chennai

Rev. Master came back to Chennai on the 3rd August after His birthday celebrations at Tiruppur. He was given a rousing reception at the airport by abhyasis who had thronged the place. He was forced to walk a long distance due to some reason and Master seemed to enjoy the long walk to his car. It is a lesson for every abhyasi on how he quickly adjusts to every challenge that comes his way, however small or large it might seem to be.

In the book, 'Down Memory Lane', Master has vividly written about his boyhood days in Jabalpur and his schooling in Christ Church School. He often recalls those days in private conversation. Therefore, it was a matter of great pleasure for him when the present Principal of his alma mater called on him on 4th August.

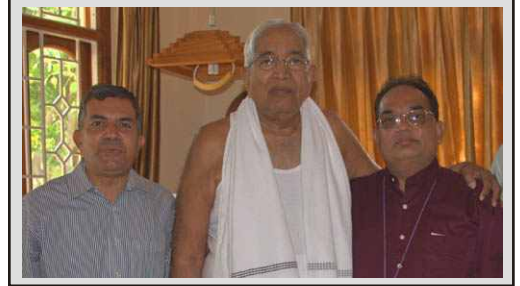
Mr. L. Matthew, Principal of Christ Church Boys' Senior Secondary School, Jabalpur was accompanied by another dignitary of the Church of North India, Bishop Dr. P. C. Singh of Jabalpur Diocese and Chairman of the CNI Schools. Master spent some time with them recalling his days in their school in Jabalpur. The visitors who went around the ashram remarked on the Divine atmosphere and expressed their happiness to be there.

5th August, was Raksha Bandhan and many abhyasis, including children, tied 'rakhis' to his hand and Master gladly accepted the same without disappointing anyone. Even on his

evening 'Golf Cart' round, there were many abhyasis who had lined up to offer sweets and tie the 'rakhi'.

The extended week-end of 13th to 16th August saw many abhyasis thronging Chennai. 13th was 'Krishna Janmashtami' and Master conducted a satsangh in the meditation hall much to the joy of abhyasis present. 15th August was a local holiday for India's independence day. Master conducted a satsangh in the meditation hall. Br. Shashank, an expert flutist, sprung a surprise by playing on his flute in Master's cottage, after satsangh. It was a superlative performance and Master enjoyed it very much.

On 16th August, Master arrived in the meditation hall by 7.10 am. and was waiting patiently for abhyasis to arrive. He had to wait till 7.25 am. before commencing the satsangh. An announcement was made to stress the following: "To be an abhyasi is a great gift; being in satsangh is a greater gift than that. To be in satsangh in Master's presence is a gift unmatched. It is but the





duty of the abhyasi to be in the meditation hall at least 30 minutes before Master (or the Prefect) comes to the hall. It is not etiquette to make Master or the prefect wait. We need to come ahead and prepare ourselves to receive the divine gift being bestowed on us in the satsangh". The effect of this announcement was felt in the next week when the hall was almost full even before Master came in.

Due to the threat of swine flu, Master has kept his travel plans on hold. Abhyasis from all over India have been visiting him and it has kept Master really busy. His administrative work, preparing prefects, receiving abhyasis who throng his cottage... the list doesn't end. His work keeps going on and the standard he sets for himself (and for others in the process) is exemplary. We need to learn a lot from his work ethics and the attention to detail for every small thing he does.

Some points from Master during informal sessions with abhyasis:

- 1) Master, upon going through an article in Times of India (Chennai Edition, dt. 23rd Aug, Sunday), wherein it was mentioned that Chennai HC has authorised seizure of the vehicle (car /2 wheeler) and the mobile phone (if the driver / rider is found using mobile phone while driving/riding), mentioned categorically that, "I forbid all from using mobile phones while they are driving their vehicle; if they have to take a call, they have to pull up their vehicle to the side of the road and then take the call".
- 2) Forgiving & forgetting: When an abhyasi asked Master, "When someone repents for a mistake do you forgive and forget that person?" Master answered, "I always forgive instantly; but forgetting is purely in the hands of the person. As long as the person carries that memory, forgetting is not possible for me".
- 3) On discipline: "All discipline comes from self-interest; all indiscipline comes from self-indulgence".

Announcements



Master's Request for Prayer Before Eating

Molena Ashram, August 2003

"We are still worried about our food and its purity. I'm not talking of the biological purity of stuff that we eat so that we don't get sick. But the so-called spiritual purity.

Babuji taught us a way of making everything palatable and good for us spiritually. He said, before you eat, meditate for a moment and offer it to your Master. I don't see anybody doing it, not one. ... So just try that. Even if it's just a sandwich, or a cookie as they say in America for a biscuit. Just close your eyes for a moment and think that the great Master is eating it. And you'll find it becomes like nectar. It's no more Indian food, it's no more American food, it's not even food. It is nectar, and nectar belongs to all. There is no Christian nectar and Hindu nectar and Muslim nectar and Buddhist nectar. Nectar is of the gods."

Scholarship Training Programme - India

The First Scholarship Training programme will be conducted for abhyasis in India at Kolkata Ashram from 26th September to 2nd October 2009. The programme will be residential and in English.

The purpose of this programme is to train abhyasis from new and growing centres and encourage them to become more and more active in the Mission, not only in doing their practice regularly but in serving the Mission in all ways, to the best of their ability.

To start this programme, ZICs of UP East, West Bengal, Orissa, North-Eastern States, Assam, Bihar & Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh will select candidates from their zones and send their applications for the program. A selection will be made and a batch of 30-35 abhyasis will be selected for the first programme.

Retreat Centre Schedules

Beginning October 1st, 2009 there will be a change in the usage of the SMSF Retreat Centres.

Sisters and brothers abhyasis will be allotted separately in alternate months. The following months – October 2009, December 2009 as well as February, April, June, August, October and December 2010 will be exclusively for sister abhyasis.

The months of November 2009 and January, March, May, July, September and November 2010 will be exclusively for brother abhyasis.

All those who have already received prior approvals are requested to reschedule their dates as per the new guidelines. A separate email will be sent to each of them individually. Questions regarding this may be sent to retreat@sahajmarg.org. It is to be noted that children are NOT permitted at any time during the retreats.



CREST, Bangalore - 3rd Anniversary



CREST, Bangalore observed its 3rd anniversary on 9th August with a get-together of volunteers, facilitators and faculty members from Bangalore. On 9th August 2006, Master had inaugurated CREST, Bangalore with the first two week seminar.

The get-together started with morning satsangh and concluded with lunch in the afternoon. It was a gathering of about 110 abhyasis. Br. R. Jagannathan, Director - CREST presented a report on the various activities taking place at CREST.

A panel discussion was organised on the topic 'Service in the Mission, its various aspects'. The panel experts were Br. Bhaskar Rao, Br. K. T. Manjunath and Br. B. G. Subramanya. Br. B. Sreenivasa was the moderator. Various points on the topic were brought out and the panel experts expressed their thoughts on them. The audience raised questions and sought clarifications. The discussion highlighted the importance of regular sadhana and total surrender to Master while doing service.

This was followed by a cultural program with a devotional song, a flute recital and a skit on 'The Real Value'.

Assistant Director, Br. Pramod Johri presented the motion of thanks. Everyone felt rejuvenated to continue working with zeal and love for Master.

Inauguration of Meditation Hall, Ramgarh, Jharkhand

Saturday, 8th August was a joyful moment for the abhyasis of Ramgarh Centre. By the grace of Master the meditation hall was inaugurated by Shri Rajnath Tiwari, who has been practicing Sahaj Marg since 1970; in the presence of ZiC Shri G. M. Bhatnagar and abhyasis from different centres, followed by satsangh.

In the Basic Abhyasi Training Program that started after breakfast, four main points namely meditation, cleaning, prayer and Constant Remembrance were discussed. The faculties for this session were Br. Paramanand Pandey and Sis. Alpana Tiwari. In the second session Sis. Anita Tiwari of Ranchi Centre conducted a quiz for the abhyasis followed by CD show entitled "What is Master?"

A preceptor's meeting of zone no. 17 was also held

simultaneously in another hall. Code of conduct of the preceptors in view of Prefect meeting held in Tirupur, monthly and zonal reports calendar, activities for the growth of centres, SMRTI's programmes, faculty development, VBSE and Echoes newsletters were some of the main points of discussion. Evening satsangh was followed by devotional songs by the children.

The second day's programme started with morning satsangh. An open house organized after satsangh was attended by about 30 people. 15 new abhyasis were inducted and five are expected to join soon. About two hundred abhyasis attended this two day programme.

Godavarikhani (A.P.) - Lessons from the Bhandara

Godavarikhani center had a full-day programme on Sunday August 9, 2009 which had a participation of nearly 125 abhyasis. The focus of the programme was to share the experiences during Master's birthday celebrations at Tiruppur and the lessons learnt.

Following are the common experiences and the lessons derived as expressed by the abhyasis:

- ★ An inner closeness with Master was felt most of the time at the Bhandara independent of whether one could meet Him personally.
- ★ Deeper craving in the heart, reduced attachment to worldly things is felt after returning from the celebrations.
- ★ A deeper sense of calmness is felt in individual and group meditations following the Bhandara.
- ★ Abhyasis were very appreciative of the way more work was accomplished by fewer volunteers at the venue showing the effectiveness of good team work. The same spirit of team work should be reflected locally.
- ★ Everyone expressed the need to inculcate a true sense of brotherhood where there is no distinction between local abhyasis and those from other centers as was apparent at Tiruppur.

All India Essay Writing Event

Master places a lot of importance on the children and youth of today as they are the building blocks who will shape the future. The essay writing event was organised at educational institutions and at centres of SRCM on 12th August 2009 to coincide with the UN International Youth Day. It was organised by Shri Ram Chandra Mission in collaboration with the United Nations Information Centre (India and Bhutan). The event is to encourage and motivate children and youth to start thinking about values like love, tolerance, etc. To achieve our goal of one humanity; to transcend the barrier of language, the essay writing event was organized in 13 regional languages. It was received with great enthusiasm at schools and colleges across the country.

In **Kerala** training was given to 140 volunteers from different centres at the Kerala Zonal Ashram at Aluva. Around 1000 schools and colleges from different parts of the state participated in the event. The posters of the event were displayed prominently and the simple but thought-provoking topics generated amusement and curiosity among the students, parents and teachers and many of them wanted to know more about the Mission. Some schools have requested for follow-up programs to inculcate values in children. The volunteers are now in the process of collecting the scripts and a regional level evaluation will be held at the Zonal Ashram at Aluva in September. Selected essays will then be sent for national level evaluation.

Ahmedabad had 203 institutions participating. Around 9700 essays are expected in Gujarati, Hindi and English. The centre is divided into 6 geographical areas and volunteer teams are working on tasks assigned for this event. This initiative has been taken for the first time in Ahmedabad Centre and the response received from premier institutes has been encouraging.

At **Vadodara** centre, about 56 institutes took part with about 5700 interested students participating with full enthusiasm and zeal. A team of 20 dedicated volunteers had planned well in advance to conduct this mammoth event. The essay was conducted in English, Hindi and Gujarati. The evaluation process for this essay has started in full swing.

In South **Karnataka**, about 50-60 volunteers across the state approached various schools and colleges to encourage the institutions to conduct this event and motivate their students to participate. There was a good response from the institutions (especially from the schools, many of whom were very happy to take part in this as they had also been looking for ways to inculcate values in their children). Currently, about 600 schools and colleges across South Karnataka are participating in this event. The evaluation process will start shortly to identify the best essays at the school, State and National level.

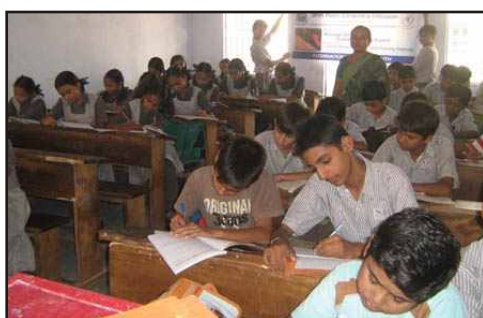
Growth of a Centre - Chittanoor, A.P.

Chittanoor is a small village in Mahboobnagar district in Andhra Pradesh. This center started in 1991 with two



abhyasis and now has over 35 abhyasis, most of them are daily wage farm workers. With the increasing number of abhyasis, the present meeting place of an abhyasi residence was no longer sufficient. To address this need, two abhyasis bought a small piece of land from the government and obtained permission from Master to build a hall (18 ft. x 30 ft.) to conduct mission activities.

One year later the hall was ready and Master permitted the first satsangh to be held on Sunday, August 16, 2009. It was indeed a special day for all the abhyasis of the Mahboobnagar district as it was the first building in the entire district that was to be exclusively used for mission activities. Over 75 abhyasis from all over the district attended the event and spent the entire day participating in various activities to deepen their understanding of Sahaj Marg. One speaker aptly expressed that the meditation hall in Chittanoor is a prime example of how it is possible to create such a place with minimal financial resources when supported by love, faith and sincere efforts of abhyasis.





Workshop - Mangalore



A workshop was conducted by Br. Mohandas at Mangalore Centre on Sunday 9th August, 2009 with around 35 abhyasis participating.

After satsangh, Master's DVD on 'Duty and Responsibility' was played. Afterwards, the importance of attending bhandaras and the need to preserve that condition by remembering it was emphasized.

Explaining that character formation is very important, he said the maxim, "Mould your living so as to arouse a feeling of love and piety in others", should be adopted. Our will power should be used for a change in our character towards the goal.

The role of Master in human evolution and regularity in practice were other topics discussed. The correct method of doing the bed time prayer was explained. A group discussion on steps to be taken for the growth of the Mission in the centre was done, to generate ideas.

Bhopal - Meeting of Prefects from M.P

The meeting was held after a gap of nine years in Bhopal on 15th August 2009. Many important matters pertaining to prefects's work were reviewed and the course set for the months to come.

- ❖ The spotlight was on the personal sadhana of prefects and their experience.
- ❖ The need for use of email for easy communication within the mission was stressed.
- ❖ Planning of SMRTI activities in the zone and zonal Activity Calendar were reviewed
- ❖ Implementation of Security Guidelines 2008 issued by headquarters in PPT form was explained to the participants.
- ❖ Br. Vikalp, ZiC reviewed the whole range of subjects such as - the role of CiC in managing various activities, completion of various ashram construction, corpus membership, open houses, training programs, visit of prefects to satellite centers, monthly meeting of prefects and so on.

- ❖ Br. Sachin Sinha's presentation on "The vision for the zone" was helpful in developing a macro view for the future.



Indore

A special program was held on 5th July, Sunday at Indore center on 'Human transformation'. The program had several speakers

talking on various topics related to the program. Br. Sinha spoke on 'A journey within' on how our sadhana helps us transform from the lower 'self' to the higher 'Self'. Br. Srivastava spoke on the importance of developing a feeling of 'love and brotherhood' to become part of His dream in transforming the world. Br. Avinash and Br. Rajesh spoke on 'Love for the Master' as the fastest way to spiritual progress. Love is to be diverted to its proper and natural object - 'God'. Br. Vikalp, ZiC, concluded the program with a lot of inspiring PowerPoint presentations, short movies and an innovative quiz. An interactive session on spiritual progress also helped the participants. The session was attended by around 400 abhyasis, which was more than the attendance seen in usual full day programs.

Abhyasi Training Programme at Nagpur, Maharashtra

On 28th June 2009, Nagpur centre organised a one day SMRTI Abhyasi Induction Training Program for the abhyasis of Vidarbha region. Sis. Anusuya Ramchandran was invited from Nasik Centre to conduct the programme.

Around 30 abhyasis, from Nagpur and seven nearby centres, attended this programme which was skillfully interlaced with interactive sessions to keep the interest of the abhyasis alive throughout the day.

In a question answer session, Sis. Anusuya cleared the confusion of the new abhyasis. The response was very good from the audience and they expressed their thoughts and experiences in the feedback forms. All the abhyasis appreciated the content of the program and expressed the need for conducting such programs on regular basis. Some also desired that the program should be conducted even for abhyasis with more that one year practice in our system.



N. Karnataka Open House Sessions

N. Karnataka has organised several open house sessions in the last couple of months. These sessions were held at Byadagi, Haveri, Ranibennur, Gadag and Gulbarga. Br. Kashampurkar, Br. Gajendra and Sis. Sujatha spoke on various topics relating to Sahaj Marg; the Masters, the mission and the method. The response to these sessions was good and many have expressed their keenness to join the system.



On 5th July at Mother Teresa D.Ed College at Gulbarga, Br. Gautam Allipur and Br. Mahesh Deshpande conducted the programme. About 100 students were present. All of them listened attentively and later came up with plenty of questions which were clarified by the speakers.



In **Byadagi** in Haveri district, around 20km from Ranibennur an open house was organised at the MDH school premises for about 25-30 aspirants, mostly teachers. The Headmistress spoke with insight on pursuing such paths as Sahaj Marg to bring back values into the society. She insisted that after the theoretical introduction, it was imperative for those who attended, to start the real practice.



An open house was organised by Sis.Sujatha Keshava on 27th June at the Samudaya bhavan in **Haveri** which is around 75 Kms from Hubli. About 25-30 participants attended the function. It was a modest gathering with mainly women and a few men. A young abhyasi of Davangere centre named Vinayak, who was also

instrumental in mobilising his local acquaintances to the programme, shared his experience in Sahaj Marg and presented fluently Master's views about change. The programme was effectively coordinated by Br. Mayachar, who is an information Officer at Haveri.

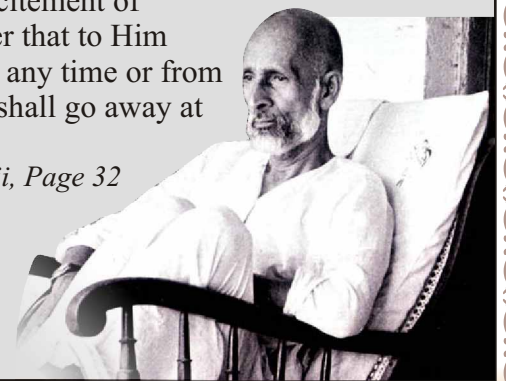


Ranibennur is a major place in Haveri district and is about 40 Kms away from Haveri. An open house was organised in collaboration with the local wing of the JCI (Junior Chamber International), an organisation comprising mainly of youth and young entrepreneurs. Around 35 mostly JCI members, attended the programme. The topic was Meditation -The Sahaj Marg way. The president of the JCI, a doctor herself gave concluding remarks accepting the central idea of meditation and the need for human transformation today.

A Home Gathering was organised at Sis. Harikumari Chawda's residence on 6th July at **Gulbarga**. The program was attended by 19 aspirants, mostly ladies from the Gujarati Community. Introduction to Sahaj Marg was given by Sis. Harikumari and Sis. Laxmi Chauhan spoke on why spirituality, why Sahaj Marg, Importance of Living Guru, etc. Sis. Ramola Chawda talked about cleaning. It was based in a very family environment. All the talks were delivered in Gujarati as most of the audience could understand Gujarati language.

"If you find any difficulty or entanglement, or even an unbearable excitement of emotion, just refer that to Him through prayer at any time or from any place, and it shall go away at once."

Thus Speaks Babuji, Page 32



VBSE Initiative - Solapur, Maharashtra



Solapur Centre started a new initiative of teaching Value Based Spiritual Education to children of class 1 to 7 as per the syllabus given by SMRTI. This will be covered over a period of one year with sessions once a month on a Sunday.

On 12th July 2009, children residing in Sindhu Vihar area were taken to the meditation hall. Sis. Shubhada and Sis. Chhaya who are teachers by profession, taught the 59 children through video stories, the importance of hard work, unity, brotherhood, friendship and sharing. Sis. Snehal assisted them in the programme. The children were asked to explain the moral of the stories shown to them and to everybody's surprise they showed that given the opportunity, they can interpret the hidden meaning in the stories more effectively than the elders.

The importance and need of daily physical exercise was also stressed to which the students responded positively. They enrolled in the physical training program which would be conducted by the youth forum volunteers next month.

The enthusiasm of children in this session motivated the volunteers to plan and organize such sessions on an ongoing basis for grooming the future generation. It is heartening to note that although all the children were from non-abhyasi families they had learnt the Mission prayer in English.

Residential Camp - Zonal Ashram, Thumkunta, Hyderabad

A residential programme was organized from Friday 7th August to Sunday 9th August 2009 for abhyasis who have completed five years of practice.

The objectives of the camp were to facilitate the abhyasis to introspect and review the Sahaj Marg way of life in the modern times of intense competition. To reinforce the significance of doing sadhana regularly and as prescribed and to discuss openly in small groups and work out personal action plans to do sadhana with interest, dedication and commitment.

Eighteen young abhyasis who were having trouble at being

regular with their practice for various reasons such as high pressure life style, night shifts, attitude problems, lack of will power or lethargy, participated in the program.

All lived together in the ashram sharing their inner feelings and problems in a natural setting, following Sahaj Marg way of life. The openness helped draw solutions to their problems from amongst themselves. Individual sittings were conducted in a serene atmosphere of peace. In a one-to-one setting, there was ample time and opportunity to discuss questions related to the practice.

In their feedback all the participants expressed immense benefit from the individual sittings and interactions with brother and sister abhyasis. Each one made a commitment to improve upon their individual sadhana. The participants enacted a meaningful skit to lighten the environment charged so far with their own deliberations on the human failings related to sadhana. The camp concluded at 6 p.m. on Sunday with concluding remarks and observations both by the participants and organizers.

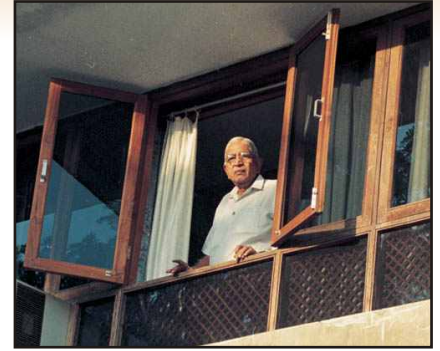
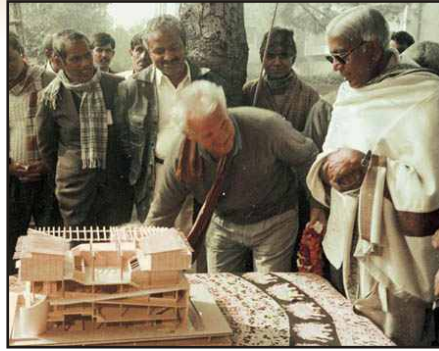
Interactive Workshop at Osmania Medical College

Members of the VBSE team from the Hyderabad center conducted a three hour Interactive Workshop for medical students on 4th August, 2009 at Osmania Medical College campus. The audience comprised of 200 new students to the Medical College. The first speaker discussed "Life in Perspective", with small everyday examples. The second speaker brought out the need to set personal goals and methods to adopt.. He also discussed the roles of attitude, courage and regulation of mind. The program ended with a short video show.

The interaction from the students was a little subdued at the beginning (as this was only their second day in the medical college!) but picked up steadily. While there was an overall and general response of gratitude and joy for having been a part of this program there were many other responses too:

- "This program has changed my life"
- "...has come at a very critical period"
- "... has made me realize what I am, what my role in society is"
- "...has brought serenity into my life"
- "...realized that my soul is the most important thing"

There were many requests to have similar programs at regular intervals. The most touching aspect of the feedback were the numerous requests that such programs be held in all other schools and colleges, especially in villages and small towns and the sense of pain that they felt for the others.



DELHI ASHRAM at R.K. PURAM

Delhi centre was established in 1958 and for a long time, the national capital did not have a fixed place for SRCM activities. On 6th November 1986, SRCM received from Delhi Administration the possession of the 900 square yard plot in Sector 4 of R.K. Puram in South Delhi. This was on the recommendation of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Government of India which officially recognised SRCM as an educational institution providing training in Yoga. On 19th November 1986, Master inspected the site and planted a sapling along with his wife, Sis. Sulochana (Mami).

The foundation stone of the ashram was laid by Master on 3rd February, Basant Panchami day in 1987. On this occasion he said, "Love lies not in the form, but in the content, very much like when you buy something from a store, however nicely it may be gift-wrapped, it is what it is inside the package that matters, not the outside. The outside is after all, at least in modern society, torn off and thrown into the garbage bin. It is the inside that we cherish. That is what the Master wants - the inside of us."

The ashram was designed by Br. Otto Steidle, an architect from Germany. Although the plans were ready in 1987, it took a long time to get the approval and hence satsangh used to take place under a shamiana on the plot until construction started in October 1989. Master who used to stay with Br. M.M. Kapoor in Safdarjung Enclave would often walk to the venue cutting across the deer park. He would show the overseas abhyasis the peacocks roaming freely there. On one such occasion, a pretty one with all its plumage open was facing the opposite direction and Master wanting to show its colourful front to the abhyasis whispered, "Turn" and the peacock obeyed instantly!

Since the site was rather small, the building is constructed in four levels with the basement used for accommodation for visiting abhyasis. The first satsangh was conducted by Master in this basement on 13th October 1991. The ground floor and gallery are used for seating during meditation. On the second floor, there is a two room apartment where Master stayed for the first time on 2nd December 1992.

When the rods had been laid for concreting of the roof of the first floor, Master went up to inspect it. A protruding piece of binding wire cut into his finger and it was bleeding slightly. He made light of it saying, "It is good that I sustained a minor injury, otherwise someone working here would have sustained a serious injury."

The strength of the satsangh grew from 40 to 300 with the construction of the ashram, which was completed in 1992. The local abhyasis donated generously and also provided expertise in construction. The ashram has been serving as a stop-over for Master for his North India (as well as overseas) tours. It

became the hub of activity, during Master's birthday celebration in 1998 which was organised at the Indraprastha stadium. We now have another zonal ashram in Palam Farms, Gurgaon, in the adjoining state of Haryana which was registered on 15th June, 2001.

The R.K. Puram ashram is located approximately 15 km equidistant from New Delhi railway station, and Palam airport. Due to its location, the ashram serves as convenient transit point for abhyasis travelling to and from Satkhol ashram.



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