



Ashram...

“An ashram is a place where we sit and meditate and try to find him here within ourselves, where He is. It is a place where we must sit in a calm atmosphere, where because you are meditating again and again, the atmosphere becomes suitable for us, and then seek Him within ...

So can we not do sadhana very effectively, absolutely effectively without an ashram? Yes, we can. We don't need an ashram! But it is, shall we say, the smallest luxury we can afford, to create a brotherhood by giving a place where everybody can sit together, hear speeches, share experience. People sit and meditate, each one finds the other meditating. We get into some sort of harmonious relationship with ourselves, our belief is strengthened by what we see - other people talking or experiencing or believing and that is the only purpose that an ashram serves.”

Chariji

<http://www.sahajmarg.org/smww/featured-ashrams>

Retreat...

“A retreat was for always the few, who needed to retreat from everyday life, and retire in seclusion to introspect, meditate, brood over one's inner condition etc. The purpose was to re-enter normal everyday life refreshed spiritually to face life with a renewed sense of purpose, to restore balance to one's life. A retreat could never be for the many or for the multitude.

So here we look into ourselves, find ourselves as we are with the courage to look at what we see, and to accept what we see, and then comes the boldness and the determination to change what we see into what it should be. ...That is the culmination of yogic practice.”

Chariji

<http://www.sahajmarg.org/smww/retreat-center-overview>





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Ashram, a place I call Home *by Sheenah Hamid, Singapore*

It has been said, that even if you live next door to your guru, you are supposed to lock your house, and go and live with your teacher for a week. I don't live next door to my Master. I live more than a thousand (more precisely, 1,801) miles away, in Singapore. As a practitioner of Sahaj Marg since 2007, for the past two years, I fly 3 to 4 times a year to be at the Manapakkam ashram. It has become the only place that I travel to during vacations, much to the perplexity of family, friends and colleagues.



If our goal is the Master, if we can afford the time away, then why spend it anywhere else? To be in a haven (read heaven) of contemplation, meditation, reflection and simplicity, what more can a spiritual aspirant, ask for? Furthermore, to have a family of brothers and sisters journeying together towards the same goal, for me, it is time well utilised, compared to what I might fritter away otherwise. Master, may not have been at the ashram on every trip I made, but from every journey, I have returned home, rejuvenated, revitalised, and at peace. For a soul, I feel this spiritual world, is where it is re-energised, reconnected at the essence and made whole again. It's a homecoming of immense proportions, where my soul says, "I am home again."

**Love and Devotion make the Ashram a Paradise** *by Mei Hong, China*

Very often I hear people say joyfully, "What a paradise it is". Our ashram in Chennai is just like a paradise - beautiful trees and flowers, lovely squirrels and pigeons, simple and tasty food, serene meditation hall, warm, patient and dedicated abhyasis working in every corner of the ashram.

I used to think these workers were hired by the ashram. Only during my visit, this February, did I realise that all the brothers and sisters were volunteers! Abhyasis work at the counter, prepare food in the kitchen, wash dishes, clean the floor in the meditation hall, and click photographs.



The most touching sight for me at the ashram was when one night around 11 p.m. I saw a sister sweeping the pavement in darkness. She didn't notice me as she was totally absorbed in her work. Full of gratitude in my heart, I said, "Thank you sister for doing this work". She smiled back, "It is all Master's work". My eyes filled with tears. Yes, it is all Master's work! It was dark outside, but I felt a brightness inside me. I suddenly realized that the ashram is made a paradise by not just the trees and flowers, but with the love and devotion of the people silently working for it.

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Being with Him by *Vijeta Rathore, South Korea*

We find Him in our hearts all the time. But when we are at his feet, we feel his presence in every being and everything. One goes to the ashram to meet the Beloved, to be with him physically and to nourish the soul. The environment charged with love, takes one deeper into its realms of existence and makes us realise our relationship with Master.

We are also able to strengthen our grasp of our sadhana, through insights of our brothers and sisters. Their personal experiences on the spiritual path motivates us. The discussions help us understand the sadhana better. This is best coupled with introspection about one's own state. We feel more connected to our inner selves as we are gifted with a spiritual condition which is nurtured and nourished further. We also learn to live with love and harmony with our fellow brothers and sisters. These spiritual gatherings, where people gather with divine love, attracts grace from our Masters. The entire Earth is blessed with their love and grace, making it very special for all humanity. These are like gifts from the Master.

**TODAY** by *Shanti Thiyagarajah, Malaysia*

The ache in the heart and the tear in the eye that I had
Before I lay down to sleep last night has been removed
By the cleaning and soothed away gently by the night prayer.

When the early morning comes into my eyes,
I wake up with my Master within my eyes and heart
And see the shapes and nature of things that He has given.

With the life He gave me, He teaches the best lessons.
When I fumble I sometimes feel the pain of progress lost
In wishes, disobedience, laziness leading away from His path.

Yet I am again embraced by His love and acceptance
And encouraged and propelled towards surrender in Him,
Only to realise my true nature and purpose in His universe.

It is evening, I feel blessed, I passed the day in remembrance
As another step in my spiritual journey with Him,
my only Significant, Eternal companion, my Master.



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Malaysia-Singapore Retreat (21st and 22nd January 2012, Klang Ashram)

An ashram retreat was jointly arranged by Malaysia and Singapore abhyasis on 21st and 22nd January 2012, providing an opportunity to immerse in the ashram atmosphere for two days. All the 73 abhyasis felt love and joy in the spiritually charged Klang ashram, the first of many in South-East Asia.

An ice breaker session identifying each person with a positive quality starting with the first letter of their name exposed all of us to a pleasant and effective way of knowing and remembering abhyasis. Several programs including presentations, group discussions, videos, songs were organized, providing food to the mind and soul, whereas the tasty and nourishing food arranged by the sisters from Malaysia filled all with a feeling of gratitude.

The video "Heaven" created an atmosphere of being in Manapakkam, bringing tears of gratitude for the ONE who tirelessly works to help us shape our destiny. The children presented "Super Ten", a program, demonstrating the application of the Ten maxims with simple stories and examples. The last activity of the day was a discussion in the moon light. Even though the moon was hidden by the clouds, the light shone through the hearts of all.

Abhyasis got an opportunity to volunteer their services at the ashram and they performed all the chores enthusiastically. There were 4 satsanghs during the retreat and the benefit of having an ashram in the region spoke for itself. Master has blessed this region with this beautiful ashram and we hope to utilise this opportunity to its optimum, and pray many more yearning souls do the same.



Joy of Sadhana Youth Seminar

(3rd and 4th March 2012, Klang Ashram)

The Malaysian and Singapore centres jointly organised a Youth Seminar themed, *Joy of Sadhana*, with 30 participating abhyasis, amidst much fun and laughter.

The seminar's objective was to rediscover the joy in the practice with emphasis on the practical applications on how to do the **morning meditation**, **evening cleaning** and the **bedtime prayer**, as prescribed. The participants, through small group discussions, activities, a skit and a game, learnt all that was required to re-discover the joy was to look at the sadhana from a different perspective; a change in one's attitude.

Maxim 9 was explored through discussions in small groups and it was opened to all abhyasis who attended the Sunday satsangh. The idea of the seminar was also to incorporate a holistic approach of the mind, body and soul concept. Morning exercise was thus included on Sunday, besides the discussions, and the contemplative and reflective sessions. Each day ended with a group-sharing segment, where participants shared the highlights of what they had learnt.

In all, the seminar brought out a richness in terms of learning and experiences. The benevolent grace and attention of Master was present throughout the event. Every participant was carefully attended to, and the help that the organisers needed, was always there.

The feeling of brotherhood inculcated among the youth of the Mission through seminars has always been amazing. It would be a good idea for abhyasis from the other countries of this region to come together for such seminars.



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Singapore Ashram Fun Fair, 26th February 2012

The sisters came up with a creative way of generating funds for the Singapore ashram by hosting a fun-filled family event at the Centre on 26th February 2012.

The sisters lovingly prepared a vast variety of food from different regions of India. The extensive menu comprised of delicacies from the South, mouth watering dishes from the North, food for the western and Malay palate. Small packets of savoury snacks, Indian sweetmeats, pickles, powders and chutneys were purchased to be relished at home.

Pottery tiles and products made by abhyasis during a pottery workshop were on sale. Handmade art and craft items had been specially prepared for the fair, which included candles, bead earrings, fridge magnets and little bookmarks.

The stall to convert scenic photographs, taken by an abhyasi brother, into posters was a super hit. 'A Minute to Win it' a simple yet challenging game proved to be the most fun and cost effective fund raiser of the day!

Everyone enjoyed the event and felt a sense of togetherness. The amazing response and encouragement received has motivated the sisters to plan more events like this in the future.





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CENTRE UPDATES

PHILIPPINES

The Philippines centre celebrated Pujya Lalaji's birthday with morning and evening satsanghs on 2nd February 2012. Abhyasis watched the video 'Approaching the Guru'.

An Open House was held at the Asian Institute of Management, Makati City, on 25th February 2012. The event resulted in the beginning of abhyas for several students.



MALAYSIA

Malaka centre abhyasis joined the Junior Dwi Bestari kindergarten belonging to Sis Vani at Bertam Perdana to celebrate Universal Children's Day on 19th November 2011.

It was also the graduation for the children the same night. Some of the children at the kindergarten are involved in the VBSE classes.

The children gave excellent performances and narrated stories with moral values.



HONG KONG

The idea to have the Mission registered in Hong Kong started many years ago, right after the ZiC's first visit to Hong Kong in 2006. Though this island city state is completely a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) since 1997, it benefits from 'one state two systems'.

Taking into consideration the encouraging development of the centre through active participation of abhyasis and prefects, and the possibility of having a flexible legal status under the Society rules, Master gave permission to register the Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation in Hong Kong in the summer of 2011.

By His grace, the dream became a reality. **On 5th March 2012 the society was registered as Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation Hong Kong.**

We are grateful to Master for blessing us with this opportunity to serve Him. The future is full of promise and hope. May we follow in His footsteps and create more opportunities for the benefit of humankind.

