

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

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

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

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

Featured in this issue

CREST: We feature ISTP program 2009-10 and Sadhana Programs at CREST, Bangalore

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

SPURS: We include a report regarding SPURS retreat ranch in the year 2009.

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



(above) Rev. Master with ISTP delegates at Manapakkam

International Scholarship Training Program 2009-10

The 8th batch of the International Scholarship Training Programme (ISTP) has just come to an end. It has been attended by 26 abhyasis from four continents: Europe (5), ex-CIS (5), Far East (3), Israel (1), Middle East (2), South America (9) and Africa (1).

The training programme aims at deepening the practice and understanding of Sahaj Marg in an atmosphere conducive to spiritual development and, above all, to give the participants the opportunity to meet Rev. Master. Speeches are delivered on Sahaj practice, attitude and character formation, organisation of the Mission and the Foundation. Practical exercises are proposed for the organisation of open houses. With this intense training programme, the participants are able to become "ambassadors" of the Mission and contribute to spreading Sahaj Marg in their centres.

The programme started at CREST Kharagpur, West Bengal, on the 13th of December. Brother Ajay Bhattar and his

family joined the group on the 25th of December. He delivered a speech on "Change" and conducted a much appreciated Questions & Answers session.

On the 29th of December, the group arrived at Babuji Memorial Ashram, Manapakkam. They had a first meeting with Rev. Master on the 31st December and another one on 8th January. These were blessed and happy moments for all. The programme came to a conclusion on Sunday the 10th of January. After the morning, satsangh Rev. Master handed over to each scholar a certificate of recognition and blessed them all. Concluding the ceremony, the scholars sang a moving song titled "The One" which seemed to be much appreciated by all abhyasis gathered in the Meditation Hall.

Next is an insight of this very special time spent under the loving care of our Master.

Source: Br. Alberto Lafranchi

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

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

School for the Heart

“Long ago, in my school days, I read a story that took place in the future. It was about life in a boarding school in the countryside, far away from the agitation of the cities. The children living there grew happily, sharing their lives with their peers, teachers and nature. The story gave me a feeling of freedom, peace and simplicity.

The book had a profound impact on me. An underlying concern of mine has been the best way to let the heart of human beings unfold and grow as they need. In other words, to find a true “School for the Heart” has been my utopian dream.

I have always felt that the environment in which I grew up was so jam packed

dream was here, an accomplished reality.

CREST in Kharagpur is a very beautiful campus in the countryside where the focus is on deepening the practice of Sahaj Marg, thereby developing and strengthening the connection with one’s heart. The training programme consists of talks on different aspects of spirituality in the light of Sahaj Marg. There is time for reading, small group discussions and reflection. The daily hour of “Golden Silence” allows appreciation of the silence of inner and outer surroundings. There is also a chance to give a small talk to let our heart speak. All this takes place in an atmosphere of peace, brotherhood and love.



(above) A session of ISTP 2009-10 at CREST, Kharagpur.

and noisy that I was unable to listen to my heart and express it openly. The pull to become what “they” wanted me to become, had left very little space for my heart to take part in the process.

Many years later, I found myself at CREST in Kharagpur, India on the very first day of the International Scholarship Training Programme. As the programme advanced, suddenly my heart recognized that this could be a place very much like the one I had pictured when reading the story about the boarding school so many years ago. Maybe my hidden hope of that utopian

The magic of this place is that it respects the divinity of the heart and its need to unfold by itself, by its own pull, using the simplest and most essential means: vacuum and Love. It allows each individual to listen to his/her inner truth. During this experience, my heart found what it had been craving for.

With the most sincere gratitude to my Beloved Master who has let me be a disciple of this school of wonder, the “School for the Heart”.

Source: Br. Roger Sans Guimerà, Spanish coordinator for ISTP 2009 - 2010.



(above) Images from International Scholars Training Programme 2009-10 that took place at CREST, Kharagpur.

Sadhana Programs at CREST Bangalore



(above) Sadhana programme participants with Rev. Master at CREST, Bangalore

MASTER'S REQUEST FOR PRAYER BEFORE EATING

Molena Ashram, August 2003

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

Babuji taught us a way of making everything palatable and good for us spiritually.

He said, before you eat, meditate for a moment and offer it to your Master.

I don't see anybody doing it, not one. ...

So just try that. Even if it's just a sandwich, or a cookie as they say in America for a biscuit.

Just close your eyes for a moment and think that the great Master is eating it.

And you'll find it becomes like nectar. It's no more Indian food, it's no more American food, it's not even food. It is nectar, and nectar belongs to all. There is no Christian nectar and Hindu nectar and Muslim nectar and Buddhist nectar. Nectar is of the gods.

So let us try these things in our assemblies.

Let us not try artificially to make everybody our brothers and sisters. Let us feel it in our hearts.

Sadhana Program for Youth, No. 6

There were about 25 delegates in the Sadhana Program for Youth which concluded on 22nd November.

The highlight of the program was a session on "Natural Resource Management [Water] by Br. A Perumal. In the session importance of conserving water was brought out by the speaker. The delegates took the essence of the message and wanted the session to carry on even after the bell had rung. The interaction continued during the tea time; the delegates sat on the floor around the speaker and heard him narrate his experiences on the topic.

Br. Anal Pal Tomar [Dehradun] and Sr. Kamal Viridi [Pune] participated in the program as observers.

Towards the end of the program the youth delegates looked more cheerful, ready to share and accept.

Sadhana Program for Abhyasis - 45

The program concluded on 4th December with Rev. Master presiding over the Valedictory function. He distributed certificates to the delegates. Br. R Jagannathan, Director, CREST presented Him a copy of the CD containing the presentations of all classroom sessions.

Source: Br. Parthasarathy Patel

Valedictory Address by Rev. Master to Sadhana programme participants on 4th December 2009 at CREST, Bangalore

..Members of a cricket team who are waiting to be called and generally are not. But they have to suffer the heat and they are on tenterhooks, lot of tension, in case the other wicket should fall and they have to go, or somebody should be injured. So in a very real sense one of my roles is to be able to fill a gap. But I am not filling a gap here, I am only sort of, you know explaining my role as a, what should I say, person who comes here often to attend such programs, seminars which we conduct. I think we have had three seminars so far? International seminars - three and though it would be my heart's desire to stay permanently in a place like this; because for me it is very congenial it is something very beautiful and it is something where you know, I feel part of it. But in my duties I can't stay in one place and although I am not a sanyasi who is bound to stay no more than three nights in one place, my life is like that, I cannot stay in one place, ever, to my heart's content. So I am here, by plan, as far as I am concerned. By coincidence as far as you are all concerned and I hope our Director is happy with my presence here. Because he is the kingpin you know of this place. He conducts things here, he is in-charge, he is

responsible and I am happy to say we have a very erudite, well read person who has also achieved the top positions in public life. You know he was a DGP, the highest police post in a state and as a police officer he is a disciplinarian, which is good. One of the first points of discipline is that we need theory and we need practice. The mission is full of abhyasis who lack in both. You understand what I am saying no? Who are very shall we say superficial in their sadhana, practically. It is just a sort of cursory respect they pay to the four or five *angas* of the *sadhana paddhati* that we have here in Sahaj Marg. Perfunctory sittings in the morning, just to satisfy your own conscience that yes today's meditation is over. How long did you meditate? I have heard answers in Babuji's time, sitting next to him, "*Yun samajhiye ki das pandrah minute.*" Actually how long did you meditate? One hour? No, five minutes. And then what about cleaning? No, Master by the time we come home after the day's work we are so tired and you know often we don't even remember we have to do the cleaning. So Babuji once said in Hindi that it is astonishing they remember their dinner but not their cleaning. "*Khana nahin bhoolte, but jo saphai ki kriya hai apni, voh bhool jathe hain.*"

So we found over the years, that as

abhyasis grow in the mission, in age; year by year we are aging, they forget little by little and eventually after ten years if you ask one abhyasi what is cleaning, "*Arre saab, everybody knows what is cleaning.*" "No, but you tell me." "No. we sit silently with our eyes closed and Babuji Maharaj does the rest". Okay. "What do you do in meditation?" Another, you know speaker, "Sir, I am not able to bathe every morning because I have shift work from seven o'clock." So? "I must confess I am not very regular in meditation." Why? Because Babuji says pay attention to purity of body and mind. Since I cannot bathe, I feel guilty about meditating. Alright on the days you bathe what do you do? I sit, I close my eyes and I pray to Master. After ten years. After fifteen years you ask the same question, they say, "No, no sir, you asked the same question fifteen years ago. Why? Why do you ask me the same question again and again?" I tell them in Uttar Pradesh, you have parrots in cages and they say Ram Ram, Ram Ram without understanding the meaning of what they are saying.

So we have become like that. We do and we think that He is doing it and we are happy because when Babuji does it, it must be supreme, it must be most effective and I must be developing. Alright, let me take a chance and ask his



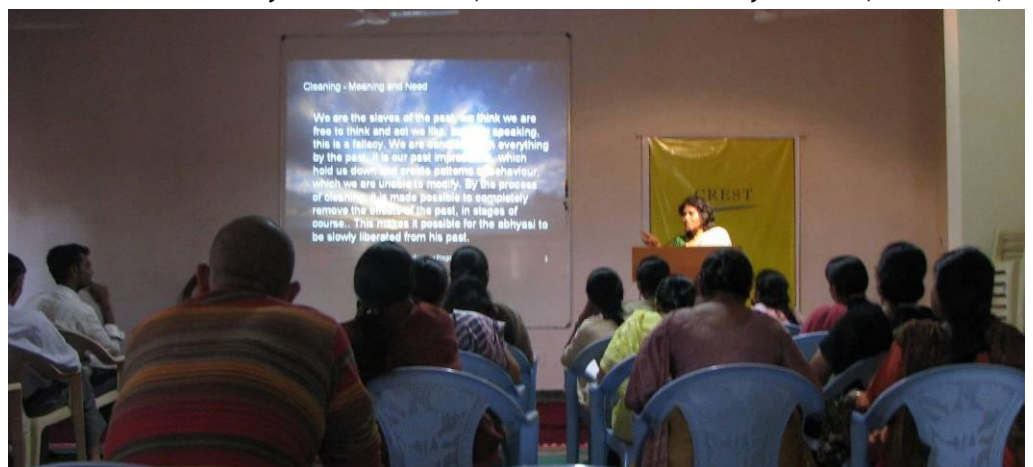
(right) Rev. Master at CREST, Bangalore

wife. "Has he changed at all?" and she says, "Saab, akele me baat karenge." Let us speak in private. So the husband says "aise kaunsi baat he tum bolne wale ho jo mein nahin sun sakta?" "Nahin nahin, humne aise nahin kaha, keval maine kahaa kee mein dus minute unke saath baithe." You follow? And then you ask her, "Accha behan, tell me what, how is he now? Has he changed?" "Haan, in his work he has changed. He was clerk, he became superintendent then he became manager now he is big officer." I am not talking about that. About change as a human being. "You know, I don't want to say much but you know, same anger, same you know bad manners with the wife, teasing the children, demanding everything from children but demanding nothing from himself."

I can assure you any woman I ask, every woman I have asked, will say that. If you ask a man have you found any changes in your wife - "What wife? After all a woman, she cooks well, washes the clothes." What about sadhana? "Oh, sadhana? You see, we have to praise the Indian Hindu woman. Arre kambakht, they are so busy with their family, you know. They have to wake up, do the cooking, look after the children, bathe them, send them to school. Sometimes they don't even give me my breakfast because they are so busy." Long answer because they have no real answer. Has she changed? "She was always loveable sir. She was always very loveable. Sometimes of course you know women,

they throw tantrums but by and large I am happy." You see, two sides.

Now, in these courses, what our Director has called sadhana, we should be able to understand the need for sadhana. What is the need for sadhana? I want to tell you a very nice story, a very meaningful though humorous about a young promising abhyasi a Guru had, very promising. And the Guru said if I send this fellow out into the desert for six months, he will shine. He will become, you know top class material. So he called this boy. He said, you know I find there is great promise in you, I think a little solitary meditation will be good for you. I want you to go to the desert for six months or maybe a little more. Are you willing? He said, "Guruji whatever you say. When should I go?" He said, "As soon as you are ready. Take a tent, take a little light bedding, don't get used to comfort in the desert and take a hookah. I permit you to smoke because it will be very cold in the desert." The boy was very happy. Guruji is permitting a hookah and he said, "Guruji" and touched his feet and walked out. And as he was nearing the gate, Guruji said, "Don't forget sadhana". Six months later Guruji went to the desert to see how this boy is faring. The boy is resplendent, well fed, shining cheeks, sitting in the sun, early morning. As he approached, he vacated the chair, gave it to the Guru. Guruji said, "All night I have travelled, can I have a chillum? Would you mind if I smoke?" So the boy shouted, "Sadhana,



(right) Sadhana Programme at CREST, Bangalore

chillum bhar lao". Guruji watched, very pretty girl with the hookah. "Yeh kaun hai?" "Guruji, aap hi ne kaha, don't forget sadhana."

So this sort of attentiveness to Guruji's injunctions, orders; we are able to do because our mind has the duality - what I like, what I have to like. We generally prefer what we like to what we must like and do. These courses must enable you to understand that our desires, our likes and dislikes or prejudices are our enemies of spirituality. *Sadhana paddhati* says, "Wake up at dawn". "No, no sir how is it possible? No, no I generally get up at 5:30." The *generally* means never. So the first rule you are not able to follow of the ten maxims. Eat what is put before you with love. "What is this? No salt?" You see. Do we see changes at least in our day to day behaviour? Are you able to control your temper and eventually give it up? Give it up in favour of your own calmness. My peace depends on myself and not on any one of you. If I am going to get upset every time I see you barking or you shouting or you slouching, I am not going to be peaceful. Have I learnt to keep my regulator here (pointing to the heart) spinning properly - gyroscope. Then I am independent of the world,

the universe. Anything can happen - I am what I am because I am able to make myself like that, because I have followed the ten maxims and because I have practiced the sadhana as stipulated.

"I like to (do sadhana), you know sir, I am a Basaveshwara bhakta. I used to be. Now after Sahaj Marg not so much. When I meditate Basaveshwara comes, what shall I do?" He doesn't come, you bring him. Same story for other Lingayats, this thing, that thing, you know. Have we cut our association with these things, respectfully. As Babuji told me all these people in the past have brought you to where you are but it is now time to bid them goodbye respectfully, as Swami Vivekananda says. All that we have done have brought us here therefore we are grateful to them whether it is father, mother and family or school or our religious traditions and ideologies and our own desires. Now we say goodbye to everything and get into this boat that is called Sahaj Marg.

So you see theory-practice, theory-practice this goes step by step like climbing a ladder and I am happy that at CREST we have this facility to apply the



(right) Sadhana delegates near 'Master's tree' at LalBagh, Bangalore

(right) Sadhana delegates in the CREST Library, Bangalore



possibility of instruction, of education, of training to people who are willing to accept it. But acceptance is not enough. Are they willing to abide by what is taught here? You know one of our famous statements - *satyam vada*. Tell the truth. *Dharmam chara* They are written in Ashoka pillars and all these things you see. Our beliefs and our people for centuries we are wonderful at telling others what to do. And we say it is for others. *Nahi saab*, I have put it on the walls. All over India defaced with placards, notices defaced and Supreme Court sometimes says stop. Are we willing to accept that this is for me?

Every one of you, are you going to change or are you like the proverbial person who went to the well and came back unclean because the well into which he went had no water? But he followed a ritual - going every morning and coming out. That is what rituals are. Bathing in wells, bathing in tanks, there is no water but shastra says so I have done.

Unless you are sincere and obliged to yourself to benefit from your exposure here and improve your practice which again is only for your benefit, forget all this nonsense about obedience to the Guru, obedience to this. We are not

obedient; we will not be obedient unless we obey ourselves. My inner self says get up at 4:30. *Nahin, nahin yaar*, what is this. Obedience to yourself is the most difficult thing. Almost impossible. At least you have to cultivate which you have to you know enlarge until the inner voice is the voice that speaks, the inner person who is inside you as your *antaryamin* is the one who gives you advice and you follow it, until you become an instrument of that which is inside you.

So I pray that all of you will follow these things, think over them, convince yourself that yes this is for my benefit and my benefit alone. The devil take the rest. No, no sir I am praying for all those who attended with me. Not necessary. If you cannot help yourself what are you going to do for another person? Zero. Don't pride yourself. Don't become arrogant and say I am praying for the whole world. God is praying for the whole world. Who are you to pray for the whole world? Pray for yourself, apply the principles to yourself. Change yourself and the day will come, Babuji will say this man is fit. Send him up.

Blessings to all of you.

Applying for Retreats

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

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

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

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

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



(above) A few abhyasis who stayed at Pune Retreat Centre



(above) Peepal tree planted by Rev Master on 5 May 2005

Activities of Pune Retreat Centre

(above) Preceptors who attended the training programme at Pune Retreat Centre

During the quarter ending 31st December 2009, Pune Retreat Centre was proud to host 30 abhyasis. The feedback from them has been extremely positive and every abhyasi claims to have benefitted spiritually and has returned satisfied from their stay. They experienced our Master's grace from prevailing spiritually charged environment and the ambience conducive for their spiritual growth.

The Retreat Centre Management looks forward to greater participation.

In addition to the above, the Retreat Centre was the venue for the Preceptors training programme for Maharashtra and Goa from 13th to 15th November 09.

The Peepal sapling planted by Rev Master on 5th May 2005, at the time of laying the Foundation of the Retreat Centre, has taken firm roots and has grown in stature. Rev Master has named it "KSHEMAM".

In Srimadbhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna told his disciple, friend and relative Arjuna, "*Yoga Kshemam Bahamyahem*," (that is, your welfare is my duty). "*Ananyas chintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate, tesham nityabhiyuktanam yoga-kshemam vahamy aham*" (9.22): "If you resort to Me, it shall be My duty to take care of you. I shall provide you with all your requirements, and I shall also see that what you have been provided with is secure." A compassionate statement says that - not only you will be given what you want, but that which is given will be protected, safeguarded.

Abhyasis who wish to come for Retreat should apply as given in the web site. The Manager is Br. Arjun Patil, who can be contacted by email to retreat.pune@sahajmarg.org; cell at +91-9325896699; land line at +91-20 20209003.

Source: Br. (Gen) Dovedy

SPURS IN 2009: A Report

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

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

As many of us know, our Master has established retreat centers for abhyasis to pull away from the world for a brief period in order to deepen their practice and commitment to reaching the Goal. Many brothers and sisters are increasingly taking advantage of this opportunity Master has given. At the SPURS Ranch Retreat Center in Austin, Texas the numbers of abhyasi guests increased considerably in 2009. The attendance at SPURS jumped by better than 62% over that of 2008 with 84 sisters and 79 brothers coming to the center. From North America there were abhyasis representing 27 of US States and 1 Canadian province. In addition, there were several abhyasis from India. From USA, Texas, California, and Ohio had the highest number of abhyasis at SPURS in 2009.



Abhyasis may request to stay at SPURS for a minimum of three days and up to a maximum of thirty. Three-day retreats were the most favoured length of stay for seventy-one abhyasis who came in 2009. Longer retreats lasting from four through fifteen days were taken by over ninety sisters and brothers. Whatever the number of days chosen for the retreat, it seems that the length of stay is exactly right for the work that needs to be accomplished. No matter what their length of stay, the real challenge expressed again and again by those abhyasis heading home after a retreat is, "How do I take back and nourish what I've been given here?"

A number of abhyasis have returned several times after their first time at SPURS to retreat again. In 2009, for

example, there were two abhyasis who had come for a sixth retreat, one for a fourth time and others for a second and third retreat. All have indicated, not surprisingly, that each retreat was a different experience.

All who have come have been moved by the quietness of the ranch as well as its physical beauty. Interspersed between times of meditation and contemplation, their walks in the ranch's twenty-eight acres of nature preserve have helped to nurture their quietened condition. Away from the rush of daily responsibilities at home and work, the simple awareness of the environment becomes keener. Time permits one to observe with care the creatures that frequent the ranch—turkeys, deer, song birds and of course the nine resident peafowl whose antics often suggest a comparison with the behaviour of us humans. The surroundings here speak to abhyasis as they become more aware of their internal Selves and its relation to the outer. And many observe that none of this is an accident—that the Master has a plan which in some quiet way teaches and inspires those who spend a few days in this protected and holy space.

Before closing, we should mention the loving work provided by brothers and sisters from Austin and other centers in Texas who come to SPURS regularly to help maintain the ranch house and its grounds. We simply could not function in the way we do without this caring help. Their serving our Master in this way is appreciated more than we can put into words.

Source: Tom Stoner, Resident Prefect
SPURS Ranch Retreat Center



Medical Centre News

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

Free Medical Centre - Manapakkam

FMC has served a total of 11,357 patients for the quarter October to December 09. 137 patients were seen outside regular outpatient hours during this quarter. Spirometry camps were conducted every month (courtesy Lupin Laboratories) and 26 patients benefited. Following are the details of the medical activities conducted by Free Medical Centre, Manapakkam in this period.

Department	Patients	Panel of Doctors
General medicine	9287	Dr. U. Ravindran, Dr. R. Sulochana Dr. K. Sudheshna, Dr. E. Ellanchelian Dr. G. Jaya Prashanthi

Specialty Clinics

Department	Patients	Panel of Doctors
Cardiology	35	Dr V. Vanaja
Dentistry	193	Dr. Swati N. Bhagat Dr. Jagadish Kumar
Dermatology	333	Dr. M. Jayaraman
Gastro-enterology	33	Dr. Manimaran
Gynaecology	65	Dr. Jayanthi Mohan
Homeopathy	980	Dr. S. Balaji Jayasanker Dr. S. K. Ram Subramaniam Dr. Sudha Jagadish Dr. R.Asha Dr. N. Padma Suganya
Ophthalmology	132	Dr. Harshitha Bakshi
Orthopaedics	7	Dr. S. Sivaiah
Paediatrics	192	Dr. B.I. Sasirekha
Physiotherapy	6	Br. N. Siva Subramaniyan
Psychiatry	17	Dr. A.P. Mythili
Pulmonology	61	Dr. G. Raja Amarnath
Urology	14	Dr. Sanjay Sharma
General Surgery	2	Dr. E. Suja
Total	2070	

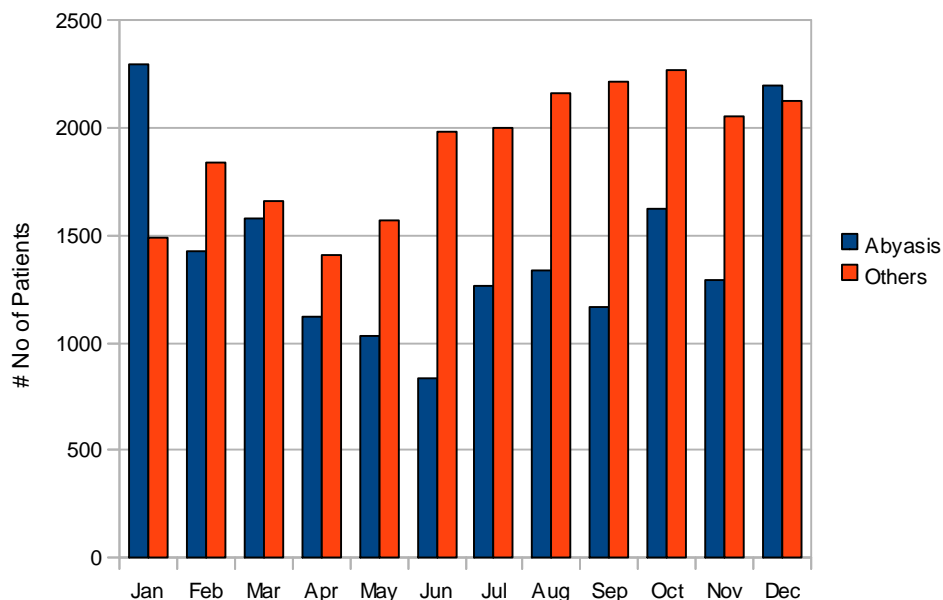
Staff	Staff	Volunteers
Dr. G.Jaya Prasanthi (Doctor) S. Meenakshi (Pharmacist) M. Kamakshi (House-keeping) P. Gomathi (Receptionist)	A. Radhamani, R. Chitra, B. Krupa Shree, K. Sathya, S. Soundarya, R. Karthika (Nurses)	V. Rajapurna M. Jayanthi, Radhakrishnan P. Senthilkumar

Sahaj Marg Physicians Group (SMPG)

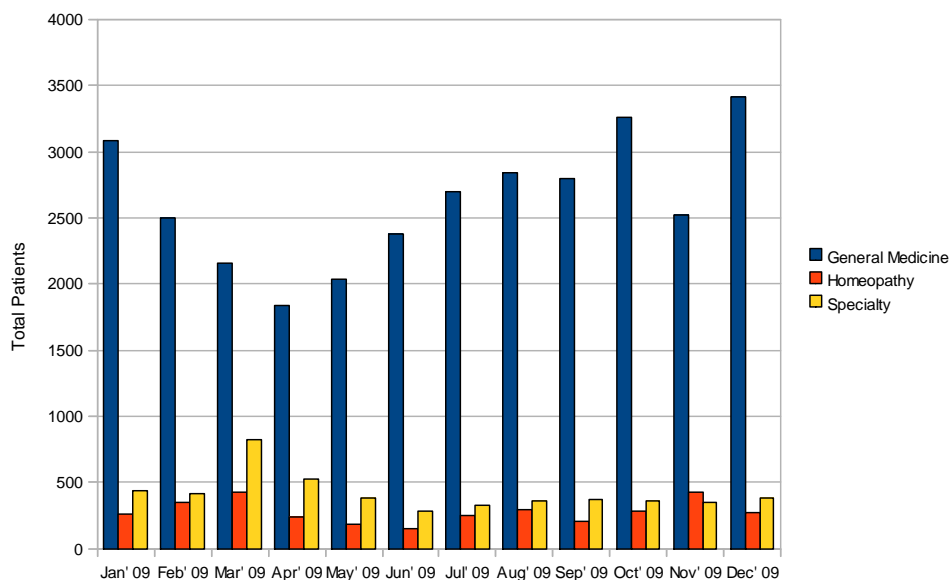
SMPG is an initiative involving physicians, medical students, residents, nurses and others in the medical community to offer medical services to the needy through SMSF Medical Centers. As part of this initiative, a database of names of the physicians from all branches of medicine has been completed.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

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

Trend of Abyasis and Non-Abyasis
2009



Trend chart for 2009



Shown above are trend charts on patients treated at FMC, Chennai during 2009.

Source: Br. Dr. Ravindran Ulaganathan

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