



Echoes of North America

Shri Ram Chandra Mission

Issue 3

March 2009

Master's news

Excerpts from talk given at Satkhol, India, Feb 2, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You are all familiar with the messages that were published a couple of years ago, under the title *Whispers from the Brighter World*—mainly messages from Babuji Maharaj, but also containing messages from Lalaji Sahib and some other highly spiritualized entities.

And we have been also putting them on the, what do you call it, the Web; one message every day. I hope you have all been reading them, because Babuji Maharaj himself says, "Good things must be



the details of how, where, when will be released in Sahaj Sandesh. It will all be available by email today to all who have access to the computers. This copy will be followed—much to my joy and surprise—by two more volumes, at least. One volume, that is the second volume, now on 30th April 2009, third volume, 30th April 2010 and fourth volume, I hope 30th April 2011, closing with the last message of 31st December 2010...



... So I would take this opportunity of imploring you all to read these messages again and again. Read it with, you know, an open heart so that the meaning goes into you directly into the heart without going through the brain. We have to bypass the brain if you are going to be a spiritual person seriously interested in your evolution. Anything that you subject to your brain for evaluation will only doom you to further slavery. I hope you will take this last warning of mine to heart—put away your head completely. Read with your heart. "No, no, how can I read with my heart?" Try it and you will be amazed at what the heart can find, which your brain never told you exists. I pray for you all.

Master has been travelling extensively for the last few months. Here is a glimpse of his travels from December through the end of January.

Read with your heart. "No, no, how can I read with my heart?" Try it and you will be amazed at what the heart can find, which your brain never told you exists.

repeated. Need to be repeated." And one wonder behind those messages is that as you read them again and again and again, the meaning goes deeper and deeper. And it has been my own experience that, I don't know, you cannot quantify it as seventh reading or eighth reading, but as you go on reading them, even the reading itself seems to open up spiritual conditions in us. So I would recommend that you read volume one continuously, and I am happy to announce that we will be releasing volume two on the 30th of April, the birth anniversary of my Master, Babuji Maharaj.

It will also contain a great deal of messages; I expect it to run to about six hundred pages, one message per page, and

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Tiruppur:

Master arrived in Tiruppur on the evening of December 3 and drove to the Diamond Jubilee park.

Later he conducted a satsangh in the cottage. It was not much crowded in the beginning so abhyasis were able to see Master very closely. He used to come out at about 9.30 a.m. from his cottage to read the newspaper, and then would do some talking and answering abhyasis' questions, this was his routine almost every day of his stay in Tiruppur



On the Friday of that week he inaugurated the new kitchen (about 2000 sq. ft.) in DJ Park, Tiruppur. He conducted both the 6.30 a.m. satsangh and the 9.00 a.m. satsangh. On December 6 after the Sunday satsangh he expressed his unhappiness about the cell phones ringing during satsangh. He spoke in Tamil for about 3 minutes, saying, "why should all of you even attend the



satsangh if you are so interested in phones? Do all of you come here only to close your eyes, and then get up when I say that's all! If you want to see who has called and need to see your phone just after the sitting is over, please don't come here, you may as well sit at home. In Chennai we collect Rs.1000 as fine when a phone rings, those of you who are true to your conscience, please go ahead and pay the fine." (abhyasis laughter) "No no, I am very serious about this. Please don't laugh. When you come here for satsangh, you must switch off the phone before entering, and the phone should be put on only when out of the meditation hall."

Malampuzha:

Master then visited Malampuzha, Kerala, on December 17 to the SMSF retreat center. There were about 40 scholars from around the world to attend the scholarship training program for 2008 in the SMSF retreat center. Master was in a light mood and spent a lot of time talking to the scholars attending the program. During his stay he inaugurated the meditation hall in the Malampuzha center.



Thrissur:

He made a day trip to Puzhakkal, Thrissur, on December 19 where he inaugurated the meditation hall named Yogashram. On the day before his departure to Coimbatore and Chennai from the retreat center, Revered Master addressed the group of scholars in the new library. Some excerpts from this speech are given below:

"If people are coming to the spiritual life only to change the world, they will not achieve anything. I assure you. If you come to change **yourself**, there is a guarantee of success, provided you apply yourself to changing yourself."

"When you change yourself, the law says, your world changes for you. You don't change **the** world but you change **your** world. You learn to live harmoniously, you learn to have compassion, you are able to really love people, you are able to beat class consciousness, colour consciousness, rich-poor and therefore, you are the center of harmony not the periphery of harmony. Unless you are in the center of harmony, the center of peace and the center of love, you achieve nothing. If you want the world to change, you can wait forever."

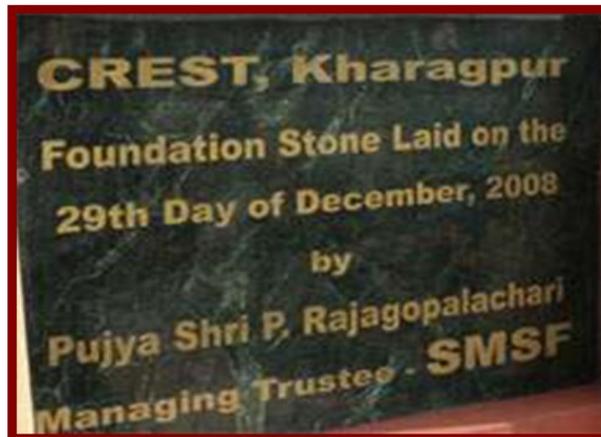
"Self conquest is the only conquest. And self conquest means the conquest of this world. This is what spirituality offers, this is what spirituality gives free to anyone who wants it with the promise that you too can achieve. I hope that you all realize the seriousness of the method, realize and understand the seriousness of the practice. It is your purpose, your chance; it is your opportunity in life to change yourself. By changing yourself you change the world."

Kolkata:

Master arrived in Kolkata on December 25. On the 29th he laid the foundation stone for CREST at Kharagpur. This is the second CREST campus in India.

Chennai:

Master arrived the evening of the 30th. He was greeted by more than 50 abhyasis including Canadians, Italians, Irish and Russians. The following morning, abhyasis waiting at the gate for a glimpse of Master were invited into the cottage (and the porch) for a sitting with him. People arrived for New Years that day and Master gave a sitting at midnight and then the 9.00 a.m. the next (New Years Day) morning. On January 14, Pongal began with an influx of several thousand people, filling the meditation hall and





spilling out onto the dorm roofs on either side. Master gave the sitting in the morning and the evening of that day, a special treat.

Andhra Pradesh:

Master started by car from Chennai at around 7.00 a.m. on January 19 for Ramapuram, where he had inaugurated an ashram in 1991. After conducting satsangh for the assembled abhyasis, he left by about 10:30 a.m. for Chittoor – an hour's drive away. He conducted satsangh at Chittoor immediately upon arrival with about 1,100 abhyasis present. Following satsangh, he inaugurated a cottage prepared for his stay. Master appeared happy and was pleased to see the disciplined behaviour of all abhyasis present. On the morning of January 20, Master conducted satsangh at 6:30 a.m. and left for Tirupati by road at 8:15 a.m. Upon reaching Tirupati, he conducted satsangh for about 1500 people assembled and also gave a talk following satsangh. Following lunch, Master returned to Chittoor, where he rested for a while, then conducted evening satsangh at around 5:15 p.m. Following dinner, Master spent some time with abhyasis. He mentioned that real darshan is the darshan of the Reality within, and asked this to be translated in Telugu (local language) for those present. The following morning, Master conducted satsangh at 7:45 a.m., and left Chittoor for Chennai at 9 a.m.

Ahmedabad:

Master arrived on January 23 to Ahmedabad. There were about 2800 abhyasis present in the Adalaj Ashram for the gathering. Master conducted five satsanghs during his stay. In an informal conversation he mentioned that "It is Love and Brotherhood" which creates atmosphere conducive for spiritual growth. The onus of spiritual growth entirely rests on the abhyasi. It is the abhyasi who is responsible for his own destiny, he commented. He later visited Delhi from January 27-29 and then on to Satkhoh until February 3.



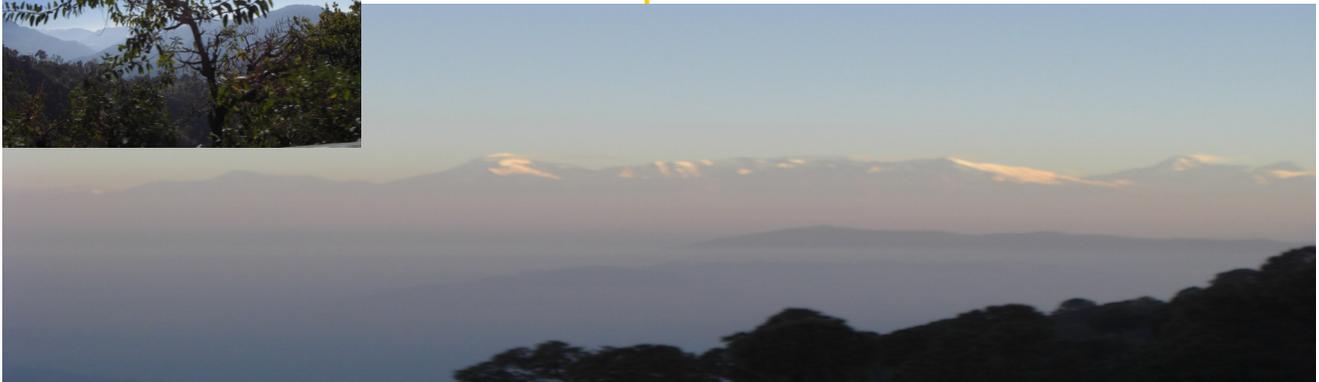
Eric and Emily in Satkhoh

Feature Story 1: Sahaj Marg Finds You!

(by Janmarie Connor)

Those of us born in the West often marvel at how we managed to "find" Sahaj Marg. Despite the profound efficacy of our system, our numbers are still small in North America, so "finding the path" is indeed a wonder. During my recent stay in Satkhoh, I had the opportunity to meet a young American couple who, through a series of coincidences and chance encounters, wound up meeting the Master and following him to this Himalayan heaven. Eric and Emily were clear about one thing. They did not "find" Sahaj Marg. *Sahaj Marg found them!* Here is a bit of their story:

Eric had just finished his university studies and Emily was living in Seattle and working as a yoga instructor. The two had met as undergraduates and had the dream of going to magical India. So after graduation, they put their carefully crafted plan into action and booked tickets for a three month stay. Their itinerary included yoga on the beach in Pondicherry, some hiking in the Himalayas, and many adventures in between. In the weeks before leaving, Eric received an e-mail from his cousin, Joan, who was studying in Spain. He hadn't had contact with





Joan in a long while, and was stunned to learn that not only was she also planning a trip to India, but she was arriving in Chennai, the same place as Emily and Eric, on the same day and within hours of their flight. Hmmm...



Master having a laugh with abhyasis at Satkhol

They decided to try to meet in Chennai but made it clear that Joan should go on if they were delayed. As it turned out, they were delayed by nearly a day, but when they arrived, they were greeted by Joan and some fellow travellers. All exhausted, each one had a different idea about where to go next. One traveller booked a taxi and expected a small car, but when a full size van arrived big enough for 5 people, including luggage, Eric and Emily ditched their plan and went on with the others to someplace they called the Babuji Memorial Ashram in Manapakkam.

On the way there, Eric and Emily learned more about Sahaj Marg meditation, the system that Joan had recently begun. They learned that S.M. meditation focused on the heart and had the highest goal of oneness with the Divine. While not overtly seeking a path, something was resonating, particularly for Emily. They had no

place to stay, and because Pongal celebrations were beginning, all the flats and apartments were booked. But, coincidentally, they learned that another couple, who meditated in Sahaj Marg, would be late by three days and they could stay in their apartment. Hmmm... three days; just enough time to take introductory sittings.

They took their sittings and learned more about the Master, Method and the Mission. Three days grew into two weeks at the Manapakkam ashram. And while they were curiously drawn to stay, they also had their own itinerary which was calling them. They sent a note to Master, asking for his blessings on their journey, and in reply, they found themselves in deep conversation with an abhyasi who, unknowingly, helped them with concepts that are quite confusing for many westerners; the Master for example.

Since Master was set to travel the next day, they thought their opportunity to meet him personally had passed, but the abhyasi encouraged them to consider going on with Master to a place called Satkhol - at least to sleep on the idea. They did sleep on it and without knowing the odds were well against them, they found themselves standing before the Master, boldly saying "we want to travel with you." According to Emily, Master threw his head back, laughed and instructed that their names be added to the list of abhyasis going to Satkhol. And that's where I met them. They were keenly aware of their serendipitous good fortune, unclear about what it all meant, and thankful for their time in this sacred place under the loving care and guidance of the Master.



Children at Satkhol

Eric and Emily did go on with their travels after Satkhol, and who knows what's next for them. But with ignited hearts and with alertness to Nature's process fully working in their behalf, all things are possible. After all, *Sahaj Marg finds you!*





Feature Story 2: At One in the Crowd (by Maire Estar)

Sue Horton and I left Montana on Monday, January 12, 2009, arriving in Chennai early the morning of January 15. This was Sue's first visit to India and my fifth. No matter how many times I travel to see Master, I never know beforehand what areas of my life will get a good cleaning nor what gifts he will bestow upon me. Living in Montana, surrounded by farm and ranch land with many avenues of accessing the nearby areas of pristine wilderness, I can look back and trace the path of this year's learning adventure.



We arrived at the Ashram in Manapakkam during the last day of the Pongal festivities. There was quite a large number of abhyasis still at the ashram and upon our arrival in the wee hours of the morning; there were no places in any of the dormitories for us to set up our mosquito tents. It was a clear night so we set our tents up on the flat roof above the women's dorm. Here the space was unlimited and the breeze rustled through the trees sounding like the many creeks that cascade through our valley at home. We didn't sleep that night, but being in the wide-open space of the rooftop with the comforting sounds of Mother Nature above us, we felt right at home.

The rooftop had a nice feel to it and we had a clear view to Master's cottage with only a few trees obstructing our way. Of the three previous times I had been in Manapakkam in January, it had never rained, so in my mind I decided we were to stay on the roof until someone told us to leave or until it rained. I would take the rain as a sign from Master that it was time to make new living arrangements. Master made his decision for us on the second night, bringing a slight drizzle shortly after midnight, giving us enough time to get all our belongings moved below before the deluge hit about 10 minutes later. It was another night of little sleep and after this night, we were able to get a room in the C block where we had more of the comfort and quiet of home.

Getting in to see Master or even getting close to Master was another issue. Because this was Sue's first visit to India to be in Master's physical presence, I was worried that she might be disappointed because we were told it was nearly impossible to get into his cottage to see him. The closest we were going to get, it seemed, was to give him a quick hello and wave as he passed by in his golf cart. That was OK with Sue, as she was much more patient and mature than I. She believed that Master's presence would be felt the same throughout the ashram no matter where she was in relationship to his physical presence. Knowing this took a weight off of my shoulders.

We traveled by bus, following Master to Chitoor and Tirupati on January 19-21. Master blessed us by leading five satsanghs during that three-day journey. How fortunate we felt to be in the crowd on those days receiving so much from our dear Master. Looking back on those sittings, I realize that Master was giving so much to everyone there. Whether he knew us by name or not, he was present for all. Then it was back to Babuji Memorial Ashram to prepare for our flight to Ahmedabad on January 23. During our two-day stay in Manapakkam, Sue and I did get a more personal encounter with Master as he toured the ashram in his golf cart. Sue had wanted to get away from the crowds waiting for him to come up the backside of the meditation hall. So we walked to the unpaved drive that connects the registration office to the kitchen. Sure enough, his cart came down that path, alone, with only the two of us standing near the corner. It was perfect as Sue got to have that moment when Master looks you in the eye and physically acknowledges your presence in India.

On January 23, it was to the Chennai airport to prepare for the flight to Ahmedabad. There was a brief break in the crowd in front of Master and I was able to introduce Sue to him. Master gave her a heartfelt welcome to India. Once we got to Ahmedabad and settled into the wonderful apartments they had set up at the ashram for the foreign abhyasis, it wasn't possible to get very close to Master as there were nearly 4000 participants at this 3-day celebration. It didn't matter that we couldn't get very close to Master. He made his presence felt at the ashram even when he wasn't there. He conducted morning Satsanghs and most of the evening ones. There was an apartment set up for Master on the ground level below our apartment where he spent one full afternoon and part of another. While Master was in his apartment, it was nice to be above him, resting or sleeping, just being quiet and absorbing as much as possible of what he was giving us. Sue, who never takes daytime naps, found herself wanting to sleep whenever Master was present at the ashram.

After one of the morning Satsanghs, Master gave the prefects a talk with discipline being the first topic. He told us that discipline must start with the prefects who must be an example for others. He said that if there were discipline among the abhyasis there would be no need for the ropes that were strung up to keep the crowds at a safe distance from him. He related two instances where



the lack of discipline in the crowds surrounding him caused him physical injury—once a broken toe and the other time a hit on the head by an airport security guard's rifle. I was saddened to hear about these things happening to Master. I have always taken the crowds of people around him for granted, thinking that the jostling and jockeying for a position closer to Master was just another part of the India experience. Any concern for his safety hadn't entered my mind. Now that I had become aware of this concern, my attention turned to the continual throng of people following Master's every move and I wondered how it was possible to be close to him without impeding his physical progress.



When our prefects meeting ended, Master left the tent and was again greeted by many abhyasis waiting for him near the entrance of his apartment. He graciously sat outside for a short while, giving an informal talk to those around him. Later, when it was time for him to leave the ashram for the last time, the scene of him getting into his car was shocking. Many abhyasis had gotten around or under the ropes that were set up to keep his car off limits. Those who are always with Master, those who take care of him, were transformed into his bodyguards. I could see them positioning their own bodies to shield Master from the crowd that had gathered around his car. Somehow they got the door open and Master inside, which ended my anxiety, yet I was amazed at how much effort it took to get him safely inside.

Master left for Delhi on the morning of the 27th and he seemed to choose a seat at the Ahmedabad airport where access to him was limited. I was relieved to see that he was in a place where he could have some space around him. In Delhi, the crowding around him cooled off somewhat until the morning of January 29th, which was the day for him to begin his journey to Satkhol. This was our last day with Master so Sue and I went early to his apartment to see if we could get in to say goodbye to him. When that wasn't possible we waited outside the door in line with other abhyasis. A pathway was formed in the crowd from the front door to his awaiting car, one that Master could easily walk through. The 3-foot pathway stayed open until Master appeared at the door. Once he was visible and out the door, the surge of abhyasis came quickly and his way was blocked. Sue and I stood firm where we were, not allowing anyone to push us into his path. Master was able to graciously greet those around him while painstakingly wading through the crowd to reach his car.



After Master left Delhi, Sue and I had two days before we had to get back to Chennai to catch our flight home. We rented a car with three others and headed south to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. This was the first time in any of my trips to India that I had done any real sightseeing and would be going to a place where Master wasn't. We were told the 200KM drive from Delhi to Agra would be only 2-3 hours, but 5 weary hours later we reached our destination. Upon our arrival at the parking lot of the Taj Mahal, we were greeted by throngs of vendors who descended upon us with only one thought in mind: they had some trinket to sell or a service to offer and they wanted our money in exchange for what they had to give. I didn't like this at all, for no matter how many times I said NO, they kept on coming. I finally got angry and they backed off. They seemed to stay away from what they considered a crazy white woman. And by that time, even I considered myself to be a crazy white woman.

Yet I gained something from that crowd of vendors at the Taj Mahal. I realized that this is what Master must feel like every time he steps out his door and is greeted by a throng of people wanting something from him. The only difference with these vendors is that they were offering something to me in exchange for the money I had to give them. I wondered, what it is that I offer Master when I have eagerly pushed to get close to him? What is it that he wants from me in exchange for what I want from him?

Babuji has said that all he wanted from an abhyasi is a heart this big (as he held up his fist). Putting things into this perspective, I have to ask myself, when I'm in the midst of the crowd around Master am I offering my heart to him or am I disappointed because I feel he's not paying attention to me? After all, I've traveled halfway around the world to see him. According to my ego, that fact alone ought be enough to get me inside his cottage! But, what is it I truly NEED from him? My ego thinks it needs (and wants) many things from him. But my heart knows of only one need—his love. How can I RECEIVE this if my biggest concern is finding a way through the crowd to get closer to him? How can HE GIVE to me if he has to focus his attention on every step he takes, making sure he doesn't trip or stumble? (Somehow he still does!)

In the words of Babuji, SILENCE is the language of God. It is in the stillness that I hear Master and know the presence of his love within me. Other than my own thoughts and fears, there is nothing or nobody else, even the crowd that may always be surrounding Master, that stands in the way of my receiving the love and care that he offers. Master offers his love freely. Am I free enough from the crowdedness within my own mind to receive it? This knowledge and this question are His gifts to me.



Whispers from the Brighter World – A Second Revelation, Collector’s Edition



Revered Master would like to motivate one and all to have their own personal copy of the special collector’s edition of Whispers from the Brighter World – A Second Revelation, to be released on April 30, 2009. The donation amount has been lowered from \$300 to \$200 in order to make it possible for all to own a copy of this special edition book. To order, go to: <https://www.srcm.org/onlinebookstore//subscriptionForm.do?reset=true&country=US>.

Change in address for donations

Please note a change in addresses for donations. Please include your email address in all your correspondence.

All SRCM donations and related inquiries (i.e., Book Corpus; Constant Remembrance Corpus; Constant Remembrance- Annual; Donations towards support of approved rental facilities) are to be sent to:	Shri Ram Chandra Mission Accounts Dept. PO Box 70487 Marietta, GA 30007-0487 Email: us.treasurer@srcm.org Phone: Bani Surapu 404-660-0996 Fax: 770-559-0981
All SMSF donations and related inquiries (i.e., SPURS –Retreat Center; Audio-Video Corpus; He, the Hookah and I, Volumes I & II; Whispers, Volume II and subsequent releases) are to be sent to:	Victor Kannan 364 Wynfield Estates Dr Roswell GA 30075 Email: us.treasurer@sahajmarg.info
All donations intended for India , please send directly to:	The President Shri Ram Chandra Mission "GAYATHRI" 19, North Street Sri Ram Nagar Chennai – 600 018 INDIA

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. 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. Also, heart- felt experience/understanding of the Mission, Method and Master are appreciated. 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).

For inclusion in the June newsletter, please send submissions by May 15, 2009 to: EchoesNA@sahajmarg.org

Calendar submissions for gatherings and similar events the June newsletter should be for the months of June, July and August only and should follow format as seen on page 16 of this newsletter.



Region In Charge & Regional Coordinators Corner

Message from John Barlow, R.C., East Region

One of the least interesting and in some ways least important aspects of the Ram Chandra Mission is its organizational structure. What is our organizational structure and what place does it have in our Mission? All we need in Sahaj Marg is a place to meet for satsangh, a way to obtain books and DVDs, etc., so we can learn about the practice, and a way to be kept informed about what is happening in the Mission, with Master, and with other abhyasis.

Why the structure? Someone has to organize the publications, someone or some team has to look for rental meditation meeting spaces and someone or some team needs to oversee the purchase of ashrams.

Then, when one has these places someone must organize their workings, including food, books, repairs, insurance, maintenance, etc., etc. In the end an organizational structure is required in order to support our ability to meet and practice this path. What does it look like?

In our Master's wisdom he has put in place the following structure, which as a structure may last many years or may change frequently as he sees the need. The people responsible for carrying out the organizational requirements also change as the need requires. All positions like these are appointments of our Master and change as the requirements change or the participants request change.

In May, 2008, Master initiated a major change for North America. The change put into place a model similar to what has been used in Europe for a number of years. First, he appointed P.R. Krishna as the Regional-in-Charge for North America. Then, he divided North America up into five regions and appointed five abhyasis to serve as regional coordinators (RCs) for each of the five regions. The five regions and coordinators are: East, John Barlow; Midwest, Raga Ragavendran; South, Balaji Narayan; West, Diana Waycott; and Canada/Alaska, Kim Hansen. Each of the five will serve as the lead regional coordinator on a rotating basis. For example, I am the lead RC (regional coordinator) this year, and Diana Waycott will be the lead RC for 2010, and so forth. The work of the RCs is spiritual in nature and necessitates their staying in touch with and meeting regularly with prefects in their respective regions in support of their work.

Another recent change occurred in December, 2008, when Master appointed a new "administrative" team. The administrative structure as mentioned above has to do with many organizational issues, from ashrams to maintaining prefect/abhyasis lists and to developing newsletters like this one. The newly appointed administrative team is as follows: William Waycott, Vice President; Naren Kini, Secretary; Kimm X Jayne and Urmil Shah, Joint Secretaries; and, Bani Surapu, Treasurer.

Besides those of us who have been appointed for a specific period of time there are many, many others working behind the scenes in support of our Master's work. Over the years (the N.A. Mission now over 30 years in existence) many have served in a multitude of ways and we now have a significant knowledge and experience base upon which to draw. To me it seems as though we are all in this together and we all want the same thing—to grow spiritually and to support our Master's vision and work. While some currently have more visible specific roles, it is our Mission and working together we will make it the best possible vehicle of spiritual change and growth for all.

Letter from Kim Hansen, R.C., Canada/Alaska



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

How time is flying by! Over the last few months abhyasis across Canada have continued to enjoy gathering together in brotherhood, in spite of the exceptionally snowy winter. For example, at Toronto Centre we greeted the new year with a mid-morning Satsangh and lunch on new year's day; a full-day celebration of Lalaji's birth anniversary; and a "family movie night" and dinner on Valentine's Day – the film, "Wide Awake" was entertaining and offered a spiritual message for adults and children alike, (and was, of course, accompanied by popcorn and soda pop). Later in February we had a question/answer with newly-introduced abhyasis after Sunday Satsangh. February closed with a regional gathering, the program fo-





cusing on one aspect of life in our Mission, and a session on evening cleaning. We were delighted to welcome abhyasis from Montreal, Sherbrooke, Ottawa and Buffalo to our Toronto Centre again.

While you may not see these and other events posted on the website or calendar, be assured that there is always activity in the "northern" region. If you're planning a trip to Canada, contact us for details.

We have produced a second SRCM Canada wall calendar. See the "announcement" elsewhere in this newsletter.

By Master's grace I will travel to the west of Canada in March, by planes, trains, automobiles and boats, across plains, forests, mountains and seas. I look forward to visiting about a dozen of our centres in British Columbia and Alberta. Of note is a gathering in Fort Langley, B.C. (near Vancouver) on Saturday, March 7th. Everyone is welcome to participate! For more info:

cprisland@shaw.ca

We have been talking about the importance and need to arrive early for Satsangh, to prepare ourselves to receive the Divine transmission; about the immense value of sitting quietly to retrospect and 'brood' over our condition after the sitting; and only then recording our condition in our diaries. Stay tuned for more on this topic in upcoming issues.

In Love,
(sister) Kim Hansen



Photos and wall calendar of abhyasis from Sherbrooke and Victoria, Canada

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SRCM CANADA CALENDAR : We have produced a second SRCM Canada wall calendar. The first one was a birthday gift to Master in July 2007. Each month displays a group photograph of abhyasis in our centres, and a quotation of Master on the theme 'ashram'. Special dates of commemorative significance are marked. This calendar runs from March 2009 through May 2010. Sale proceeds go towards the fund for a future ashram in Canada. The calendars are being sold for \$40.00 (minimum donation) to abhyasis in Canada. If other abhyasis are interested in having one, you are welcome to send an email to srcmcan@ica.net with your name, centre and postal mailing address.

CRAIG'S LIST: Has your center posted information about Sahaj Marg on Craig's List, appealing to spiritual seekers in your area? If you did, let us know about it. If you didn't and want to learn more, contact sister Kim Hansen at srcmcan@ica.net.

AUDIO/VIDEO LIBRARY: Would you find it helpful to have access to a "library" of readings and video/audio segments of Master's talks, of suitable length and content for presentation after Satsangh? Again, for more information, contact Kim at srcmcan@ica.net.

"CELL PHONES OFF, HEARTS ON!"

Master gave Sunday satsangh on Feb 8 at the ashram in Gurgaon, India, outside Delhi. About 3,000 attended. Before beginning meditation, Master said: **"Cell phones off, hearts on!"** Then he said that often our hearts are like a camera shutter, opening only briefly before closing again. But we should strive to keep our hearts open continuously.

(contributed by Riva Richmond)





SPURS Retreat Center, Austin, Texas

Fourth Quarter Report (by Tom Stoner Resident Prefect/Caretaker, SPURS Retreat Ranch)

We're happy to report that 101 abhyasis took advantage of the opportunity to come to SPURS Retreat Ranch in 2008 for deepening their connection to Master and their commitment to reaching the Goal. This figure includes ninety-three from the United States, four from India, two from Canada and one each from France and Venezuela. The length of stays for these sixty-four sisters and thirty-seven brothers varied widely; with three-day stays being the most frequent length (forty chose this length). One sister was able to be here for thirty days—the maximum length Master has allowed.

A number of improvements were made to the grounds at SPURS this fall. A variety of 125 shrubs was planted, the majority in the area of Babuji's bust near the large veranda of the retreat house. Additional landscaping, including mulched beds for the plantings and establishing a new lawn in the area provides a finished appearance in keeping with the quiet atmosphere of the place.

In November some new wildlife took up residence at the ranch. At Master's request we acquired ten adolescent peafowl (five peacocks and five peahens). For the next several months, until they realize that SPURS is their home, they are being penned in a shed northeast of the retreat house. Around April they will be turned loose to join the many deer, wild turkeys and other inhabitants that frequent the ranch. Though we understand that it takes three years for the peafowl to become fully grown, we look forward to the color these feathered friends will add to the landscape. A side note here: the wild turkeys, especially the males, seem to be drawn to the meditation hall here. They appear to admire their reflections in the glass of the hall's door.

The best way to report on the impact the retreat center is having on abhyasis is to cite a few anonymous observations made by brothers and sisters who have come to SPURS in the past three months.

"My spiritual condition has been transformed! I feel like I've had a heart transplant. I feel like I'm ready to go home and face the rest of my bhog [laughing, but serious]. . . . I wasn't prepared for the love that was here"

"I felt full of joy as soon as I arrived. The whole time here I felt I was in a special spiritual embrace. Even if I was unhappy, I felt this."

"The atmosphere here made it feel like cleaning was going on all the time—even when you were not sitting, or even after a sitting had stopped."

"This was like being in Master's presence without the people around as in a gathering."

"It's like I became more aware of what happens during my cleaning—space was created and absorption developed. I could continue in this condition as I worked through my day."

"I wanted tangible evidence for why to do the practice, other than that Master tells us to. I did it because I wanted to be obedient. Now I want to do it because I want to go Home. The focus is a desire to do the practice."

"Diary writing has been very difficult for me and I do know you are just supposed to report. But this time I really enjoyed reporting on 'what is.' Usually I think that you are to report on 'big things' like 'revelations,' but here I've seen an important aspect of diary writing."

"I feel like I'm going back to my original self—it's ME! I'm happy. I don't have to be somebody. I'm just me. I realized that I was now with my Self, that I am just my Self and that it is fine!"



My Time at SPURS (by Devi Sekar)

My Beloved Master gave me a wonderful opportunity to be at SPURS Retreat Ranch for one week in February. I arrived there on Feb 1, 2009, the day before Basant. It was a true blessing for me to celebrate Lalaji's Birthday in the silent presence of our Master. SPURS is a true gift from Master to all abhyasis. He has poured his divine essence into this place. One has to experience it for him or herself. It was suggested that I not read any mission literature or any books for three days. Those three days felt like 'gestation period' for me. I was slipping into meditation many times a day without any effort on my own, since the atmosphere was so charged and palpable. After three days, I randomly started reading some of the mission literature. The readings revealed much deeper meaning than when I had read them before! I believe the essence of these readings will stay with me for all my life.

My entire stay at SPURS felt like one long meditation, whether I was meditating, cooking, eating or taking a walk. It was truly blissful. Lots of negative thoughts did surface during this one-week stay. After a while, I started looking at my past issues and past problems with a sense of wonder, wondering how such a thing could have happened to me, to my mother or to my husband, etc.



All the repulsion, hatred and negativity seem to have vanished on its own! I felt so much cleaner and lighter.

There is a small room called the 'sanctuary' at SPURS. Only two people are to meditate in that place at a time. The first time I meditated there I felt very disturbed and did not even want to go in there again! Brother Tom gave me a sitting after that. Later on, I gathered enough courage to sit and meditate there several times!

Brother Tom and Sister Mary Lou are caretakers of this place. They are very affectionate to the abhyasi sisters and brothers who come. They take extreme care in maintaining the place and they take very good care of both our physical and spiritual needs, starting from transportation, food, and accommodation to individual sittings. They treat us very special!

One of Master's remarks regarding retreat centers is:

"I hope you will make use of these centers for the purpose they are established. Come as you are, go away as something else."

I felt that this was very true for me. I feel so much lighter and stronger after my stay at SPURS. My meditations have become much deeper and I feel much more joyful. It was a true gift for me from Master. I sincerely thank Him for providing me this wonderful opportunity. It is very different from going to an ashram or spending time in the physical presence of the Master. It has its place. Master has created these retreat centers with a specific purpose. I sincerely wish and hope that every abhyasi may take the opportunity to make a trip to SPURS and savor this experience.

Forgetting Yourself (by Rajendra Patel)

Since the opening of the SPURS retreat center, satsanghs are held every Sunday in the meditation hall for the Austin abhyasis. Abhyasis attending Sunday satsanghs are only permitted in the meditation hall so as not to disturb those coming to stay at the retreat center. After satsangh, many stay for regular maintenance that needs to be done and once a month, we have a maintenance weekend.

I finally had an opportunity to spend three days at the center on retreat from November 7-11, 2008. After making the decision to stay and choosing my days, I completed the necessary forms online requesting permission. A few days later, I was contacted by Brother Tom Stoner, who lives at and takes care of the retreat center with his wife, Sister Mary Lou. Tom provided a brief overview over the phone and suggested some materials that I could read before arriving.

Immediately upon entering the retreat center, one can feel the charged atmosphere of love and peace all around and the feeling of being in a place where all your worries seem to dissolve and leave you behind. Both Tom and Mary Lou greeted me with a warm welcome. We sat down for a brief discussion at the dining table to go over three day program. Shortly after, Mary Lou took me to my room, which was followed by a tour of the kitchen area, discussing any special needs and requirements with regard to food preparation.

After unpacking and settling in, I had a sitting with brother Tom as I felt that this would be a good way to start off my program; from then on I would be on my own here. My very first meditation in the sanctuary was for about 40 minutes. Thoughts of

work came to mind several times and immediately I thought of my purpose for being here and brought my attention back to the heart, which immediately put me back into inner peace. After lunch I walked inside the fenced area of the retreat center, and later went back to the sanctuary for more meditation. Later that day I sat in the living room to receive Master's "long distance" sitting at 9 p.m. (given on Fridays). Overall, this whole day had been something special in which I was continuously feeling the effect of cleaning going on and the flow of transmission creating peace, serenity and lightness within and all around me.

Unable to sleep most of the night and not knowing what else to do, I decided to go to the sanctuary and meditate during the early hours from 2-4 a.m. I listened to and observed the gentle, smooth, calm and quietness of my breath as I went deeper into meditation, observing and listening at the same time to the howling and barking sounds of coyotes in the distance. During the early morning hours, just after sunrise, I went back to the living room and watched wild turkeys and deer. There were also horses grazing across the neighbor's fence. The natural feeling of peace and tranquility within made me forget myself and be more watchful of the activity of the animals and the natural surroundings.

During the day I continued feeling gentle transmission all over. Many times while sitting in the living room writing in



"I hope you will make use of these centers for the purpose they are established. Come as you are, go away as something else."





my diary or reading my previous recording, I would be "gone" or "unaware," not realizing what I had been doing until I suddenly opened my eyes to see that two or more hours had passed by. In the afternoon, as I was sitting in my bedroom resting, I watched the sun's rays shining through the room and within minutes I went out to sit on the front porch to bathe in the breezy warm sunlight. The continued flow of transmission was very noticeable as I felt the calmness and peace all around and the almost perfect balance of everything. I watched the leaves and shrubs gently dance back and forth and the large tree branches moving and making noise that sounded just like ocean waves rolling on coastal shores.

My condition progressively changed to a much calmer and peaceful state as I continued with cleaning and meditation. On Sunday morning almost 50 abhyasis attended the satsangh. It was extremely deep, calm and timeless. Following lunch and a short interview with Tom and Mary Lou I departed. As I drove off one of the first things that came to mind was that I should retain the condition Master had infused in me and also the feeling of forgetting oneself. The fascinating thing is that when we are physically with Master, we are always running around and planning schedules to be wherever he is, but here at the retreat center, the stress of trying to keep up with Master's travel is removed, and therefore we are able to work more on our selves and Master is also able to do more for us. Everything, including the presence of Master is right there at the retreat center and naturally I am looking forward to coming back again next year.

Children's center at SPURS (by Ranjani Balaji)

Master wrote in one of his letters to an abhyasi in 1988,

"It is the next generation which will really reflect the totality of Sahaj Marg practice through the intermediary of the present generation of mankind, and the children must be trained, from the very beginning, in this new tradition of human development. I believe that the parents of the next generation of children will have a bigger responsibility that our own parents ever had. The world must be changed and transformed. And as this will be our job, they must be prepared with the utmost tenderness and love in order to accomplish the great task which awaits them."

I would like to share the children's center in Austin with you all. Master has given us the wonderful gift of SPURS, where we have the opportunity to self develop as well as provide an excellent atmosphere for children's development. SPURS has a children's area that the abhyasis created from what used to be a barn. This place is also home to beautiful peacocks that the children look forward to seeing every Sunday.

There are about 25 children in Austin ranging in age from one year to 15 years. The children participate every week in activities that offer them physical, mental and self development.

These activities include sports, a math Olympiad, arts and crafts, and reading and writing. The children get an opportunity to show their talent as well as explore their inner self through music session with their favorite Uncle Tom (Stoner). The activities planned for the children are simple and promote learning together with love, which is a step towards helping children to become what they have to become.

This New Year brings in more fire and energy to help children explore their inner self and spirituality. We started a new session called Great Leaders scheduled once a month. In this hour, the children learn about one great leader, the qualities that make them what they are and how they achieved their goals. We learned about Martin Luther King Jr. in January and Lalaji Maharaj in February. Children wrote beautifully about the message of brotherhood and love spread by these leaders. The sessions ended by having the children ponder and draw on what the leaders meant to them.



Hopping for joy at SPURS!

Article published in *The Hindu* (January 6, 2009)

An article in *The Hindu* (January 6, 2009) featured the Lalaji Memorial Omega International (LMOI) School, for their participation in the 11th Annual United Nations Student Conference on Human Rights (UNSHCR) that was held between December 3 and 5, 2008. The children research natural disasters and then offered possible solutions at the conference.

"Omega was the only school from the country [India] and one of the nine schools selected worldwide for this annual videoconference. Eighty students from Omega toured villages and researched on the Internet over a period of three months to understand the impact of natural calamities on human rights. They also came up with a Plan of Action to prevent such effects. The plan was presented by four students at the web conference, and discussed with the school students assembled at the UN headquarters in New York and at nine videoconference sites in the Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia. The final student Plan of Action will be presented to the President of the UN General Assembly and passed on to its 192 member states." For full text see: <http://www.hinduonnet.com/vw/2009/01/06/stories/2009010650211400.htm>



Happenings in North America

Celebrating Lalaji's Birth Anniversary Celebrations in The US and Canada

Between January 31 and February 2, abhyasis gathered in the US and Canada to celebrate Basant, the birth anniversary of Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh Master's 81st birth Anniversary. Below is a sampling of festivities at various centers in North America.

Jacksonville, Florida:

As a part of the 2009 Basant celebrations, the children of the Jacksonville center prepared a cultural program, where they performed three skits after Sunday satsangh. Two of the skits were based on stories adapted from the Mission's website (the sage and beauty tips) and the third was based on the well known theme, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." The skit based on "The Sage" highlighted the importance of having the right attitude towards everyday problems - not to complain about them but to find solutions and take them as opportunities for growth. The skit based on "Beauty Tips" focused on the idea that internal and moral beauty is real and everlasting. Children aged 3-9



years participated. They had several practice sessions over a month's period. All abhyasis enjoyed the performance and the children were very happy to add their contribution to the Basant celebrations. (Sharda Mehra)

Molena Ashram, Molena, Georgia:

An extended 3-day gathering was held from January 31 - February 2. A total of five satsanghs were held and about 150 people attended the gathering. Many local abhyasis came and a good number of families stayed in the ashram for the entire gathering, making it a very fulfilling family retreat experience. A few Chinese abhyasis who had recently started the practice came to the ashram for the first time. They stayed overnight and became quite comfortable and adjusted to the place. The regular material world was gladly missing from our lives, as we were completely "present" in that spiritual atmosphere created by Rev. Master. As he once said, "we bring our physical presence

and he provides the spiritual presence." The freedom that this atmosphere provides is clearly visible when one observes the liveliness and happiness expressed by the children in the place. About 20 - 25 children extracted every possible bit of enjoyment they could during their stay at the gathering. While the adults were talking about brotherhood, the children were practicing it—playing and living together in harmony. It has become such a common phenomenon to rain during Basant and the evening satsangh on February 2 was very special. There were howling winds rising from the north outside, squeezing through the small gap between the meditation hall and the dining hall, all accompanied by a heavy downpour.

However, inside the meditation hall as well as inside abhyasis' hearts, there was the complete stillness of Master's love. By the time satsangh concluded the rain had stopped and a serene feeling permeated all. (Bharath Madhavan)

Seattle, Washington:

The Seattle Center celebrated Rev. Lalaji Maharaj's birthday on February 2, 2009. The celebration started with satsangh at 8 a.m. in the morning. After the meditation, the first chapter from Lalaji's Truth Eternal was read. After a break of 15 minutes we watched a video produced by the Pune abhyasis, called *Life of Lalaji Maharaj*. After lunch, we watched another video of Master being interviewed in Atlanta. Some of the abhyasis were busy taking care of children, while others were busy reading mission literature. Many were resting blissfully. The day was quite peaceful. We had a few young infants who kept everybody engaged. After evening tea we read two articles from *Constant Remembrance*, one by Lalaji and one by Babuji. We also read a chapter from *Complete Works of Ram Chandra*, Volume II, on what causes happiness and miseries. Evening meditation was at 5:30 p.m. which was attended by about 25 abhyasis. Both the sittings were of one hour duration and were very deep. Dinner was served at 6:45 p.m. It was an enjoyable day spent in remembrance Lalaji Maharaj. (Satya Nistala)

Sunderland Ashram, Sunderland, Massachusetts

The Sunderland Meditation Center was the site for a Basant gathering of over 80 adult abhyasis and 25 children. The theme of the Basant gathering was "Feeling the Master Within." The Sunderland Center abhyasis hosted the event. A set of four carefully chosen readings from Chariji and Babuji ended each satsangh with suggestions on how to



realize the Master's presence within the heart and how to approach a more constant awareness of it, realizing that it is the Real "I." DVD's were also selected to add reflections on Lalaji's life and teaching and the atmosphere deepened after each. It was a relaxed and intimate gathering, with the space suiting the size of the gathering well given that it was cold and icy outside. Nevertheless, the children were making the most of what the environment had to offer, with three little girls conducting an imaginary formal "snow and ice banquet" for each other atop one of the 10 foot tall snow mounds brought to life by the plow. The group diminished on Monday with many abhyasis needing to report back to work, but the atmosphere remained and the spirit of the theme seemed to permeate our awareness on a subtle level. (Harlan Smith)

Montreal, Canada:



On the auspicious occasion of Basant Panchami, the abhyasis of the Montreal center gathered to celebrate our Adi Guru, Lalaji Maharaj's birth anniversary. The blissful journey began on Saturday, January 31 at brother Yan's home. Individual sittings were held in the afternoon along with some informal discussion. Later on, the evening satsangh was conducted at 6 p.m. The opportunity to spend time together was more than welcome by everyone and the atmosphere was pure delight. We held a small potluck. In the evening we discussed some administrative matters of the Mission followed by a video from *He, the Hookah and I, Set 2, Hubble Bubble*.

On Sunday morning satsangh was held with 14 abhyasis, followed by a reading and a photo shoot for our Canadian annual calendar. There was a perfect meeting lead by Tom and Kim Hansen in the afternoon. On Monday morning satsangh was held at 8 a.m., followed by a movie on Revered Master Lalaji's life. A second satsangh was conducted that evening at 7 p.m. All readings were excerpted from the book *Truth Eternal*. The celebrants were thankful for the privilege bestowed upon us by our Revered Master's Lalaji and were grateful to have been given the privilege of being recipients of His Divine flow of Grace. (Guylaine Sauve)



Houston, Texas:

We had a nice gathering on the day of Basant (Monday, February 2), with a full-day program emphasizing introspection and remembrance. We also engaged in a fun interactive Quiz. There were 30 abhyasis in all, with everybody attending the evening satsangh and 17 abhyasis attending the morning satsangh. Ten kids had fun with cookies, balloons, etc. After the morning satsangh, the abhyasis enjoyed watching Master's Hookah video on Lalaji Maharaj. (Hari Thota)

Phoenix, Arizona:



Abhyasis from all over the Western USA participated in a Basant gathering in Phoenix, Arizona, from January 31 to February 2. Specifically, 96 adults and 25 children from Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and Idaho attended the gathering. The theme was "Service, Reflection, and Character." Abhyasis engaged in two fun activities designed to strengthen the divine connection within themselves. First, the group played Sahaj Marg Jeopardy. Second, the group interpreted advertisements of items used by each of us daily within a Sahaj Marg framework. A 30 minute video (compiled from various sources) on the life of Lalaji Maharaj was played on February 2. A perfect workshop also was held during this gathering. (Siva Kumar Kamineni)

Cupertino, California:



The Bay Area (including San Jose and San Francisco) celebrated Basant with a full day program on Saturday, January 31, 2009, at the IOOF Hall, Cupertino. The event was attended by more than 120 abhyasis and children. The topic of study was tolerance, with materials organized by sisters Keerthi and Shobha.



The study material was read after the morning satsangh while abhyasis listened and absorbed the thoughts of the Masters presented in those readings. After lunch Abhyasis were formed into five groups to discuss the material. One representative from each of the groups presented the understanding of the group on the topic. One of the groups was of senior brothers and sisters, some of whom were visiting from India. The discussion for that group was conducted in an Indian language so that they could participate in the study. In the afternoon, the movie *Life of Lalaji* was played and abhyasis spent time remembering the great Master while watching the trials and triumphs of his spiritual life on earth. In the late afternoon, the children presented a program that included their interpretation of tolerance, readings of proverbs, poems, stories, and a group song. (Harshal Jawale)

Voorhees, New Jersey

The Voorhees, New Jersey, center celebrated Basant with a full day gathering on January 31st, followed by a morning satsangh on February 1st, and ended with an 8 p.m. satsangh on February 2nd. Around 12 abhyasis attended the gathering with devotion and their hearts full of love for Master. The atmosphere during the entire three day period was very sober and calm. After the January 31st morning satsangh everyone watched a series of talks given by the Masters in *He, the Hookah, and I. Some of the abhyasis were seeing these talks for the very first time and felt that Master was talking directly to them and they were very encouraged.* (Jasweer Khanuja)

Charlotte, North Carolina:

On Sunday, February 1, 2009, the Charlotte center hosted a gathering at the Stone Creek Clubhouse to observe the birth anniversary of Lalaji Maharaj. Forty-five adults and 10 children participated from Charlotte and nearby centers. We gathered at 8:30 a.m. for breakfast, then had satsangh followed by a program on the topic of Character Formation. The literature inspired conversation about practical applications of our practice in everyday situations. Lunch was pot-luck and was followed by a baby shower for a family in our center. Afterwards, we resumed the program with time for reflections and observations and closed with satsangh. (Pam Turner)



Staten Island, New York:

Over 75 adults and 15 children came together from various centers in New York and New Jersey on February 1st and 2nd on Staten Island to celebrate Revered Lalaji Maharaj's birth anniversary. The gathering commenced on Sunday the 1st with a satsangh at 9 a.m., followed by a viewing of a video on the life of Lalaji. The video was a wonderful opportunity for the many abhyasis present who had never before seen it and who knew little about the life of Lalaji, the first Master of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission. Even those who had viewed the video before were captivated by the film and learned something new about Lalaji and his message. A festive lunch followed by contemplation was enjoyed before the evening satsangh. The celebrations culminated on Monday the 2nd after a morning satsangh at 7 a.m. All abhyasis felt very blessed to have been able to attend the gathering and to be together in the remembrance of Lalaji Maharaj. (Amy Mody)



Mission Website Re-Design

A team has been put together to redesign the Mission websites. Master has said that the website should reflect the work of the team spread all around the world. The group would like to gather brochures, workshops, power points, children's programs, and any other materials developed in English and other languages so that it can be shared under a heading called "resources" via the website. Please send contributions to Dolly (Veronique) Nicolai: dolly.nicolai@srcm.org.



Calendar of Events

March 7, 2009	Charlotte, NC	Prefect workshop	balaji@email.com
March 7, 2009	Fort Langley, B.C. (near Vancouver)	Day long gathering	cprisland@shaw.pa
March 14-15, 2009	Jacksonville, FL	Regional gathering	madhusn@gmail.com
March 14-15, 2009	Chicago, IL	Prefect workshop	raga_ragavendran@yahoo.com
March 14-15, 2009	Sunderland ashram, MA	Regional gathering	coleensackheim@yahoo.com
March 15, 2009	Columbus, OH	Extended day gathering	sahai.2@osu.edu
March 21-22, 2009	Beavercreek ashram, OH	Prefect workshop	raga_ragavendran@yahoo.com
March 22, 2009	Warrenville meditation center, IL	Day long gathering	raga_ragavendran@yahoo.com
April 5, 2009	Indianapolis, IN	Extended day gathering	bob@connorpainting.com
April 18, 2009	Columbus, OH	Extended day gathering	sahai.2@osu.edu
April 29-30, 2009	Sunderland ashram, MA	Babuji's Birth Anniversary	coleensackheim@yahoo.com
April 29-30, 2009	Warrenville meditation center, IL	Babuji's Birth Anniversary	raga_ragavendran@yahoo.com
April 29-30, 2009	Beavercreek ashram, OH	Babuji's Birth Anniversary	vchitkara@sbcglobal.net
May 3, 2009	Indianapolis, IN	Extended day gathering	bob@connorpainting.com
May 17, 2009	Warrenville meditation center, IL	Day long gathering	raga_ragavendran@yahoo.com



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